

The Gift to Be Single: Celibacy and Religious
Enthusiasm In the Community of True Inspiration

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IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST for his judgment on several pressing questions, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the congregation of Christians at Corinth in which he explained his views on the issues they raised, including the subject of marriage:

It is a good thing for a man to have nothing to do with women; but because there is so much immorality, let each man have his own wife and woman her own husband. . . . I should like you all to be as I am myself [i.e. unmarried]; but everyone has the gift God has granted him, one this gift and another that. To the unmarried and to widows I say this: it is a good thing if they can stay as I am myself; but if they cannot control themselves, they should marry. Better to be married than burn with vain desire.¹

Although Paul's preference for the celibate life has never motivated a large number of Christians, a minority has often adopted celibacy as part of a special calling. Beginning in the fourth century, the Church sought to prohibit cohabitation between clerics and their wives, and in the twelfth century the First Council of Lateran extended the ban and forbade priests from marrying at all.² Similarly, most monastic orders considered a vow of chastity to be an essential part of the religious life. The Reformation virtually ended monasticism in Protestant territories, but there arose in its place a tradition of separatist communities, many of which, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, practiced celibacy to varying degrees. Some proscribed marriage (and sexual relations) entirely; the Shakers are the best known of these. Other communities, such as Ephrata, maintained distinct classes for celibate and married members.

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1. 1 Cor. 7:1-2, 79 (New English Bible, Oxford Study Edition).

2. George H. Tavard, *Woman in Christian Tradition* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), p. 119.

More consonant with the voluntary spirit behind Paul's statement are the teachings about marriage in another separatist group, the Community of True Inspiration, which originated in 1714 in Hessen, Germany, and survives today in Iowa as the Amana Society. The Inspirationists always permitted marriage, but during the most religious periods of their history they viewed celibacy as a special gift, symbolic of an individual's elevated spirituality. Unmarried adult members of the community advanced more rapidly in church ranks and performed privileged roles in certain church rituals. Single men were considered more worthy to hold the positions of church elder and school teacher, and single women were praised as special helpers in the community. Lastly, the group's divinely inspired prophets, or *Werkzeuge*, were almost all single during the period in which they were inspired. Several of the *Werkzeuge* lost the power of inspiration spontaneously upon marrying, and when one of them became inspired for a second time many years after her marriage, she separated from her husband. Four of the thirteen *Werkzeuge* in the groups' history were women, including the last one, who died in 1883.

The topic of Inspirationist celibacy has received inadequate attention from students of the two Inspirationist communities in America: Ebenezer, New York (1843-1865), and Amana, Iowa (1855-present). Most writers mention the Inspirationists' approbation of celibacy without exploring either the origin of their views or the actual practice of celibacy in their communities. This paper is concerned with both aspects. The major sources of the Inspirationists' beliefs about celibacy are Scripture, which they acknowledged, and the writings of the seventeenth-century mystic Jacob Böhme, which they did not. The historical record permits a partial reconstruction of the pathway which led from Böhme to the Inspirationists, though some questions remain. Praxis, on the other hand, can be thoroughly investigated, but only for the nineteenth century. After coming to America, the Inspirationists kept complete records of their membership, which allow us to document the frequency of celibacy and chart its course over time and with reference to particular categories of member. The records show that an individual's decision to remain unmarried was significantly conditioned by his or her date of birth and place of birth, and by the year he or she joined the community. During the nineteenth century, the frequency of celibacy among the Inspirationists began at a moderately high level, rose quickly, and then tapered off, the peak being achieved among members who attained marriageable age in Ebenezer, New York. I will argue that the celibacy rate reflected the intensity of religious enthusiasm in the Inspirationist communities.

1. *The Scriptural Foundation of Inspirationist Celibacy*

The Community of True Inspiration began under the joint leadership of

the Lutheran pastor Eberhard Ludwig Gruber (1665-1728) and the son of a pastor, a harness-maker by trade, Johann Friedrich Rock (1678-1749). Gruber was a trained theologian, having earned his doctorate at Tübingen in 1688 with a thesis on the impossibility of reconciliation between the Lutheran Church and Rome. He was well-acquainted with other Protestant scholars of his day, but he eventually separated from the Lutherans over the issue of religious tolerance. His writings provided the theological basis of Inspirationism. Rock received no formal theological training but, like Gruber, was known to many religious figures of the time. In addition, Rock was an inspired leader of the Community for many years. Gruber never received the power of inspiration, though his son, Johann Adam, was an important *Werkzeug* for a brief time. After Rock's death the Inspirationists were without a *Werkzeug* and suffered a decline until 1817, when three new *Werkzeuge* sparked a revival. One of these was Christian Metz (1794-1867), a carpenter from the Ronneburg who led the Inspirationists to America and established the system of communal living, which they practiced until 1932.

The Inspirationists left relatively few explicit statements justifying their position on celibacy and marriage, but those so far discovered point to Scripture as the foundation of their beliefs. Gruber apparently did instruct his followers on the subject of matrimony. His teachings are alluded to (in conjunction with references to Corinthians) in a nineteenth-century document³ but no written record of these teachings has been located. Even less has surfaced concerning Rock's views. It was customary for *Werkzeuge* to approve marriages in the community, and one can read accounts in the old history of Rock prohibiting or allowing particular marriages. For example, in 1722 he dissuaded an Elder of the community from marrying, saying the Lord did not wish it. Four years later, however, the man "allowed temptation a second opportunity, disregarding the divine warning from Rock, and was no longer strong enough to withstand the temptation, so it became God's conceding, but not wholly agreeable. Will that the Brethren should allow this matter to reach its conclusion, thereby avoiding a dangerous rift."⁴ Rock probably opposed the marriage because the man was a church Elder and a widower, but he offered no

3. *Jahrbücher der Wahren Inspirations-Gemeinden*, Sammlung 21 (1846) (Ebenezer, New York: [The Ebenezer Society], 1863), appendix (no pagination).

4. Gottlieb Scheuner, *Inspirations-History* (The History of the Inspiration or Historical Account of the Founding of the Congregation or Community of True Inspiration), Part I, translated by Janet Zuber (Amana, Iowa: Amana Church Society, 1977 [orig. 1884]), p. 149. Bertha Shambaugh, in *Amana That Was and Amana That Is* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1932), p. 118, cites this passage, but she misdates it as 1727 rather than 1726, mistakenly identifies the source of the opposition to the marriage as Gruber, who was married, rather than Rock, who was single, and then, through an inaccurate translation, gives a completely erroneous impression about the outcome of the incident.

theological explanation for his opposition. Nor did he author any general treatise on matrimony which has come to light.

The most explicit and succinct formulation of the Inspirationists' view of marriage is found in a nineteenth-century pamphlet entitled, "Articles of Faith of the True Inspiration Community." The section "On Marriage" contains the following passage:

We believe that marriage was ordained by God, and therefore it is continued among us, provided it is done in the Lord, so that God in His mercy might bless it; and thus, following the instructions of the Holy Scriptures, it must be begun and continued modestly and in a true, God-fearing way. Nevertheless, we consider also the words of the holy Apostle Paul, who repeatedly declares: to marry is good, but to remain single is better, 1 Corinthians 7:38, insofar as it is done in the spirit of the Apostle and one feels himself called to serve the Lord constantly and unhindered.⁵

This position, including a reference to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, was reiterated in an appendix to a volume of inspired testimonies spoken by Christian Metz in 1846. As we shall see, the year 1846 was one in which intense discussions took place about celibacy.

These writings clearly indicate that the New Testament, and especially Paul's epistles, influenced the Inspirationists' beliefs about marriage and the celibate life. Although an explicit acknowledgment of this influence has so far been found only in nineteenth-century documents, the influence almost certainly arrived earlier in the group's history. A "marriage policy" based on Scripture was also articulated in the nineteenth century. Whether such a policy was part of eighteenth-century Inspirationism remains for now a question.

Two considerations suggest that we need to look beyond Scripture in order to gain a complete understanding of the Inspirationist attitude towards sexuality. First, while all Christians are familiar with Paul's advice, few go as far as the Inspirationists in advocating celibacy (although, as mentioned earlier, a few go farther). Second, occasional pronouncements by Inspirationist leaders indicate a view of sexuality more negative than Paul's. The earliest of these is from the writings of E.L. Gruber, who in 1715 issued "Twenty-one Rules for the Examination of Our Daily Lives." Rule xviii states: "Den Umgang mit Frauenvolk so viel möglich als einen sehr gefährlichen Magnet und magisches Feuer zu fliehen" [Flee from association with womenfolk as much as possible as an extremely dangerous magnet and magical fire.]⁶ The gynephobia in

5. *Glaubensbekenntnis der Wahren Inspirations-Gemeinde* (no place of publication or publisher or date given!), pp. 4-5, trans. J. Andelson. This document was prepared under Christian Metz's direction in the 1820's or 1830's in response to questions posed by authorities in Germany about the sect's beliefs.

6. *Erster Beytrag zur Fortsetzung der Wahren Inspirations-Gemeinschaft* (Büdingen: Inspirations-Gemeinschaft, 1822), p. 170.

this statement is absent from other Inspirationist writing, early or late, but it reflects an attitude which must have had its place in the community. Another suggestive statement is among the "Sixty-six Rules for the Conduct of Children," found at the back of the Inspirationists' Catechism: "Take no pleasure in boisterousness and immodest play . . . never associate with licentious boys, for there you learn only wickedness; refrain also from playing with children of the opposite sex."⁷

A third example comes from a testimony given by Christian Metz:

You should thus advise the present-day children of Adam that they should no longer live for the flesh, that they should not serve the sin, that they should rid themselves of the works of injustice and darkness, that they shall create something new and open their hearts to the spirit of discipline and penance. For the wrath of the fair and divine God reaches all the deeds committed in the darkness, all deeds of the flesh, yes, over the children who were born of sinful seed and continue to live with it, and who will spread again their seed of lewdness and impurity, and who will not change and cannot be brought to change or lift themselves up.

Now listen and perceive if Spirit must be born of spirit, for out of flesh and blood no good emerges.⁸

These and other passages suggest that Inspirationists were more hostile toward sexuality, and looked more favorably upon celibacy, than most Christians. The reason for this can be found in developments in religious thought in early modern Germany.

2. Celibacy and German Radical Pietism

Like many of the separatist religious communities which settled in America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Community of True Inspiration emerged out of the theological ferment of German Radical Pietism. Radical Pietism, as the name implies, carried the teachings of the seventeenth-century Pietist reformers to extremes, often combining them with elements of mysticism and theosophy. Briefly, Pietists urged a return to the simpler, more emotional tone of primitive Christianity they felt had been lost under the influences of Scholasticism, state churches, and corrupt clergy. Prominent among Pietism's tenets was the need to revive and reemphasize the study of Scripture. Without denying this principle, the Radical Pietists went even further in the

7. *Catechister Unterricht von der Lehre des Heils*, Erster Theil (Amana, Iowa: Published by the Amana Society, 1905). [no pagination]. The translation is from Shambaugh, *Amana That Was and Amana That Is*, p. 186.

8. *Jahrbücher der Wahren Inspirations-Gemeinden*, Sammlung 21, pp. 375-6, trans. M. Schuener and K. Stein.

direction of Christian individualism by stressing the possibility of a personal mystical union with Christ. By virtue of its more pronounced subjectivism, Radical Pietism was more likely to stimulate separatist movements. The Inspirationists assimilated into their canon teachings from several strands of Pietism: from Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705), the father of so-called Church Pietism, came the doctrine of inner illumination; from August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), Spener's principle follower, came a recognition of the role of *Busskampff* [repentance] following an inner struggle over past sins; and from Radical Pietism came the desire to separate from the established Church.⁹

An additional feature of Radical Pietism which distinguished it from Church Pietism in particular, and from Protestant Reformation ideology in general, was its attitude toward celibacy. Luther's position on the "religious life" (that is, life in a monastic community under the force of self-denying vows, including chastity) changed during his lifetime from one of tolerance to sharp criticism. As late as 1519, Luther had stated that the religious life offered true believers a straighter and shorter, if more difficult, road to Christ. Just two years later, however, he published arguments against the taking of monastic vows, which, he said, not only falsely implied the existence of a superior way to attain salvation, but actually interfered with the attainment of the very virtues (chastity, poverty, and obedience) the vows were intended to promote.¹⁰ Calvin, too, rejected monasticism. He strongly attacked those priests and monks whose pious vows cloaked their licentiousness. Although Calvin did not rule out altogether the value of a celibate life, he believed that matrimony was in no way undesirable or spiritually inferior to it. God created marriage to bind man and woman; it was a gift and even a remedy for the weaknesses of the flesh, and humans ought not to put it aside.¹¹ Zwingli adopted a similar position, arguing that marriage was proper for all since it had been created by God. Spener's views on celibacy have received little attention, possibly because he had nothing to add to the orthodox position.

Unlike most Protestants, the Radical Pietists viewed sexuality as inimical to spiritual growth.¹² Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714), a key figure in Radical Pietism, wrote favorably of celibacy in 1700 in his work, *The Mystery of the Divine Sophia*. Ironically, Arnold married the following year—with Spener's blessings—causing concern among his radical associates, who hoped (in vain, as it turned out) that Arnold would at

least keep his marriage "pure," that is, childless.¹³ Other Radical Pietist leaders besides Arnold preached the virtue of celibacy, among them Johann Georg Gichel (1638-1710), Ernst Christoph Hochmann von Hochenu (1670-1721), and Johann Konrad Dippel (1673-1724). So did the German Philadelphian, Heinrich Horch (or Horche) (1652-1729). Still other contemporary figures, all connected with Radical Pietism, practiced or advocated asceticism and hermiticism, including Johann Jacob Zimmermann (1634-1693), Johannes Kelpius (1673-c1708), and Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769).¹⁴

Behind all of these men lurks the imposing but enigmatic figure of Jacob Böhme (1575-1624), the "shoemaker of Görlitz," whose voluminous mystical and radical writings influenced so many religious nonconformists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Of interest to us here are Böhme's ideas about sexuality, which he revealed primarily in the context of his interpretation of the creation and fall of man. God created man in His own image. Böhme understood this image to be Wisdom, or "the virgin Sophia":

Wisdom was the image [Ebenbild] or counter-image [Gegenwurf] of the unknown God; she was the mother-bridge of God and the mother-bridge of man and thus the revealers of God in man and of man in God. She was also the form of the God-image in man, the image building man to God, and the image revealing God's wonders in man.¹⁵

Böhme conceived Wisdom to be man's inner being; man's outer being was *limmus* [earth-essence], a body not of flesh but of form, which performed all bodily functions, but performed them spiritually rather than physically. Wisdom was also a female light-principle, given to Adam as long as the counterpoised male fire-principle burned with a pure flame. As God is complete, so Adam was complete, thus androgynous, and capable of asexual reproduction.

Adam was man and wife in one individuality. However, he must not be considered as having been a woman in the usual sense of this word, but as a pure, chaste, virginal power. That is to say, he had within himself the fracture or spirit of fire, and also that of water, and he loved himself and God. He could generate in a

13. Donald F. Durmbaugh, "Work and Hope: The Spirituality of the Radical Pietist Communitarians," *Church History* 39 (March 1970): 87.

14. See, in addition to Durmbaugh, *ibid.*, and Soeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, p. 187; Delburn Carpenter, *The Radical Pietists: Celibate Communal Societies Established in the United States Before 1820* (New York: AMS Press, 1975), pp. 39-41; James E. Ernst, *Ephraïm: A History of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society*, Vol. 25 (Allentown, Pa.: Schlecker's, 1963), p. 35; Erb, *Pietists: Selected Writings*, pp. 14-16.

15. John Joseph Stoudt, *Jacob Böhme: His Life and Thought* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), p. 259.

9. Peter C. Erb, ed., *Pietists: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), pp. 5-12.

10. Francois Bied, *The Rise of Protestant Monasticism*, trans. W.J. Kerrigan (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), pp. 15-16.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

12. F. Ernest Soeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), p. 215.

virginal state, and procreate by means of his will and out of his own substance without any pain or laceration.¹⁶

Apparently, Böhme viewed Adam's autonomous procreative power as a potentiality that was never used before being lost when mankind fell from grace.

If man had withstood the temptation, one human being would have been born from another, in the same way as Adam in his virginal state was projected onto objectivity as a human being and image of God, because that which is of the Eternal can also procreate itself according to the law of eternity.¹⁷

Böhme was not satisfied by the orthodox interpretation of the Fall of man. The original sin could not, he argued, have occurred when Adam ate the apple proffered by Eve, since that was the act of a body already transformed to flesh. Rather, Adam fell when he lost the image of God in sleep.

The image of God does not sleep. In it there is no time. With sleep, time became manifest in man. He fell asleep in the angelic world, and awoke relative to the external world.¹⁸

Adam slept, according to Böhme, because, tempted by the Devil, he grew tired of unity and lusted after the world and after an understanding of good and evil.

After the lust of the spirit of this world had conquered in Adam, he fell asleep. Then his celestial body became flesh and blood, and his strong power became rigid bones. Then the celestial virgin went into the celestial ether, into the principle of power.¹⁹

Adam's sleep broke the unity of his previous experience and replaced it with disharmony, dialectic, and tension. Adam was no longer conscious of a divine image; he now had, and was conscious of, his own image, which was corporeal and incomplete. God therefore created the physical Eve to complement Adam. Böhme emphasized that Eve, though a divine creation, had never been chaste,

because as soon as Adam awoke from his sleep, he saw her by his side. He soon imagined into her (fell in love with her). . . . Eve likewise began to put her imagination into Adam, and each one ignited the desire of the other. Where, then, is the pure chastity and virginity? Is this not animal?²⁰

16. Jacob Böhme translated in Franz Hartmann, ed., *Personal Christianity: The Doctrines of Jacob Böhme*; with introduction and notes by F. Hartmann (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957), p. 196.

17. Böhme translated in Hartmann, *Personal Christianity*, pp. 196-7; Stoudt, *Jacob Böhme*, p. 266, offers a different reading of Böhme, according to which Adam did not procreate because there was no need to, as death had not yet come into the world.

18. Böhme translated in Hartmann, *Personal Christianity*, p. 164.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

Eventually, Adam sought to regain his earlier condition through union with Eve, which constituted a second fall. But his attempt was futile, the unity it achieved grossly deficient in comparison to unity with God.²¹ Redemption for mankind can only come through Christ. Böhme's theology posited an androgynous Jesus, in whom male and female principles are reunited. Christ is a second Adam, sent to mankind to help restore what the first Adam lost, namely the unity and harmony of our original godly image.

And when Christ on the cross had again accomplished this redemption of our virgin-like image from the divided sex of male and female . . . he said: it is finished . . . Christ turned back Adam into his sleep from the vanity, and from the man and woman, again into the angelical image.²²

Those redeemed through Christ will also be androgynous. They will receive new spiritual bodies, they will not marry, and their love will be holy rather than profane. Redemption in these terms is not automatic. It requires human effort to achieve. Böhme admonished his readers:

We must force a way out of this world, out of the earthly man, and give up our will to His Will, and introduce our imagination and desire into Him, then we become pregnant in His virginity . . . and we are new-born in Christ in ourselves.²³

Since redemption requires self-denial, and since redeemed humans are androgynous, it is not surprising to find Böhme articulating a negative view of conjugal sexuality: "Even in its best aspect the performance is disgusting before the sanctity of that which is divine, it having been caused by sin in consequence of primordial man's degradation."²⁴ Böhme made it clear that any form of carnal sex is "an abomination before the Lord (the divine Being in man), whether it be within or outside of legalized wedlock."²⁵ Nevertheless, he distinguished between raw lust, which is animalistic and sinful, and orderly conjugal relations with a spouse, which God tolerates because of their greater degree of selflessness. The renunciation of physical love altogether (as in celibacy) is more selfless still, and those who achieve it will have made a significant step toward the attainment of unity with God.

Böhme did not have a personal influence on Radical Pietism. He died three-quarters of a century before the movement coalesced. But when the Radical Pietists needed a language with which to express their convictions, they frequently turned to Böhme. His words and ideas were

21. Stoudt, *Jacob Böhme*, p. 267.

22. Böhme translated in Stoudt, *Jacob Böhme*, p. 283.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

24. Böhme translated in Hartmann, *Personal Christianity*, p. 198.

25. *Ibid.*

studied by and had an influence upon all the figures of German Radical Pietism mentioned earlier, and also on the English Philadelphian Jane Leade and on the Camisards, or French Prophets. They, in turn, transmitted Böhmiist principles to the founders of many religious separatist groups. It is no mere coincidence that the communities formed by men and women directly or indirectly inspired by Böhme's writings were at least partially celibate for at least a portion of their existence. Without trying to disentangle the many interconnecting lines of influence in the development of these communities, we can mention some of them: in Europe, Pilgerhütte (a short-lived community influenced by Teststeegen), Gichtels "Brothers of the Angels" (or *Gichtelianer*), and the Schwarzenau Duncers under Alexander Mack (celibate before 1715); in America, Bohemia Manor, the Society of the Woman in the Wilderness, Ephrata, the Shakers, the Society of Universal Friends, the Rappite communities of Harmony and Economy (after 1807), and Zoar (before 1830).²⁶

3. Radical Pietism and Inspirationism

The leaders of Inspirationism did not explicitly acknowledge any influence from Böhme, Arnold, or other Radical Pietists on their beliefs or practices. However in their praise for celibacy the Inspirationists clearly resembled Böhme and the Radical Pietists more closely than they resembled mainstream Protestants. The claim that Inspirationism's position on marriage developed out of Radical Pietism finds indirect support in evidence of extensive contact early in the eighteenth century between the Inspirationists and figures in the Radical Pietist movement.

Contact actually began before the Community of True Inspiration was founded. In around 1705, E. L. Gruber, then serving as church deacon at GROSSBOTWAR, near Stuttgart, became embroiled in a controversy over the radical preaching of Johann Georg Rosenbach (1678-1747), a student of Böhme, Arnold, and Dippel, and an advocate of *Busskämpf*. Opposition to Rosenbach arose among conservative church leaders in the vicinity, who succeeded in having him banished from the region and in stripping Gruber and other sympathizers of their positions.²⁷ Rosenbach's preaching

26. The attitude toward marriage held in several other Pietistic communities has been treated by various authors in more or less detail. Among the sources not otherwise cited in this paper are: Karl J. R. Arndt, *George Rapp's Harmony Society, 1785-1847* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965); Chapter 30; Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Chapter II, on the origins of Shaker celibacy; Walter C. Klein, *Johann Conrad Beissel, Mystic and Martinist, 1690-1768* (Philadelphia: Forcupine Press, 1972); Chapter 14; Raymond Lee Muncy, *Sex and Marriage in Utopian Communities* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1973); 27. Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 206-7.

also impressed Johann Samuel Carl (1676-1757), another important figure in early Inspirationism.²⁸

One sect influenced by Böhmiist teachings appears to have had a direct impact on the development of Inspirationism. This was the Camisards, a radical millenarian group from France. In 1705, a party of them prophesied and expounded their belief in mystical illumination and divine inspiration; several of them were confirmed celibates.²⁹ Many years later, their teachings indirectly influenced Shaker doctrine.³⁰ Some of the Camisards subsequently came to Germany, and at Hanau in about 1713 they made contact with three brothers by the name of Pott. These brothers were admirers of Francke, and they readily embraced the French Prophets' doctrine of inspiration. Becoming inspired themselves, the Potts undertook itinerant preaching, searching for other spiritually awakened believers. Among those the Potts converted to an acceptance of divine inspiration were the Schwarzenau Duncers, who at the time practiced celibacy. In the course of their travels the Potts went to visit Gruber and Rock at Himbach, where the two had moved in 1707. At a meeting there on November 14, 1714, attended by Gruber, Rock, one of the Potts, and a few others, the Community of True Inspiration was born.

The new group found friend and foe alike among followers of Böhme. In 1715, the Inspirationists interacted with the celibate Gichtelianers, who harshly criticized the doctrine of divine inspiration while advocating an even stricter celibacy.³¹ The extremely heterodox celibate, Johann Konrad Dippel, likewise opposed inspirationism, but praised the group in other ways.³² Another Böhmiist, Conrad Beissel, who later founded the Ephrata Cloister, was briefly associated with the community around 1717 and served as Rock's assistant. Prior to that time, Beissel had been influenced by Heinrich Horch and Hochmann von Hochenau, and, like Rock, he was a Philadelphian.³³

Lastly, the Inspirationists might have imbibed Böhmiist principles through contact with other prominent thinkers who, though not particular proponents of celibacy, were nevertheless familiar with Böhme's ideas. These included Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782) and Johann Christian Edelmann (1698-1767), both of whom had extensive dealings with Rock during the 1730's,³⁴ and possibly the editors of the

28. Walter Grossmann, *Johann Christian Edelmann, From Orthodoxy to Enlightenment* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), p. 96.

29. Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 280.

30. Carpenter, *The Radical Pietists*, p. 119.

31. Scheuner, *Inspirations-History*, p. 32.

32. Grossman, *Johann Christian Edelmann*, p. 100.

33. Carpenter, *The Radical Pietists*, pp. 67-68.

34. Grossman, *Johann Christian Edelmann*, p. 100; Scheuner, *Inspirations-History*, I, p. 108.

so-called "Berleburger Bibel." Several learned figures collaborated on this eight-volume annotated translation of the Bible, which was published at Berleburg between 1726 and 1742. According to Erb,³⁵ Rock was one of the collaborators, though Grossmann³⁶ does not list his name in this connection. Certainly the Inspirationists were in the area and aware of the project. The community's historian recorded many visits by Rock and other leaders to Berleburg during these years.³⁷

It is appropriate to describe how the annotators of the Berleburg Bible, described as "the most monumental work of German Philadelphianism,"³⁸ treated the passages in Corinthians concerning matrimony. They acknowledged in their commentary that the choice between marriage and celibacy was a difficult one. Each, they said, has its burdens and temptations, and they enjoined people in either state to resist sexual impulses and desires. They did not consider marriage itself a sin—"it is one thing to have missed the advantage of something [i.e. being unmarried] and another thing to say you have entered a state of sin"—but neither did they see the married and single states as spiritual equivalents. Both could be of service to the good, but the annotators concluded that the celibate stands closer to God and has fewer obstacles on the road to redemption.³⁹ Their commentary was cautious and cautionary and quite close to the position adopted in the Community of True Inspiration.

In the light of the foregoing evidence, no doubt can remain that the Inspirationists had ample exposure to the ideas of Jacob Böhme. In confirmation of this, works by Böhme and Arnold occasionally surface in the libraries (and attics!) of present-day Amanans. We presume that they were read in the past and that the early Inspirationists developed their theology in the context of Radical Pietism. One wonders at the absence of explicit citations of these authors in Gruber's and Rock's writing. This may have been a common practice at that time, or at least within this circle. Grossmann notes that the annotators of the Berleburg Bible similarly failed to give references to commentary lifted directly from Böhme, among others.⁴⁰

The Inspirationists' attitude toward marriage lay between that of mainstream Protestantism and most of the Radical Pietists. Unlike

orthodox Protestants, they could only accept marriage as a tolerable, not a desirable, condition. But they were less committed to celibacy than virtually any of the other separatist communities of the period, with the notable exception of the Moravian Brethren (Herrnhuters) under Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), Spener's godson and Francké's pupil. Unexpectedly, Zinzendorf "exalted sexuality in marriage" as "the best analogy for understanding the relationship between Christ and the believer."⁴¹ Obviously, the Inspirationists could scarcely agree with the Herrnhuters on this point, and the possibility of a merger between the two groups, endorsed in principle by Rock and Zinzendorf in 1732, soon evaporated in a welter of misunderstanding and recriminations.⁴² However the Moravians fit into the picture in other respects, they stood alone on the question of sexuality, resembling neither Pietists nor more orthodox Protestants. The Inspirationists, on the other hand, in a sense resembled both. Whereas orthodox Protestants developed a doctrine of advocated strict self-denial to overcome common practice, and Zinzendorf carved out a niche for himself by redefining the meaning of common practice, the Inspirationists sought a middle ground. The repudiated both uncritical acceptance of marriage and its outright prohibition, and instead endorsed voluntary self-restraint. As far as the historical record indicates, they held to their moderate stance throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. It is less clear whether during this period the Inspirationists did more than sermonize to promote sexual restraint. Only after they came to America does the record reveal practices designed to encourage young people to remain single and to ensure the proper kind of marriage among those who could not. We turn next to a consideration of these practices.

4. Structuring Sexual Restraint

In Europe, the Inspirationists mostly lived in ordinary towns scattered through southern Germany, Switzerland, and Alsace. Each individual worked at his trade, and the members of every local congregation gathered at appropriate times for worship. This pattern changed when the Inspirationists settled in America beginning in 1843. Segregated villages replaced dispersed congregations, and common ownership of property replaced private entrepreneurship. The aggregated, communal settlement pattern in Ebenezer and later Amana lent itself to the development of mechanisms for encouraging sexual restraint, though some of these mechanisms may have been used already in Europe. They can be

35. Erb, *Pietists*, p. 18.
 36. Grossmann, *Johann Christian Edelmann*, p. 92.
 37. Scheuner, *Inspirations-History*, I, and Gottlieb Scheuner, *Inspirations-History* (The History of the Inspiration or Historical Account of the Founding of the Congregation or Community of True Inspiration), Part II, trans. Janet Zuber (Amana, Iowa: Amana Church Society, 1978 [orig. 1884]).
 38. Stoefler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, p. 210.
 39. *Der Heiligen Schrift/Sechster Theil, /oder des Neuen Testaments/Zweiter Theil: Nämlich / die Apostel-Geschicht* (Berleburg: [no publisher given], 1737), pp. 405-7, trans. K. Stein.
 40. Grossmann, *Johann Christian Edelmann*, p. 94.

41. Erb, *Pietists*, pp. 21-2.
 42. Scheuner, *Inspirations-History*, I, pp. 10ff.

described in the order that they would have been employed by the church Elders in dealing with an amorous couple. I will draw liberally on the observations of the Shaker Elisha Blakeman, who visited Ebenezer in the summer of 1846 and left the first extensive report on Inspirationist customs.⁴³

If a young man or woman came before the Elders expressing a desire to marry, the Elders would first "exhort them to continence, show in them the better way, the greater acceptance they will be in to God by living a single and pure life."⁴⁴ We do not know how often such remonstrances succeeded in their object; my guess is none too often. "But if they persist," Blakeman continued, "then the Elders pick them a partner from the other sex whom they know to have like desires, and they are married, the Elders giving them their blessing in keeping the order of nature."⁴⁵ Although it is perilous to question an eye-witness observer, especially one who would have had a particular interest in the accuracy of his observations on this subject, I must interject a note of caution concerning the putative practice of arranged marriages in Ebenezer. In Amama, at least, the universal pattern was for a young man and woman to approach the Elders together. In these cases the Elders imposed a waiting period of one or sometimes two years on the lovers as a test of the character of their attachment. If they did not or would not restrain themselves sexually during this time, they were banished from the community and readmitted only after giving sincere expressions of repentance before the congregation. I am inclined to think that this was also the usual pattern in Ebenezer.

Following their marriage, a couple's status in the community depended in part on their self-restraint in sexual matters. The inspirationist church was divided into three *Versammlungen*, or orders. The first order comprised all church Elders, many of the unmarried adults, and those married adults "willing to live as strict and pure a life as the Elders in all respects," including the willingness "to bear a full cross against all manner of fleshly lust."⁴⁶ The second order was also celibate though not as spiritually advanced in other respects as the first. The third order, the *Kinderversammlung* (Childrens' Order), included, in Blakeman's words, small children and such grown persons as do not bear a full cross, who cannot stand against the temptations and desires of the flesh and blood, and are permitted to bear children, being strictly required to live to the true order of nature,

43. Elisha Blakeman, "A Brief Account of the Society of Germans, Called The True Inspirationists, Residing Seven Miles South East of Buffalo" (The Western Reserve Historical Society's Shaker Manuscripts, Series ZB: Volume 90, 1846).

44. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

having a clear knowledge that all indulgences more than just to beget an offspring is a sin and a great abomination in the sight of God.⁴⁷

A couple in the third order was looked down upon and in these years not allowed to speak in church services. If they had a child they would remain in the lowest order for at least a year, and if after advancing to the second order they had another they would be demoted again for an additional year. "It is often the case," Blakeman remarked, "that when they have generated one, two, and three children, they find so much trouble and mortification in the flesh that they are convicted of the better way, and desiring to be free from the childrens' order and restrictions, they seek to take up a full cross."⁴⁸ Sexual activity had no effect on a member's job assignment, spending allowance, or other temporal consideration. The penalty for adultery was usually expulsion.

These rules and procedures applied to the general membership in the community. More restrictive regulations governed the conduct of the most spiritual members. Men who became Elders while still single lost their office if they subsequently married. The same was true of teachers, whose efforts instructing the young people in religion and good conduct required an advanced spiritual condition. Married men were sometimes appointed through divine inspiration to the offices of Elder or teacher, but this was taken as God's prerogative; such men were invariably no longer fathering offspring. Women did not hold offices of comparable status, but single women as well as single men were selected to perform the footwashing ritual in the *Liebesmahl* (Holy Communion) service. Significantly, the community had no rules about the behavior of *Werkzeuge*, who were believed to be under the direct control of God. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, the *Werkzeuge* were always single or partners in "pure" marriages.

The various practices which surrounded marriage and childbirth in the Community of True Inspiration reinforced the doctrinal teachings about the virtues of chastity, and of modesty and restraint in wedlock. Given the apparent consistency between Inspirationist creed and custom, and the constancy of doctrine, it must have come as an unsettling surprise to members of the Ebenezer community to find themselves suddenly in the midst of a controversy over an accusation that the leadership had changed its attitude toward celibacy.

5. Controversy in Ebenezer

On November 22, 1846, at the conclusion of a special church service in the village of Nieder Ebenezer, a member of the congregation rose and

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

attacked Christian Metz for misusing God's word and his office as *Werkzeug* to destroy the traditional interpretations of marriage and celibacy in the Community of True Inspiration. The man, Philip Zimmer, charged Metz with secretly endorsing too lenient a view of marriage. Criticism of a *Werkzeug*, and particularly of Metz, who was widely admired and loved, was a rare event during this period in the Inspirationists' history, and Zimmer's attack caused no small amount of discomfort, suspicion, and questioning.

The basis of Zimmer's attack is difficult to disentangle from the fragmentary record. The precipitating event may have been an inspired testimony that Metz gave in the church service just prior to Zimmer's attack, in which he lamented his own past sins of the flesh.⁴⁹ Other evidence suggests, however, that marriage and celibacy were being intently if covertly discussed by some members of the community. The stimulus for the discussion appears to have been contact between the Inspirationists and other religious separatists in America. An anonymous Inspirationist Elder, writing shortly after Zimmer's attack, traced the confrontation to informal discussions between Metz and a few others in Ebenezer concerning the spiritual decline of the Zoar community in Ohio, which Metz had visited in 1843 and again in 1844.⁵⁰ According to this writer, Metz expressed the opinion that the Zoarites' decline began when they reversed an earlier decision to forbid marriage after Bäumler, the leader of the community, adopted a perverse interpretation of the biblical injunction, "be fruitful and multiply." At least one man, an Elder in the Inspirationist church, misconstrued Metz's remarks as being favorable toward the situation at Zoar and voiced his concern to other Elders. It is difficult at this remove from the situation to see how matters could have become so confused, but we must accept that we have only a sketchy and one-sided account of the relevant events.

New questions arose in the summer of 1846 when two Shakers from Watervliet, New York, Elisha Blakeman and Peter Long, visited Ebenezer.⁵¹ Blakeman did not indicate in his narrative the purpose of the visit, but one Inspirationist account states that Blakeman's mission was to explore the possibility of a merger between the Shakers and the Inspirationists.⁵² Although the meeting was cordial, and the two groups identified many shared beliefs and practices, Metz was not receptive to

49. *Jahrbücher*, Sammlung 21, pp. 346-350.

50. *Ibid.*, appendix [no pagination].

51. See Gottlieb Scheuner, *Inspirations-Historie, oder Historischer Bericht von der neuen Erweckung, Sammlung, und Gründung der Wehrren Inspirations-Gemeinde*. Volume 1817-1867 (Amarna, Iowa: [Amarna Society], 1891) for an Inspirationist report of the meeting, and Blakeman, "A Brief Account," for the Shakers' version.

52. *Jahrbücher*, Sammlung 21, p. 401.

an affiliation, something he first hinted at publicly in a testimony in early November, 1846, two weeks before the incident with Zimmer. In this testimony, Metz spoke approvingly of how, in various communities and sects, the "man of sin" wakes up and makes himself into a god. He said, "The Quakers [i.e. Shakers], who are visiting you, have that; and you have it, but in another way, with better understanding, light, and grace.⁵³ Unfortunately, Metz did not elaborate on this, and his failure to do so apparently led some members of the community to the conclusion that Metz was rejecting the value of celibacy and steering the community in the Zoarites' direction.

Metz was deeply disturbed by Zimmer's attack and by the public confusion about where he stood on the question of celibacy. The next day, and again three days after that, he became inspired and presented to the congregation messages on marriage and on the Shakers. He was forced to state publicly his view that Shaker doctrine contained important errors [*Irthümer*]. One of these was their compulsory celibacy, as if to deny that God had given humanity the power to bear children. This criticism did not imply, as some Inspirationists feared, that Metz favored uncontrolled carnality. He authorized a statement to be prepared reiterating the Inspirationists' traditional attitude toward marriage through a series of thirteen questions and answers, among them:

- Q1: Should marriage be accepted among us in our community?
 A1: Yes it should be, according to the contents of the Epistle to the Ephesians.
 Q2: Which marriage does the Apostle mean we should accept?
 A2: A Christian and blessed one, made in reverence of our Lord.
 Q3: Which state is the best in the Holy Scriptures and pleasing to God?
 A3: The single state has always been favored by the Lord, in the apostolic times and in our time.
 Q4: Then no marriages made in the natural and in the flesh should be made among us?
 A4: No, these cannot be blessed by the Lord, nor receive the brotherly blessing.⁵⁴

The question-and-answer document represents in my view Metz's attempt to deal with the situation pragmatically and in terms that members of the community would comprehend. Though his followers may not have realized it, Metz was searching for a compromise between Shaker continence and what he took to be Zoarite indulgence. Being unmarried was the state most pleasing to God, but the community had room for those lacking the resolve to be celibate, and for them a restrained, moderate, God-fearing marriage would be allowed.

The Shakers' second important error was their veneration of "Mother" Ann Lee, as if to say that a person conceived in the sinful act

53. *Ibid.*, p. 310, trans. J. Andelson

54. *Ibid.*, appendix [no pagination], trans. M. Schuener.

of procreation could be pure. To Metz, this error was much more profound than the first. It also turned on a fundamental question of religious authority. After all, the status which Shakers claimed for Ann Lee—the female Christ—was much loftier than what Inspirationists claimed about the *Werkzeuge*. Metz dealt with this problem very differently. No mere set of straightforward questions and answers would suffice. This time, Metz's response was more esoteric. It came in the form of inspired testimonies couched in highly abstract language, the ideas and even the words being those of Jacob Böhme.

On the afternoon of November 26, 1846, in a church service with the young men of Nieder Ebenezer, an inspired Metz said:

Yes, yes, thus He has led this secret until this day, since it is necessary to bring something to the light, to describe piece by piece and in several ways, the "man of sin" after his decline, both for the understanding of the members of the community and as a contrasting example for others. For when God's Love told the soul to emerge from itself, when it [God's Love] bore [the soul] out of itself, the soul was complete: a little man and a little woman [were contained] in one soul. The Love placed its seed in the soul in a divine way, and because the soul was spiritual it received the seed by looking at the Love from which it [the soul] originated.

The young men may have stirred at this point, for Metz told them to be composed and patient, and then he went on:

When the soul turned away from God's Love through the deceit by the child of corruption, the soul became unfit, even unable, to emanate pure births of light to become children on this blessed earth, and such a monstrosity would have been brought to light through adulteration [or: deceit (*Verfälschung*)] that no correction would have been possible. . . .

The first fall came to pass, and the wisdom of God arranged for the soul to sink into a sleep; then the soul's side was opened and that one part was taken away from it. The part was presented to the soul in an inferior degree of the divine light. It [the part] was one flesh and one bone [with the soul?], a united or cooperating power of the soul. And the first one should, by looking at his author, his eternal light, from which he was thrust, look at his help-mate [*Gehilfin*] again and by looking at her have a spiritual influence on her which was to bring forth children of light or of the divine seed.

Alas, the first fall had already happened and the other followed: the ever-widening straying away, the estrangement and alienation, the influence of the existing creatures who visibly presented themselves, darkened the eyes of the soul, which slowly lost the radiance of the divine light, the noble tincture of life, to create children without sin. Then the deceit of the serpent took place, the disobedience, after which the order was given from the mouth of the Lord: curse and penalty, even temporal death. Then the soul transformed into animal nature, into the lust of the flesh, and transformed its noble form, its beauty, its chastity, into mud and filth.⁵⁵

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 372-4, trans. M. Schuener and K. Stein.

Esoteric words indeed, and for Metz, who was not as profound or original a thinker as Gruber, or even Rock, they represented an excursion into the unfamiliar territory of mystical biblical exegesis. It is remarkable at this late date to encounter Böhme's influence, though we do not know whether Metz borrowed directly from the mystic or took his words from some secondary source.

But what had all this to do with the Shakers? After giving this account of the fall of man, Metz turned to the possibility of human redemption uniquely available through Christ, again framed in Böhme's language:

Who is clean under the sun? Who has had himself cleansed—those born of woman, those begat through the seed of man? He alone is pure who through the restoring grace of the other Adam, who raised the fallen man within the first Adam, lets the fallen man be raised in himself. Has this Adam-in-Christ the power to straighten himself completely, or to be born again? Oh yes!

Then Metz reprimanded the Shakers: "So why do you adhere to creatures who have elevated themselves so high in their spiritual ground that they even pass as a Mother? It is an error, an ungodly idolatry."⁵⁶ Did Metz need the mystical language of Böhme to support his criticism of the Shakers? In theological terms he did. If Christ was /is androgynous, then the Shakers' claim that Ann Lee was divine could not be sustained. Whether most Inspirationists were able to follow Metz's argument is debatable. Even if many were not, the abstruse words might have lent it weight.

In the end, this episode appears to have strengthened the Inspirationists rather than weakened them. Metz retained firm control of spiritual matters in the community and did not have to contend with celibacy as a divisive issue any more. The Elder who had doubted Metz remained an important pillar of the congregation until his death in 1864. Philip Zimmer stayed in the community for several years, a perennial critic, according to the Inspirationists' own historian, especially of the inspired Word. Finally, in November, 1859, Christian Metz directed a testimony at Zimmer, who by that time had moved to Armana, imploring him to develop a more fraternal attitude toward the other members of the community and to obey the Lord in love, adding that if Zimmer insisted on going his own way he could leave the Society. Zimmer did leave and eventually met a "melancholic and wretched" end in Rochester, New York, in 1869.⁵⁷

It remains to assess the impact of these events on the rest of the community. Did Metz's words, or Zimmer's, or contact with the Shakers, alter the members' attitudes toward sexuality, and did any of these affect

56. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

57. Schuener, *Inspirations-Historie*, Vol. 1817-1867, p. 656.

the members' behavior. In order to answer this question, we must examine the actual observance of celibacy in the Community of True Inspiration.

6. *The Demographics of Inspirationist Celibacy*

No amount of discussion about the Inspirationist ethos of celibacy will tell us what proportion of community members actually lived celibate lives. To learn that, we must turn from theology to demography. For the purpose of this portion of the study, an operational definition of celibacy had to be adopted which turned out to be somewhat more restrictive than a theological definition. The main difference is that the historical demographer has no accurate way of detecting celibacy within marriage. Certainly, some couples became celibate after producing one or more children, as Blakeman suggested. However, in the absence of more information about contraceptive practices in nineteenth-century Amana, and with no knowledge whatsoever about the intimate details of people's lives, speculation about celibacy within marriage would be pointless. The operational definition of a celibate adopted here was: an individual who reached marriageable age (twenty-one) but who never married. Furthermore, the study includes only individuals born anywhere at any time who died in Amana. (See Appendix for an explanation of this and other characteristics of the statistical population used in this study.)

TABLE 1 Number and Percentage of Amana Adults (over 21) Never Married, by Birth Cohorts, 1790-99 to 1890-99

Decade of Birth	Number Born		Percentage Unmarried
	Who Survived To Adulthood	Unmarried	
1790-99	102	24	23.5
1800-09	152	48	31.6
1810-19	219	76	34.7
1820-29	246	110	44.7
1830-39	264	67	25.4
1840-49	251	48	19.1
1850-59	157	33	21.0
1860-69	219	38	17.4
1870-79	285	48	16.8
1880-89	168	30	17.8
1890-99	150	20	13.3

The frequency of celibacy among members of the Community of True Inspiration is presented in Table 1. The data are for the entire population of marriageable individuals, regardless of the year they

actually joined the community, according to the decade of birth during the period 1790 to 1900. The celibacy rate began at nearly a quarter of the birth cohort of 1790-99, rose quickly to roughly 45 percent of the 1820-29 cohort, and thereafter fell off to around 15 percent for the cohorts born after 1860. Other information about the celibates can be generated by further manipulation of the dataset.

Individuals in the first birth cohort (1790-99) reached marriageable age in the decade after the "reawakening," a revitalization of Inspirationism which began in 1817. It would be useful if this group could constitute an appropriate "baseline" population with which to compare later birth cohorts. Unfortunately, the figure (23.5 percent) given in Table 1 for the celibate portion of this cohort is somewhat misleading, since it includes individuals who, though born in the 1790's, may not have joined the community until the 1850's or 1860's, in which case we could not show that Inspirationism affected their decisions about whether or not to marry. There are several ways to deal with this problem. One is to identify those individuals born in the 1790's who joined the community before they were of marriageable age. This is not an especially good solution, since only five people in this birth cohort became members by age twenty-one (four of them remained single). Alternatively, we could consider those born in the 1790's who joined by other specified years. Doing this we find in general that the earlier someone in this birth cohort became an Inspirationist, the more likely he or she was to remain single. Thus, 52.3 percent of those born from 1790-99 who joined the community before 1830 remained celibate for their entire lives, and 34.7 percent did of those who joined by 1842, the year before the main group of Inspirationists left Europe. In such a fluid and changing situation, we cannot identify an absolute baseline, only relative ones which can serve as the basis for specific comparisons.

Of the various celibacy rates calculated for the 1790-99 birth cohort, the lowest—23.5 percent—is that for the entire cohort, regardless of when particular individuals became Inspirationists. It is convenient to begin our demographic analysis by comparing this figure with celibacy rates reported for other historical and contemporary European populations. Table 11 summarizes this information for selected populations. One is immediately struck by the substantial variation both between populations and through time within a population. Beyond that, it is clear that even the lowest celibacy rate calculated for the Inspirationists' 1790-99 birth cohort is high by Western European standards. If we use any of the more realistic rates for this cohort, the community's celibacy rate exceeds that reported for any other European population. This confirms a link between Inspirationist doctrine and praxis. Either the community was attracting individuals with an inclination toward celibacy, or it instilled in its unmarried members the conviction to remain celibate.

TABLE II
Percentage of Never-Married Individuals, Selected Populations,
Europe and America

Place	Date	Enumerated Population	Percentage Never Married	Source*
W. Europe	1900	Ms age 45-49	13.0	Hajnal
		Fs age 45-49	16.0	Hajnal
Belgium	1900	Ms age 45-49	16.0	Hajnal
		Fs age 45-49	17.0	Hajnal
Bulgaria	1900	Ms age 45-49	3.0	Hajnal
		Fs age 45-49	1.0	Hajnal
England	1800	1751-60 b. c., age 40	5.0	Wrigley
	1840	1791-00 b. c., age 40	7.5	Wrigley
	1851	Ms over 50	10.6	Wrigley
		Fs over 50	11.9	Wrigley
France	191c	1790-99 b. c. at death	12.0	Wrigley
	1900	Ms age 45-49	11.0	Hajnal
		Fs age 45-49	12.0	Hajnal
Germany	1900	Ms age 45-49	9.0	Hajnal
		Fs age 45-49	10.0	Hajnal
Ireland	1841	Ms age 45-54	10.0	Clarkson
		Fs age 45-54	12.0	Clarkson
	1871	Ms age 45-54	16.0	Clarkson
		Fs age 45-54	15.0	Clarkson
	1901	Ms age 45-54	24.0	Clarkson
		Fs age 45-54	20.0	Clarkson
Italy	1900	Ms age 45-49	11.0	Hajnal
		Fs age 45-49	11.0	Hajnal
Sweden	1900	Ms age 45-49	13.0	Hajnal
		Fs age 45-49	19.0	Hajnal
Switzerland	1900	Ms age 45-49	16.0	Hajnal
		Fs age 45-49	17.0	Hajnal
Massachusetts	1970	all over age 40	29.2	Friedl & Ellis
	1889	Fs, 1830-39 b. c., age 50	14.6	Uhlenberg
	1929	Fs, 1870-79 b. c., age 50	19.1	Uhlenberg
	1949	Fs, 1890-99 b. c., age 50	22.3	Uhlenberg
Iowa (state)	1915	all over 45	8.3	Census
Iowa (Co.)	1905	Ms over 45	14.9	Census
		Fs over 45	6.6	Census

M = males, F = females, b. c. = birth cohort

a. L. A. Clarkson, "Marriage and Fertility in Nineteenth Century Ireland," in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (New York: St Martin's Press, 1981); John Friedl and Walter S. Ellis, "Celibacy, Late Marriage and Potential Mates in a Swiss Isolate," in *Anthropological Studies of Human Fertility*, ed. Bernice A. Kaplan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976); J. Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective," in *Population in History*, eds. D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley (Chicago: Aldine, 1965); Peter R. Uhlenberg, "A Study of Cohort Life Cycles: Cohorts of Native Born Massachusetts Women, 1830-1920," *Population Studies* 23 (No. 3, November, 1969); Wrigley, "Marriage, Fertility and Population Growth in Eighteenth Century England," in *Marriage and Society*, ed. Outhwaite; State of Iowa Censuses, 1905 and 1915.

Returning to Table I, we find that members of the community born in the forty years after 1800 practiced celibacy to an even greater extent than did those born in the 1790's, with the birth cohort of 1820-29 approaching a rate of 50 percent. Once again, these statistics are for all members of these cohorts, regardless of date of affiliation with the community. Considering only those who joined the community before reaching marriageable age, the proportion of celibates was: 57.1, 36.0, 56.6 and 40.5 for the 1800, 1810, 1820, and 1830 birth cohorts. The rates are still higher if we select only those who joined at least one year before the Inspiratonists emigrated from Europe: 45.2, 57.2, 55.9, and 40.5 percent of the cohorts of 1800, 1810, 1820, and 1830 never married. These are the highest celibacy rates in this study, and they may be the highest of any community in the world, save those which prohibit marriage altogether.

The Inspiratonists born after 1840 did not follow the same pattern. Celibacy rates for those cohorts fell off abruptly, with Inspiratonists born in the last half of the nineteenth century marrying nearly as often as members of the several European populations cited in Table II. This time, controlling for the year someone joined the community had no appreciable and consistent effect on the figures. The entire birth cohort of the 1840's was 19.1 percent celibate (Table I); if we consider only individuals who joined before 1860 (that is, before reaching marriageable age), the figure rises to 22.8 percent. On the other hand, the celibacy rate for the 1850's cohort goes down (from 21.0 to 15.5 percent) if we restrict our sample to pre-1870 members.

A few other demographic characteristics of the entire population of celibates can be reported. Male and female Inspiratonists adopted celibacy equally often. The sex ratio of males to females born between 1790 and 1900 who died in Amarna and who reached marriageable age was 110.9:100; the sex ratio for celibates in this population was nearly the same, 107:100. Individuals who were born in an Inspiratonist community or joined one before age twenty-one were slightly less likely to marry than were those who joined after reaching marriageable age, many of whom naturally joined with spouses. The pattern tends to reverse for birth cohorts past mid-century, but in no case is the difference statistically significant. Lastly, individuals who joined or were born into the community in Europe were twice as likely to remain single than individuals who joined or were born into the community in America (overall rates of 45.1 percent and 20.7 percent celibate, respectively). This was true for members of every birth cohort.

To summarize: Inspiratonist men and women adopted a celibate life more often than members of virtually any other reported European population. The rate of Inspiratonist celibacy was especially high (about 50 percent) for those born between 1800 and 1840, who either were born into the community in Europe or joined it there.

7. *Analysis and Interpretation*

Why did Inspirationists born between 1800 and 1840, and especially those born from 1810 to 1830, so frequently not marry? The purely material explanations which have been offered to explain changing celibacy rates in some societies are inadequate when applied to the Inspirationists. These include sex-ratio imbalances and delays in marriage caused by social or economic factors leading to failure to marry.⁵⁸ Celibacy for the Inspirationists was a matter of religion; therefore, any change in the frequency of celibacy must have religion as one of its causes. The interpretation most consistent with the evidence is that the increase in celibacy among members of this generation of Inspirationists was a manifestation of religious enthusiasm, brought about by a combination of material and ideological factors.

A decision to be celibate is, strictly speaking, an ongoing one. In practical terms, however, the decision is reached during a critical stage in a person's lifetime. For the Inspirationists, this critical stage was between the ages of 20 and 30, the years in which the overwhelming majority of them married. A person who elects the celibate life during a peak of religious enthusiasm is likely to adhere to his or her resolution if social forces and institutional supports exist which legitimize the choice. As we have seen, such forces and supports existed in the Inspirationist communities. Operating on the premise that Inspirationists who never married possibly experienced a heightened spirituality during their twenties, we can look for causes of religious enthusiasm during the period that members born between 1810 and 1830 reached the critical stage, in other words, between 1830 and 1860.

Several factors could have contributed to heightened religious feeling during this period. Among them were the disruptive circumstances of this generation's young adulthood. Growing up, they were exposed to religious persecution in Germany, which intensified in the mid-1820's. In response to this persecution, Metz summoned the previously dispersed Inspirationists to four rented estates in the liberal principality of Hesse, beginning in 1833. Not all of the members came to these estates, but those that did experienced dislocation and an insecure tenure in them at the landlord's whim. Ten years later came emigration and the rigors of a long ocean voyage, followed by settlement in a foreign culture, in the midst of which the community was the only security many of the members knew. The removal to Iowa, which began in 1855, while not a great financial sacrifice in the long run, had an enormously disruptive

effect as well. It is an established social-psychological phenomenon that suffering for the sake of a cause or an organization often produces heightened commitment to it. The Inspirationists who became adults after 1830, and who remained with the community throughout the next thirty years, had ample opportunity to develop a strong attachment to the group and its principles.

Whatever the attendant hardships of immigration, the Inspirationists themselves looked upon it as providing them the opportunity for religious freedom. Though arduous, the trans-Atlantic voyage had been safely completed; in Ebenezer, the group overcame much adversity and prospered. Such deliverances, coupled with the joy of religious tolerance from their neighbors, could have inspired an intensification of faith that was manifested in decisions to approach a more godly life through celibacy. Living in aggregated, communal villages encouraged celibacy in other ways. The Elders and Metz were able to articulate the doctrine of sexual restraint more often, and the larger population and stricter controls meant that young people more often served as examples to one another of both praiseworthy and condemnable behavior. The episode of Philip Zimmer's attack on Christian Metz, and the ensuing discussions and revelations about marriage, must also have played a role. One could, therefore, find enough evidence in the sect's experience of persecution and immigration, and events in Ebenezer, to argue that the increase in celibacy stemmed from causes peculiar to the Inspirationists.

However, another possible influence, exogenous in origin, should be mentioned. An atmosphere of religious enthusiasm, then in its final burst of intensity, permeated that part of the country in which the Inspirationists chanced to settle: western New York State. Many years ago, Whitney Cross eloquently described the unusually fertile ground that the region provided for successive waves of religious revivalism between 1800 and 1850:

Upon this broad belt of land congregated a people extraordinarily given to unusual religious beliefs, peculiarly devoted to crusades aimed at the perfection of mankind and the attainment of millennial happiness. Few of the enthusiasms or eccentricities of this generation of Americans failed to find exponents here.⁵⁹

This so-called Burned-over District witnessed the repeated rise (and usually the fall) of various species of universalism, perfectionism, illuminationism, and millennialism.⁶⁰ Enthusiasm was stirred by Charles

59. Whitney Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 13.

60. Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 476.

58. E. A. Wrigley, "Marriage, Fertility and Population Growth in Eighteenth Century England," in *Marriage and Society, Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), p. 149.

Grandison Finney's camp meetings in the 1820's and by Joseph Smith's golden plates in the 1830's, among others; but for sheer variety the 1840's was unsurpassed. The Millerites anticipated Christ's Second Coming in 1843 and, recovering from their disappointment, established the forerunner of the Adventist Church two years later. In the spring of 1844, six Fourierist Phalanxes were started in the vicinity of Rochester, New York, all of which failed within a year. John Humphrey Noyes instituted complex marriage in his Perfectionist community at Putney, Vermont, in 1846; two years later he and his followers fled the scandalized Vermonters and reconstituted their association at Oneida, New York. Throughout the period many embraced the eclectic doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg. And in 1848, the Fox sisters' rappings sparked a craze of spiritualism.

The Inspirationalists settled near Buffalo, at the western edge of the Burned-over District. It was Cross's opinion that their "foreign origin and separate development" removed them from influence by the forces of religious enthusiasm around them.⁶¹ It is true that the Inspirationalists had little direct contact with their neighbors, especially in matters of religion. They sought isolation, and by and large they found it. Of the members they recruited while in Ebenezer, only a handful, all of them Germans, had come to America independently and lived on their own before joining. The rest came directly from Europe. The Inspirationalists did have a few American visitors, but there is no evidence that these visitors did more than report on the Inspirationalists' activities. The only ones who could have infected them with the religious enthusiasm of the day were the Shakers, whose visit in 1846 has already been described.

The Shakers were at that time at the tail end of a decade-long burst of heightened spirituality known as "Mother Ann's Work." The Work began in 1837 at Niskeyuna, New York, 250 miles east of the future site of Ebenezer. It included direct communications from Jesus and Mother Ann, and such divine "gifts" as trances, seizures, dancing, and other inspirational phenomena. The thrust of the movement was conservative, urging members to return to the spiritual fervor of early Shakerism, including "a stricter separation of the sexes."⁶² The revival reached peak intensity in 1842, and for three years the Shakers closed their worship services to outsiders and concentrated their full attention on their own spiritual development. By 1845, however, there were signs that the "strange cycle of inspiration" was waning.⁶³ Increasingly, the "gifts" lost their spontaneity and depended more on voluntary effort. It was in a

mood of growing concern about the authenticity of the enthusiasm that the Shakers visited Ebenezer. According to Andrews, they were "reassured" to learn "that there, too, the divine spirit was usually manifested to individuals from within."⁶⁴

How much of all this the Shakers communicated on their visit to Ebenezer is not known. Nor are the reports from either side clear about whether any religious enthusiasm was generated on the occasion—in one direction or the other. It is not difficult to construe Zimmer's attack on Metz as one result of the Shakers' visit; and Metz's testimonies, even though hostile to the Shakers, may have strengthened the resolve of some Inspirationalists to remain single. So the possibility remains that the Inspirationalists were infected by the spirit of revivalism in their new American surroundings. In an accident of history, whatever enthusiasm was conveyed to them came (and perhaps could only have come) from a sect whose doctrines were influenced by the same Bohmist principle of the sanctity of celibacy to which they subscribed.

Having attempted to account for the high proportion of celibates among Inspirationalists born before 1840, we must now consider reasons for the decrease in celibacy in subsequent generations. By mid-century, the revivalistic zeal in the Burned-over District was spent, and whatever contribution it once made to spirituality in Ebenezer had ended. Even if new fires of enthusiasm had been kindled, they would not have touched the Inspirationalists for long. In 1854, Metz directed that the community should move once again, and over the next decade small parties resettled at Amana, Iowa, as the Society could afford to send them. I am inclined, therefore, to search for the cause of the decline in processes internal to the community. Demographic analysis reveals patterns which contain suggestive clues.

After the Inspirationalists came to America, the proportion of celibates among those born in the community ("insiders") fell off sharply from what it had been in Europe; the celibacy rate declined from 50 percent of pre-1844 births to around 18 percent of post-1844 births (see Table III). Celibacy rates for those who joined the community from the outside ("outsiders") declined more gradually or, as the figures reveal, in two stages: those who joined between 1844 and 1867 (the year Metz died) had a celibacy rate of over 25 percent, and those who joined after 1867 had a rate of only 15 percent. One interpretation of these data is that the community became less successful at instilling the value of celibacy in its members after Metz died. The discrepancy between insiders' and outsiders' rates between 1844 and 1867 can be explained on the basis of age. Outsiders who joined during those years were likely to have been

61. Cross, *The Burned-over District*, p. 333.

62. Edward Derring Andrews, *The People Called Shakers* (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), p. 156.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

TABLE III Number and Percentage of Amana Adults (over 21) Never Married, Comparing Those Born Inside the Community with Those Born Outside, by Period

Status and Period	Number Born		Percentage Unmarried
	Who Survived To Adulthood	Unmarried	
born in community			
before 1844	48	24	50.0
1844-1867	176	31	17.6
after 1867	656	118	18.0
born outside, joined			
before 1844	289	128	44.3
1844-1867	639	163	25.5
after 1867	420	62	14.8

attracted to the community by its doctrines; also, they experienced Metz's teaching and inspiration as adults. Insiders born during the same period were younger on average than the outsiders. Not only did they not enter the community voluntarily, they reached maturity after Metz died and the group had settled into a less spiritual and more routine existence.

Two other patterns highlight the trend away from celibacy. The first concerned the marital status of church Elders. As long as the *Werkzeuge* were alive, Elders were selected through divine inspiration. Over half of the Elders appointed through the period 1844 to 1883 (the year the last *Werkzeug* died) never married. After 1883, Elders were chosen by the *Grosser Brudermith*, a body of thirteen Elders elected by the members. Only 12 percent of the Elders named from 1883 to 1900 never married. Furthermore, the earlier an Elder joined or was born into the community, the more likely he was to be celibate. A similar pattern applied to school teachers. These two groups were the spiritual leaders of the community, the ones to set an example for the other members. With the community's leaders yielding to earthly temptation, the members could scarcely be expected to show restraint. What is especially remarkable about the celibacy rate among the Elders is that it declined to a value lower than that for the community as a whole.

Finally, the data suggest that the celibacy rate in Amana was lowered by the influx of a large number of Saxons in the 1880's, only a very small proportion of whom remained single. Of all the provinces in Germany which supplied members to the Community of True Inspiration, Saxony supplied the most. About 30 percent of the Inspirationists were born in Saxony, more than twice as much as from any other province, including Hessen, traditionally regarded as the Inspirationists' homeland. Saxons

tended to join the community later than people from other provinces. Only 5 percent of the 436 Saxons who eventually came to Amana joined the Inspirationists in Europe. Another 32 percent joined in America before Metz's death in 1867. About 60 percent came in the 1880's, and of this group only 8.5 percent remained celibate. This low figure is understandable given that these individuals had either been out of touch with Inspirationist doctrines for forty years (ever since the main group left Europe beginning in 1843) or did not know much about it until they joined. Furthermore, these Saxons lived in the community for only a year or two before the death of the last *Werkzeug* in 1883. They would thus have had little opportunity to hear the Word of God concerning sins of the flesh and the sanctity of celibacy. And in any case, the community as a whole was less celibate by the time of the Saxons' arrival than it had been several decades earlier.

8. Conclusions

The individual choices that Inspirationists made about whether or not to marry were surely not always based on religious conviction alone. Nevertheless, the adoption of a celibate life took place in a context favorably disposed toward that choice and supportive of it. Other things being equal, single individuals were, in the early to mid-nineteenth century especially, viewed as living on a higher spiritual plane than married persons. This belief entered Inspirationism through the Radical Pietists, who in turn derived it from reading Paul's Epistles in the light of Jacob Böhme's convoluted interpretation of Genesis. Böhme has been portrayed in this paper as a fountainhead. He was, and yet he, too, had his sources, especially among the early Gnostics and the medieval alchemists. My main concern, however, has been less the history of an idea than the idea's career in action, the part it played in the complex system of other beliefs, values, rules, personalities, praxis, and social interaction in which it functioned.

What, then, was celibacy's part in Inspirationism? Like Paul, the Inspirationists spoke of celibacy as a "gift." This implied that it was a special condition which not everyone could attain. A person could not earn it or deserve it. Rather, the gift to live a celibate life was bestowed by God unpredictably. When many individuals in a community were celibate, it meant God was looking favorably upon the community. However, if the Inspirationists really believed celibacy was a gift, they would have done nothing to foster it. True gifts from God lie beyond human manipulation. But the Inspirationists did do things to encourage celibacy, at least in Ebenezer and Amana. In theological terms, celibacy may have been a gift, but in terms of community values it was an ideal toward which all were encouraged to strive.

Celbacy also defined a socially recognized status in Inspirationist life, but as a social role it had little content. In the early years, single men were more likely to become Elders or teachers than married men, and only unmarried members performed the footwashing ritual, but there was nothing an individual invariably did or was expected to do simply because he or she was celbate. Perhaps this lack of role definition helps to account for the fluctuation in the rate of celbacy among the Inspirationists. One heard celbacy praised, one experienced the church rules designed to promote it, but the rewards for celbacy were mostly personal. The social rewards were few and were conditioned by other forces.

Celbacy never became a key sacred symbol for the Inspirationists. It lacked the focal strength, organizing power, and role definition which the phenomenon of inspiration had for them. The Inspirationists allowed celbacy the status of an outward symbol of an inner state. As such, it was a symbol not easily or effectively manipulated for social ends. The one time celbacy might have been converted into a key symbol, in the summer of 1846, the leadership resisted its power.

Because of celbacy's part in Inspirationist life, it can be used by students of Inspirationism as an indicator of the level of religious enthusiasm in the community as a whole. Viewed in these terms, the apex of spiritual intensity was achieved while the group lived in Ebenezer, New York. The effects of this high point were perpetuated in the generation that experienced it, but they were not recreated in subsequent generations. Thirty years is a long time to maintain enthusiasm. After one final boost provided by the move to Iowa, the Inspirationists settled down to a more routine existence, one less likely to instill the special gift for celbacy among its members. The falling celbacy rate foreshadowed later indicators of lapsing spirituality, such as increases in boundary penetration and purchases of worldly goods, which did not become manifest until after the turn of the century. Today, the community's past approbation of celbacy is a dim memory to older Amanans. The high celbacy rate attained by the generation of the 1820's is entirely forgotten. But in the annals of communitarian life, it remains a remarkable achievement in a community which favored voluntary self-restraint as the basis for individual action.

Appendix: *The Demographic Statistics*

The demographic statistics presented in Tables I and II represent actual totals rather than calculations from samples. However, the numbers refer only to a portion of what could theoretically be considered the "total" relevant population, and this, as well as the method of calculation, require some explanation. All figures, unless otherwise specified, refer

entirely to people who died and were buried in the Amana Colonies. The figures thus exclude members of the community who died in Europe or in Ebenezer, New York, and also anyone who withdrew from the community and died elsewhere. The reasons for this selection are pragmatic. Death records for the European period are incomplete; records for Ebenezer are more complete but cannot be checked against any other source of information; and no records were kept of apostates. The records of members who died in Amana are complete and can be checked against two other sources: gravestones and official death records for Iowa County, Iowa, which go back to 1860. The name of virtually every individual who died in Amana has been located in all three sources.

Information about the birth year, year of joining the community, and eldership came from records kept by the Amana Society. The information was originally not aggregated, as it is in this paper, but reported in biographical sketches of individual members recorded at the time of their death. These can be found in the several volumes of *Inspirations-Historie* written by Gottlieb Scheuner (see footnote 51). All of this information was coded and tallied with the help of a computer. In the majority of cases information could be cross-checked in several biographies. Much of the information about birth year and year of joining was also checked against the federal census records of 1860, 1870, and 1900, and the Iowa state census of 1885. The all-important information about marital status comes from the *Inspirations-Historie* (again with internal cross-checking), the Iowa County death register, and the federal and state censuses. In this study, the age of twenty-one was used to define an adult. The rules of the community specified that women could not marry before age nineteen and men not before twenty-two. However, these ages were not used at all times during the community's history, and some unapproved marriages occurred at younger ages. Therefore, a cut-off of twenty-one was selected as the best standard. The few individuals who were married and died before the age of twenty-one were eliminated from the statistical population.

The various sources of information did not always agree, but in virtually all cases it was possible through cross-checking to identify the correct source. Furthermore, no single source was complete, and I suggest that future researchers avoid an uncritical acceptance of any one of them. Used together, they result in the highly reliable figures of Tables I and II.

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