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## THE STRANGE AND WONDERFUL NEW WORLD OF GEORGE RAPP AND HIS HARMONY SOCIETY

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IN a country with a cultural tradition as old, meditative, and introspective as that of Germany — especially its state of Württemberg — a person's life actually begins long before he is born, and it is only his personal conception and birth that give him the opportunity to absorb some of this tradition and to give it revived expression during his brief period of consciousness on this earth. So even though I shall stick to my subject of the beginnings of the Harmony Society, it is only in conformity with my profession as a professor of Germanics that I give you some of the background from which the Harmony Society evolved. For this reason I shall divide my lecture into three parts: first, I will present some historical factors of Württemberg before the time of George Rapp, which he then absorbed as he grew up; second, I want to show you a map of the United States illustrating the nationwide influence of George Rapp and his pietism in our country and several slides which I made last July of the area from which the Harmonists came; and then, third, I will concentrate on the beginnings of the Harmony Society during George Rapp's life.

The Swabians, or Württembergers, were a highly respected German people as far back as Julius Caesar and Tacitus, who stated that they could be compared only to the gods. The first great period of

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Dr. Arndt, professor of German at Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, and authority on the Harmony Society, delivered this paper at the October 1973 lecture meeting of the Historical Society. Slides accompanied the talk, which we were unable to reproduce for the magazine.—Editor

German literature in the Middle Ages was primarily Swabian. In the sixteenth century they gave the world Faust, whose life inspired some of the greatest works of world literature and music. In the time of the Reformation, Luther wrote of the Swabians as one of the most peculiarly religious and hospitable of German peoples. In addition to a deeply religious feeling the Swabians have been characterized by a great love and loyalty to their government and, contradictory as it may seem, by a drive to migrate, either in spirit or in fact. These characteristics are clearly celebrated in their literature and folklore. One of their best known poems is called *Der Reichste Fürst* (*The Richest Ruler*). It describes what we today would call a summit meeting of all the rulers of German lands in the course of which each ruler brags about the riches of his land. The last to speak is the ruler of Württemberg, Graf im Bart. Briefly he admits that his country is poor in natural resources but that it holds one great treasure, namely that he can lay his head to rest safely in the lap of any of his subjects, whereupon all the rulers of Germany conclude with the words, "Sir, you are the richest of all the rulers of Germany, your country has a mine of diamonds."

Swabian folklore has an interesting story to illustrate the migratory inclinations of Swabians by claiming that the first white man to land in America was a Swabian. (This story should be told in pure Swabian dialect, which I have not mastered and which you would probably not understand if I could tell it in that form, so here is the gist of it in English.) Christopher Columbus, of course, had a Swabian on board his ship, so as they were about to drop anchor, this Swabian jumped overboard, swam to shore, and ran to the edge of the nearby forest where a bunch of Indians were hiding behind the trees. In purest Swabian he called into the forest: "Is there anybody here from Sindelfingen?" Soon an Indian head poked forth from behind a tree and replied, also in the purest Swabian: "No, but we do have several men here from Böblingen."

This claim to a part in the discovery of our country reflects the heavy migration of Swabians to America, for before World War I there was scarcely any American city of any size that did not boast of one or more Swabian social or singing societies. Among the fifty-two German-American social, musical, and similar associations of Pittsburgh in 1916, there were, of course, two Swabian societies: Schwäbischer Unterstützungsverein von Allegheny County, which met regularly in the Germania Halle, 912 Chestnut Street, N.S.; and

the Schwäbischer Unterstützungsverein von Pittsburgh u. Allegheny, which met regularly in Moorhead's Hall, corner of Grant and Fourth streets.

With all the love of homeland, and with all the personal piety, nowhere do we find in German lands a stronger drive to break away from the established church and to migrate beyond the homeland boundaries, either physically or mentally, than in Württemberg. The Swabian astronomer Johannes Kepler, whose researches took him far out into space and into other lands but who then returned to his beloved Württemberg, summed up his observations about Swabian piety briefly in the words: "Fromm soll man sein, aber nicht zu fromm!" ("One should be pious, but not too pious!")

To document the difficulties which the paternal government of Württemberg had with keeping Swabians in the established church and at home, I shall review a few of the decrees covering this subject, but as I do so, let us keep in mind the Swabian maxim: "In Berlin laws are made, but in Swabia laws are obeyed." Contrary to the oversimplified accusation of German lack of democracy, in Württemberg no decree was issued until it had been reviewed and all objections to it heard and reviewed at grass-roots level. No scholar who has had the ability and patience to trace the genesis of decrees in Württemberg can help but admire the patience and long-suffering of the Swabian government in dealing with its often very difficult and individualistic people. This we shall see later as we follow the evolution of George Rapp's Harmony Society in Württemberg.

In the year 1706, eighty years before Rapp's declaration of independence from the church, a decree was issued against the so-called "Pietisterei," that is, pietistic extremes and means outlined to face "these and other dangerous errors." Three years later Duke Eberhard Ludwig in a decree warned against the dangers of emigration to America and to the "desolate and wild fields" there and against the propaganda sweeping Swabia with the claims of easy living beyond the sea, as if beyond one could acquire great wealth and daily food without any physical exertion. In 1711 an important decree was issued setting forth the norms according to which separatists from the church were to be handled. This decree remained valid and in force even in the days of Rapp's beginnings. It urged extreme caution and great patience in dealing with all matters of conscience.

In the year 1717 another decree was issued warning against migration to Pennsylvania and Carolina. It spoke of "this mad lust of

moving away" and this "verderbliche Lust-Seuche nach vorgedachter Engelländischen Provinz zu ziehen"—this destructive Lust-Pestilence of moving to the aforementioned English provinces. It compared such emigration to the fate of those who had migrated from the Palatinate to America. Three years later came the decree against migration "to the Island of Mississippi" in North America. This referred to the highly effective propaganda campaign of John Law, the Scotsman who had become treasurer of France and had evolved a great get-rich scheme based on the gold to be found in the hills of Louisiana, which resulted in great migrations of Germans to Louisiana, documented to this day in maps of the state which name the area between Baton Rouge and New Orleans as Cote d'Allemagne, or the German Coast. When the Louisiana bubble burst it was worse than our celebrated stock-market crash, for it left thousands of Swabians stranded in the hot Louisiana climate. Yet, John Law's appeal in Rapp's day was still so strong that he first was negotiating with the French government for land in Louisiana, and it was only the sale of Louisiana to the United States in 1803 that turned his mind to Pennsylvania.

In 1743 the decree of 1706 about Pietists and similar sects was renewed. In the year 1750 the Swabian government, in an attempt to make the best of a migration problem, issued a new decree. As before, the right to migrate was not forbidden, but the government felt it to be its duty, as a government interested in the welfare of its departing subjects, to present them with some factual information about what they were facing. The decree opened with the words: "When you cannot cure a sickness, a physician usually prescribes such medicines as will ease the pain and torment of his patient. Because the lust of moving to Pa. is so deeply rooted in the German people, that it cannot be exterminated, although many powerful arguments might be advanced to cure emigrants, we here only wish to prescribe a few means of relief in order that they might avoid the worst kind of disaster that might befall them." There followed documented reports of the fate of emigrants in Holland and upon arrival in America. A few months later a decree followed asking for reports on emigration and for reasons given for emigration. It was specifically stated that free movement of persons and migration should not be made difficult.

In the year 1751 Württemberg was flooded with emigration propaganda from Holland urging people to emigrate to Nova Scotia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts. The redemptionist system developed with all its evils and hardships. Dutch shipping com-

panies were looking for business to fill their ships with human cargo for America, so a new profession was born, that of "Seelen Händler," those trading in the souls of men. Emigration agents were paid a price per head on passages, and those unable to pay their passage were obliged to sell themselves into temporary slavery in America to pay for their passage and upon arrival in America were held captive until someone "redeemed" them by paying their passage in return for an indenture on their services. From this time on Philadelphia papers began carrying advertisements to the effect that this or that ship was riding at anchor with German redemptionists waiting to trade for their passage.

In the years 1753, 1764, 1766, and 1782 decrees dealing with unscrupulous emigration agents were repeatedly issued in Württemberg in a vain attempt to prevent those Swabians who did not have sufficient means or intelligence to know what they were getting into from rushing headlong into a fate far worse than at home, even if they were poor. But nothing could stop the often religiously motivated drive to emigrate to Russia and America. With the Napoleonic Wars the prophecies of the Revelation of Saint John took on a new meaning and reality and, depending on the exegesis of biblical texts, some were impelled to migrate over a vast space of land to Russia, while others were convinced that salvation lay in migrating over a vast space of water. We must view George Rapp's migration to America against this mad rush out of the French-invaded Württemberg, or in terms of Pietist thinking which saw in this time a repetition of God's call to Lot to escape from Sodom and Gomorrah while there was yet time. These people knew well the warning of Genesis 19:24-26: "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his [Lot's] wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

The following is the first record of George Rapp's hearing before the church council about his reasons for separating himself from the church and from the holy sacraments. It is the basic document for the beginnings of the Harmony Society, namely Rapp's declaration written at the request of the church authorities to explain why he left the church.

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*Translation of the first hearing of George Rapp and his wife before the church council of Iptingen for absenting themselves from church services and from participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.*

"I. Iptingen, April 15th, 1785.

After a certain Separatist from this place had put himself forth with his wife and both of them had not only separated themselves from the church but also from the Christian rite of the Lord's Supper; said Separatist and his wife therefore, by virtue of ducal decree, were summoned for deposition:

(a) What is his name and how old is he?

Hans Joerg Rapp, Adam's son, twenty-eight years.

Is he a mechanic or a farmer?

By trade a weaver.

How has his previous life been?

Bad, and he has not subjected himself to church discipline, wherefore the pastor gave him the Consilium, this time he should abstain from the Lord's Supper until further reformation.

Whether he intends fully and for all time to keep away from the church and the Lord's Supper?

Yes, for all time.

What are his stumbling-blocks on this account?

Because he had found the fountain-head himself and the body itself is in Christ Jesus.

Whether he is prepared to give this in writing?

Yes, by next Sunday he will deliver same at the pastorate.

Whether he is promulgating his principles and seeking to impart them to others?

No, when no one asks him he says nothing.

Who comes to him?

Christian Hoernle and Michael Conzelmann of this place.

To whom does he go?

He comes in no house whatever, but in Christian Hoernle's house.

What books does he use?

He has no book whatever except his mother's bible and the seventh part of Dr. Luther's books.

Whether he is not seeking to distribute other books, no matter from where he has it, among the congregation?

No.

Does he hold convention, if so, when and with whom?

At night right after supper comes Christian Hoernle, and

Michael Conzelmann, now of a Tuesday, now of a Wednesday or Thursday and they hold a prayer meeting together.  
Whether strangers come to him also?

No.

Does he go out on Sundays and holidays, if so, where?

Because it has been winter until now he has gone nowhere.

Does he partake somewhat of the public alms?

No.

Does he contribute to the public alms?

No, to the orphan asylum he gives something yearly.

t.praevia praetextione: Johann Georg Rapp.

(b) The wife of Hans Joerg.

Whether she is of the same mind as her husband in reference to total abstinence from the church and the open use of the Lord's Supper?

Yes, so long as she finds no impulse to go to church and feels no impulse to go to the Lord's Supper, so long is she of her husband's mind.

Whether she does this of her own accord or to please her husband?

She does it of her own accord.

What reason has she for this?

She finds it unendurable that they preach against the Separatists.

Whether she does not know, that I [the parson] am responsible, when I as a dumb dog, do not prevent a division in the church?

Yes.

Whether she will persist in the above resolution?

Yes, she will persist.

t.praevia praetextione,

Christine Rappin.

Present at the examination,

Church Convention:

M. Andreas Genter,

Johann Georg Haecker,

Johann Friedrich Kraemer,

Israel Schmid."

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*Translation of George Rapp's formal explanation of April 17, 1785, as to why he had separated himself from the established church of Württemberg.*

"Since the Church Authorities have desired that I record my rea-

sons for staying away from church I have been willing to do this. In the first place my former life was entirely earthbound and vain, in short I was a servant of sin. During all this I felt a secret unrest within me, but the enemy was too powerful for me, until finally the word of Job in the 33 chapter was fulfilled in me: He frightens man that he may withdraw him from his purpose, and all this God does to each one two or three times that he may bring back his soul from the pit etc. Then in 1780 I felt a strong conviction within me to surrender to Jesus, but the world was still too dear to me. Just at the turn of the year 1781 I felt this unrest more strongly, but again was not true. When at about the same time in 1782 the Lord again had compassion on me, the world became very bitter for me, for the call of the Father was too strong for me. Then the love of Jesus became so precious to me because for the third time he had shown me his mercy and had sought me. As is usually the case with beginners that they want to start with being pious themselves, so for an entire quarter year I took much pain to achieve this, until I was oppressed and heavy-laden. — One day I was completely still, then the spirit of Jesus worked on me so strongly as I have never before experienced, and the verse of Jesus was brought close to my heart, Revelation 3: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice' — etc. Then I felt so small that I did not care to open my eyes. It was then that I saw that salvation is in Christ Jesus alone, and also saw how necessary it was to be in a still place and to hearken to one's heart. Accordingly I was convinced that the soul's very own life, as small as it may be, must die so that Jesus may become its resurrection and life. Since that time also I have not come to church again, because my Jesus shone into my heart brightly as the word of life, and because I needed nothing else since I had found Jesus. But because the Lord saw my weakness this light was again darkened. This caused me much sorrow and misery for my friend had departed and was looking through the gate. For the suffering and sadness which follows segregation filled me with horror, and I could not comprehend it. From that time on, however, the Lord let me know full well that in eternity nothing counts but being small and pure, and he showed me that he remains truly in no man unless he has tested him through thousands of trials. And this I certainly had to experience until I finally surrendered my will to God so that my will became his will, and his will my will. Then I renewed my determination to remain in quiet and solitude as much as possible because I was weakened rather than edi-



fied by the great variety of opinions that existed about the word of God. And this is the reason why I remained away from church, because there I was weakened rather than strengthened. This I did not do out of stubbornness or pride, as it has been interpreted and as so many judge unkindly about me, for I used the means of grace until I found Jesus, the fountain himself. If the Lord's Supper, however, were held only very infrequently or seldom I would be the first to join in it with Christ's members, often, much, and in his memory. For this only pleasure I still find in this world, to meet with righteous, true, and upright souls, the more seriously the better. This briefly is the cause. If I should now withdraw from this I would have to withdraw from Jesus, his spirit, path and truth, and consider it a spirit of temptation, and this would be a mortal sin for me, in fact I could not do it because Jesus has already shown me so much loyalty and still does. If any man should like to ascribe this to reason, let him do so at his own responsibility. The pawn and seal of the Holy Spirit is too dear to me, for it I would rather suffer the enmity of all men than knowingly deny a bit of it. Right must remain right, and all pious hearts will be attracted to it.

Iptingen, April 17, 1785.

Subserviently, Joh. G. Rapp."

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Let us mark well in this initial declaration how Rapp distinguished between reason and "the pawn and seal of the Holy Spirit" for which he would rather suffer the enmity of all men than knowingly deny a bit of it. George Rapp was here speaking of a mystic and basic element of the Christian religion which in the established church at that time of rationalism, and in our own time, has practically vanished from all but a very, very few churches. If we take the trouble to examine the Harmony Society Library in nearby Ambridge we can find the explanations by delving into the old Berlenburger, or Berleburger, Bibles there and also in the writings published under the German title *Es Wird Alles Neu Werden* (*All Things Shall Be Made New*). In these books we find the following explanation and comments about the marks that distinguish the "Kennzeichen der Inwohnung des heiligen Geistes" ("signs by which the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit can be noted"): "By which means can a believing soul itself become aware that it has been sealed by the Holy Spirit? By the very expressions of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within one's heart. For where the spirit is, there is no death. When you now sense his activity within

yourself, his withdrawal from the tumult of the world, the love for quiet, call to prayer, a childish sense of freedom in prayer, a taste for the word of God, a change about in your desires, a direction of your heart toward Jesus, experience of an exact discipline in your inner self, a sense of punishment for your errors, comfort, support, and strength in dark hours . . . then you sense the life of the spirit of God within you, and thus you have a sign by which you can recognize that the Holy Spirit dwells within you, and consequently that you are a part of the Lord."

From the time of Rapp's first statement to his death in Economy, he and those loyal to him were convinced that they were thus sealed with the mark of the Holy Spirit dwelling within their hearts. In fact the very naming of their last settlement, *Okonomie* or *Economy*, bears witness to this conviction, and its meaning to them was anything but the present materialistic economy and can be understood only within the context of the writings still in their library at Ambridge. Just as the very name which these pioneers gave to the work of their hands, *Okonomie*, has been wiped away by the material term *Ambridge*, so the essence of their concept of a "divinely established economy," where God himself would dwell with them in millennial perfection, has disappeared.

The annual parochial report for the year 1784 from Iptingen still stated that no separatists were found there. With the year 1785, part 17 of this report, dealing with the status of the church and school, changes and becomes one of the important sources for the history of the beginnings of the Harmony Society. In January of 1786 the local pastor complained that synodical authorities had yet taken no action against Rapp and his followers. In fact at the end of this year, instead of the expected measures against Rapp and his followers, the pastor received an admonition from his superiors to deal kindly with Rapp and his followers, to invite them back to the church, and to use all kindly means to persuade them not to do anything that might prove harmful to the Kingdom of Christ. Because such attempts on the part of the pastor remained unsuccessful, Rapp and his followers, on January 23, 1787, were again called before the church council. The minutes of this meeting were sent to the diocesan office at Maulbronn.

In those days a committee of citizens had the duty to patrol the village while the other citizens were in church, but Rapp and his followers had made it a point to hold their own religious gatherings in their homes during the very hour of the established-church's service.

When this citizens' committee came to the house of Rapp's friend Christian Hörnle, it was received with the words: "You come from your father the devil and want to disturb us." Both Hörnle and Rapp were incensed at the interruption of their meditations and threatened the citizens' committee with references to other separatists who would stand by them.

Among the books Hörnle and his friends had was a book about the conversion of a shepherd named Herming Cuse and a German translation of Thomas Wilcock's *Precious Drops of Honey from the Rock of Christ*. As Pennsylvanians you will be interested to know that before the Harmonists came to this state, ten editions of this work had already appeared here in English, and Henrich Miller, who made the scoop of scoops in the history of American journalism by printing the first newspaper announcement of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence — and he published it in his German newspaper, the *Pennsylvanischer Staatsbote*, in German — this patriotic German-American printer had published a German edition of the *Precious Drops of Honey from the Rock of Christ* in 1774 in Philadelphia. So Rapp and his friends were reading an international religious best seller at the time.

Later, in 1787, separatists began keeping their children out of school, because they did not want to expose their children to worldly ways and thus risk the salvation of their souls. (As Pennsylvanians again you will be interested to recall that Amish fathers in Upper Leacock Township, Pennsylvania, took the same action in 1954, with the result that the fathers were put in jail.) Rapp had prepared one of the youngsters for the hearing he knew would follow, so when the thirteen-year-old son of Christian Hörnle was called before the local pastor he entered the study with the words: "Do you know who you are to me? You seem to me to be like the giant Goliath, and I am little David. Now we will see who overcomes whom." He continued to argue that he would never go to church and school because they were idols of Baal and like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego he would not bow down before them. When the pastor asked why he would not obey the biblical command to be obedient to his teachers and to follow them, the boy replied that there were no real teachers and pastors left. When asked for an explanation he replied: "Why, they attend the university and the apostles did not do that. Pastors at present, such as you also are, were not made by the Savior but by the Spirit of the World." The next step taken by the separatists was

to refuse to have their children baptized or confirmed.

Because the entire order of life in and around Iptingen was being upset by the separatists, those who still adhered to the established church and who continued to send their children to school began to complain to the Ober/Amt, that is, the diocesan and regional government offices, about the situation, asking that the spreading rebellion be checked. This resulted in extensive investigations and hearings. The minutes of these meetings are quite detailed and give us a good insight into the thinking of the early Harmonists. The books which proved to be especially influential on Rapp and his people at this time were the works of Jacob Boehme, or the Philosophus Teutonicus, as he has been called. In his lifetime they were translated into English, and he had quite a following in England.

Boehme really had the answer for all the problems brought up by the Woman's Liberation Movement today, for he taught that God created man in his-her image, i.e., a male-female. God was not only a woman, as some women would have it today,<sup>1</sup> he was also a man because he was complete and perfect and all-sufficient in him-her-self. As God created Adam out of him-her-self, so Adam could have done if, after viewing the animals who had been created as sexual separates, he had not expressed the fatal wish to have the female in himself separate, as it was in the animal world. With this separation disharmony entered the world, and harmony would not be restored until the preestablished harmony would again be restored. The Harmonists later believed that until then it would be foolish to continue propagating divided human beings with their sinful inclinations when God was about to restore humans to their preestablished harmony. This part of Boehme's and Rapp's teaching later, however, caused the Harmonists to become extinct.

The favorite Bible of the Pietists and separatists was the Berlenburger Bible. The edition used by the Harmonists is a large octavo and contains textual explanations. A number of copies of this rather expensive work are still in the library at Economy, but the edition was also well known in all the sections of Pennsylvania populated by Germans. Then there was a book called *Schüzens Güldene Rose*, which would be an important clue to the symbolism of the Harmonists, also to their architecture, which I have never been able to locate any-

<sup>1</sup> See Estelle Ramey, "A Feminist Talks to Men" in the *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, Sept. 1973, pages 7-9. On page 9 is a revision of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* showing God as a woman creating woman: "And God created woman in her own image."

where.<sup>2</sup> Although fourteen separatists were called before this investigation, the testimony of George Rapp dominates all and is the most important. He stated that:

1. The reason for his separation from the church was the abuse in the service where Christ was confessed with the lips while one lived as a pagan.

2. He belonged to no religion as found today; whoever loved Christ would be saved, no matter from which people. Names meant nothing, not Christian, not Lutheran, not Pauline, not Kephass; all these names only led to war and bloodshed. He did not know the Augsburg Confession; if it agreed with pure doctrine and freedom of the spirit, he would accept it, otherwise not.

3. Two years ago he had visited the brethren in Tübingen and there received the advice from Michael Hahn that he would have to pass through the steps of purification — through fire and spirit. The idea of separation from the church was his own.

I must interrupt here to give two explanations: Tübingen was, and still is, one of the strong centers of Württemberg learning. In Rapp's time there was a saying that no one could teach or preach who had not been taught at Tübingen. Rapp visited Michael Hahn in Tübingen and could thus say that he had studied at Tübingen and had some formal background there. Before Rapp visited there a decree had already been issued warning against the works of Michael Hahn, who was strongly pietistic. All Hahn's works are in the Harmony Society library. The main difference between the pietism of Michael Hahn and George Rapp is that with Hahn it did not lead to separation from the church but operated within the church. In fact, Hahn's disciples to this day are the strongest pillars of the church in Württemberg, and due to their religious firmness and identity they have now been called "the Pietcong," because like the Vietcong they take their stand, and no rhyme or reason will ever change it.

Returning to the remainder of Rapp's declaration:

4. The way of purification, which also devours the flesh, is much narrower than was preached in the church. The way of the

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<sup>2</sup> The evening after giving this lecture at the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh, I had the pleasure of examining the unique library of German Americana collected by the Rev. Ammon Stapleton, the grandfather of Mrs. Ray L. Hartzel of Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania. There to my great surprise and delight I found this rare book and was able to confirm my belief as to its influence on the Harmonists. This library has been boxed away for many years, and Mrs. Hartzel is now preparing a bibliography showing its holdings.

church may be good for others, but for him it was too busy, his path was so difficult that on its way one could easily be crippled.

5. The church should let itself be driven alone by its bridegroom; the spirit may not be confined to a circle.

6. As far as the foundation of the ministry was concerned, he had no objection; he merely condemned the abuse. Bishops were not blameless. If others approved of the pastors, he had nothing against it, but he would not recognize them as servants of God because they had no love and Jesus was full of love. Since the clergy had become a master class, they had ceased to be servants of Christ. Today only he could become a pastor who had money, and he became a pastor only for the gain that is in it.

7. He (Rapp) would let baptism stand, but he did not believe that present baptism, where all were baptized together, children of the pious and of the unconverted, was pleasing to God. The apostles had put away ceremonies, and now the church was restoring them.

8. He also held communion but not externally but inwardly through the outflow of the Holy Spirit. He could not live without inner communion. External communion might stand also, if worthy guests were there, but most lead a pagan life and sacrifice to the devil, and he would not serve the table of the Lord and the Devil at the same time.

9. He did not hold any real services; he tested all actions and if they were of God, and if the Spirit said Amen, this was his divine service. When the objection was made that he held regular services in private, he admitted that his friends on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday met with him — where he usually read and where they discussed a chapter from the Bible. People from the neighboring villages attended these meetings, and he would not let anyone forbid them because John said that he who was born of God loved the brethren. Unrest would develop not only in Iptingen but also elsewhere because there was so much talk about him and so many reports about what would be done to him.

10. When he was accused of mocking those who prayed when the bell called to prayer, he said that before and after prayer they would talk nonsense and thus prove that their hearts were not with their prayers. He did not have to pray at any special time because God was always in his mind. Only true disciples of Christ should pray the Lord's prayer; now every fool did so.

11. He and his friends no longer stood under the law while

others still needed the external religion because they were animal-men and needed religion until they found the right path.

12. He did not deny coaching Hörnle's son but stated he had told him only to speak if the spirit moved him.

13. He had refused to take the oath of loyalty to the duke because he would not swear an oath. With his body he obeyed the government, but in all things relating to conscience he was free.

14. He would return to the church when it was a truly Christian church, of one mind and sense with God. All outside their circle was a Babel, and those who would not separate themselves would be burned.

15. He was not worried about any offence they claimed he was giving. The world could not get worse than it already was. According to the flesh he would also like to tolerate all and be silent, but if he were he would have no inner peace. That his cause was right was proved by the inner peace he felt and the zeal with which he overcame evil. He vigorously upheld the tenet that his cause was divine.

One might wonder how it was possible that especially such pious souls as Rapp should leave the church, yet the reasons become clearer when we realize that the influence of the rationalist philosopher Christian Wolff (1679-1754) had become quite strong among the clergy in Württemberg at this time. As a result, sermons and religious instruction of the young became imbued with a rational, dry, sober tone, which did not please the general public at all. Instead of making Christianity a matter of a living faith and feeling and proclaiming the message as a communion with Christ, many clergymen exerted themselves to rationalize the doctrines of the church and to appeal to the intellect of men. The mystic element which Rapp had discovered was lacking in the sermons of the church. The sermons were more like the cold January sun instead of the warming and life-giving sun of May. The reaction to these cold rational sermons that appealed to the intellect is found in Rapp's first statement and his subsequent testimony. In 1786 a church directive to the pastors had urged the clergy to instruct the people with the warm heavenly message in such a manner as to confirm and support the miracles proclaimed in the gospel, but the clergy had become too deeply infected with the poison of rationalism. The clergy, in fact, had become a class distinct from such highly intelligent, but by no means intellectual, persons as Rapp. Rapp still believed firmly in the power of the Holy Spirit, while the professional and more bookish clergy had become a profession in a class

distinct from the common parishioner.

It is well to remind ourselves here that before Rapp one John Milton had fought the same battle against the hirelings in the church in England. His conflict has been inscribed for all times in his *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. For John Milton the fundamentals of religion required no learned disquisitions. Christ taught them to the poor and simple, and those who first taught after him were "unlearned men" — "Plain Fishermen, no greater men them call." Though Milton expected his ideal minister to know more than these stopgap missionaries, he held still his old opinion that knowledge in a minister should be its own reward. The hirelings who expected a return on their academic investment plainly appeared no "true lovers of learning, and so very seldom guilty of it." As George Rapp later, so John Milton earlier had spoken against the hiring clergy of all impure churches in the name of Jesus Christ, the church's one foundation, the true fountain of the ministry, our royal priest and prophet, a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, and this was the model of models for the individual members of the Harmony Society.

It would seem that after the extensive hearings of Rapp and his followers and the complaints of the loyal members of the church against these disturbers of their peace, that the authorities would crack down on the early Harmonists, but the opposite took place. In reply to the complaints and hearings the local pastor, Genter, got a reproof stating that in view of the sensitivity of the situation he had not shown the proper judgment and Christian love toward those who had left the church, and he was called to further account about sermons he had delivered against the separatists. Not until three years later, after Rapp and his followers had frequently offended the loyal members of the church, was any firm action taken against him. Again the church was admonished to deal kindly and gently with the separatists, but because Rapp had made some sacrilegious remarks about the sacraments he was given a two-day sentence to the tower, while his second in command escaped with one day. They were also ordered to desist from their private gatherings. It was when these instructions were publicly proclaimed that Rapp stepped forward and said: "Can I help it if people from all over the country press upon me? If they could hear something worthwhile from your divines in the land, they would not run to poor little Rapp in the twill jacket at Iptingen." When he was told to be quiet and obedient he replied: "Where are your obedient subjects? But things will change. Enough will still be heard and God



will visit you." The Oberamtmann (chief officer of the district) again urged Rapp to be silent because he was not a prophet, to which Rapp replied: "I am a prophet and am called to be one." When he was to be put into the tower all his followers insisted on joining him. Upon his release he refused to promise that he would refrain from further private meetings either at home or in neighboring villages, saying he would have to follow his inner voice. The next Sunday his house again was full of separatists from elsewhere, and when the citizens' committee came by to make the usual check, it was not allowed to enter the house and was told that the separatists would disperse when they felt like it.

As Rapp's following grew, and as his influence increased even in villages distant from Iptingen, the opposition to him and to the disturbance created by his visitors increased. This became especially acute during the May 1792 visitation in Iptingen by the diocesan authorities. The loyal members of the established church complained bitterly that nothing was being done to protect their rights and that the authorities were going too far in tolerating those who were intolerant of them. The anger of the loyal churchmen increased to a point where they threatened to bypass regular channels in order to present their grievances directly to the Serene Highness himself, and they were kept from doing so only by the promise of the dean to bring their case before the duke himself and by the admonition that if they bypassed the proper channels the duke would ignore them as a bunch of hotheads.

In view of the mounting criticism against the separatists, the synod of the church suggested that Rapp be exiled for a time without touching his property. When we keep in mind that the duke had this suggestion in hand, together with the complaint of those irate citizens who were loyal both to the established church and the duke, it would seem that the duke would favor either exile or some severe measures against Rapp. The contrary took place. The duke's brilliant and calm advisors pointed out that such an exile would probably make matters worse and would by no means give assurance that another separatist might not step into Rapp's place of leadership. The synod and the irate citizens of Iptingen and surrounding villages were informed that in view of the fact that Rapp's religious principles contained nothing that threatened the state, the government would refrain from the severe measure of exile which had been suggested and would leave the problem for time to heal. Local governments were, however, instructed to keep a close watch over the situation to make sure that the rights of loyal members of the church would not be violated by the dissenters.

Because of such a tolerant attitude on the part of the government Rapp's movement blossomed and grew. In this very year of crisis we find the first of Rapp's pastoral letters addressed to his faithful which show that he had become the *de facto* bishop of a church that was permitted to exist outside the established church. Separatists baptized their children themselves, yet the established church did not rebaptize them but instead upheld the civil order and kept the record of vital statistics straight by having each child presented publicly with the explanation: "This child has been baptized in an irregular but valid manner and is now presented to the community with its name." Children of separatists did not present themselves for confirmation and stayed away from school. Rapp taught his own children and boasted that they were learning more under his instruction. He must have done quite well with his son John who later took the state examination for surveyor in Stuttgart and was given the state approval and license to practice as a surveyor. A final gesture of defiance came with the refusal to abide by the burial customs of the community. The dead were brought to the cemetery without any ceremony and turned over to the gravedigger for burial without prayer.

By 1798 Rapp's free church had worked out a confession of faith and presented this to the government for formal recognition. This was signed by George Rapp, Jacob Schmidt, Zacharias Boger, Jacob Scheible, and John David Gloss.<sup>3</sup>

The confession of faith consisted of the following articles: (1) concerning the church, (2) concerning baptism, (3) of Holy Communion, (4) of the school, (5) of confirmation, (6) of government and taking an oath, (7) of the military order. Of greatest interest to the government were the last two articles. The sixth, on government, read as follows: "Our feeling toward the government is still warm and we are sufficiently convinced by experience that the government is good and that one cannot do without it. Also the common people would probably long ago have driven us to the ends of the earth, if the protection of the government had not existed. For this reason we gladly do our duty to the government, as we so far have willingly done and will continue to do as long as we are tolerated in the land. The fact that we do not bind ourselves with physical oaths is not meant to convey any evil intent; we are merely moved by the duty and love which we feel toward our Lord Jesus, who imposes this upon those

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<sup>3</sup> Upon arrival in America later, Gloss, one of Rapp's most trusted leaders, broke with Rapp and tried to establish his own community.

who have dedicated themselves to following in his footsteps, according to Matthew V. 33, 34. The apostle James also confirms this in his epistle, chapter 5, verse 12. Since we appeal to the old plan of the fathers of our Christian religion and since we walk according to this plan as much as possible, we cannot contradict the Gospel, for according to the Gospel no oath is allowed him who gives evidence of a righteous life as an upright man. Yea, yea, and nay, nay, shall constitute a trust, and shall thus be interpreted and accepted by us. According to the position of the law, however, the oath puts an end to all strife, and therefore those who for conscience sake will swear no oath are commanded: 'And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.' In this way such a man does not come into conflict with the state on account of the oath."

The seventh article, on military service, was the one article which brought the separatists in direct conflict with the state. This they wanted to avoid, so they stated that those of their children who were not inclined to follow their ascetic way of life would be free to enter the military order, while those who followed their strict path of the imitation of Christ would by this very fact be unsuited for military service and would not have the makings of a good soldier even if they submitted to the law. On this point the government's tolerance ended with a firm declaration that any Swabian who was not ready to defend his fatherland was not worthy of being a citizen and not entitled to the rights and privileges which go with citizenship, because these rights could be safeguarded only by a military force, ready to do battle at the borders against those who would enslave them. The Württemberg government, in view of the aggressions of Napoleon against that country, had good reason to take this stand at this time. The sum and substance of this confession of faith was the aim of the separatists to restore the church to what they conceived to be the condition of the first church of the apostles, which in the final analysis included the common ownership of all property. As far as possible, this principle already was being practiced at this time in Württemberg.

The status of Rapp's church at the beginning of the nineteenth century is clarified in a report of the Oberamtmann of Maulbronn in November 1802: "People from a distance of 12 to 15 hours walk come to Iptingen on Sundays and festival days like soldiers in groups of six, eight or ten persons, and are quartered in the homes of Separatists. Rapp celebrates communion and the love feasts connected therewith run into late hours of the night." In view of the current permis-

siveness and lax morality of our country it should be added here that these love feasts were completely free of sexuality. Money was collected at these meetings, and Rapp was accused of doing this to enrich himself, which a subsequent investigation proved to be completely unfounded. Persons visiting from outside Iptingen always brought along supplies in abundance to share with the poor who joined in the meetings. His following at this time was spread all over the land and was reported to amount to ten- to twelve-thousand souls. With this increase the political aspect of the movement had changed, and a report from Knittlingen, Faust's hometown, in 1801 reported that there were persons there who would like to repeat the rebellion of the peasant wars of 1525 and who were thinking of reviving the rebellion of Thomas Münzer.<sup>4</sup> Then there were tailors who would like to play the part of Johann von Leyden<sup>5</sup> and who were thinking in such revolutionary terms as Knipperdolling, Krechting, and Rottmann.<sup>6</sup> The belief began to take hold that the separatists ultimately were destined to sit in judgment over all the other people, including dukes, princes, and governments.

In February of the year 1803 Rapp addressed three meetings at Knittlingen in a hall outside the town boundaries which were so well attended that windows and doors had to be removed to make it possible for the overflow audience to hear him. For this he was called to account in Maulbronn on April 20, 1803, and on this occasion frankly admitted that he was the bishop of this unrecognized church of the people and that he had been acting as such for the past fifteen years. He spoke freely of his following and named villages and numbers of his followers in these locations. His services now were generally held

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4 Thomas Münzer, 1468-1525, founded an "Association of the loyal and divine will" and wanted to establish a theocracy. He became leader of a peasant army which was destroyed near Frankenhausen, and he was executed.

5 Johann von Leyden, 1510-36, traveled extensively as a tailor-journeyman and became an influential traveling prophet. In 1533 he came to Münster. He had himself proclaimed the King of Zion and as such overthrew the city government and set up a theocracy along the lines of the Old Testament. He declared himself to be the elected King of the Apocalypse, and introduced polygamy. Münster became a scene of wild excesses against which the bishop took up arms until in 1535 the city fell into his hands. As one of the leading radicals, Johann was captured and, on January 23, 1536, tortured to death. His body was then put in an iron cage and hung up for public view.

6 Bernt Knipperdolling became mayor of Münster in 1534, was executed in 1536, his body placed in an iron cage, and was hung up on the tower of the Lamberti Church. Krechting also was executed and his body suspended from Lamberti Church in an iron cage. Rottmann also belonged to the left wing of the Reformation.

after those of the established church and generally sixty to eighty persons assembled in his house. First they sang a song from the *Davidisches Psalterspiel der Kinder Zion* (*David's Psalter of the Children of Zion*). This hymnal was also a favorite in America at this time, and I have located copies from various American presses — 1795 at Ephrata and 1816 in Baltimore.

After the singing of a hymn a chapter was read from the Bible, whereupon each made his comments on the text, these comments being started by George Rapp. They needed no further aids, although they occasionally read the works of the German mystic Johann Tauler (1300-1361). During this investigation he also mentioned his extensive correspondence with followers in distant places, such as the fertile valley called Remstal. He also for the first time mentioned his contact with the printer and bookdealer, Salzmann, in Strasbourg. From this period I have discovered some thirty pastoral letters which will be published in the first volume of my documentary history of the Harmony Society.

The result of the hearing at Maulbronn was that the government on July 23, 1803, called for more detailed reports about separatists in all areas. There was good reason to fear that the purely religious aspect of the separatist meetings was changing to something dangerously political, for some of the separatists had adopted as their form of greeting, "Praise be to God and his son Napoleon!" In view of the hardship which Napoleon's aggression had inflicted upon Württemberg, such a greeting at that time was about as welcome as "Heil Hitler" in America in the days of the Second World War. One separatist, Christoph Gräulich, had written, "I am a patriot in Christ and love liberty, equality, and brotherhood." Some separatists insisted on having their children named "Vivat Napoleon" and others spoke of Christ Napoleon. Two of these were sentenced to the Hohenasperg Prison, where they kept the faith to the foreign invader and conqueror and got lost in the bureaucratic communications. Many years later the commander of the prison reported to his superiors that he did not know why these men had been sentenced and that whatever the cause may have been they had been locked up long enough and should now be allowed to emigrate to America.

It was not until December 27, 1803, that mounting pressure resulted in a firm decree against the extremes of the separatist movement. But even this decree carefully distinguished between those who were really moved by conscience and those who were using the

tolerance granted religion as a coverup for creating political unrest. By the time this decree was published George Rapp and three of his followers had departed for Pennsylvania in order to find suitable land upon which all their followers could settle and live according to the principles of the first church, including community of property. After all the unrest Rapp had caused during his long reign as de facto bishop of the separatist church, it is surprising to read the comment on his passport — "During his stay among us he always conducted himself honestly and righteously, so that we know of nothing but good to report about him, and also otherwise we have heard nothing improper about him."

Before Rapp left he had put his adopted son Frederick in charge of the supervision of the followers. It was Frederick Reichert Rapp who organized the emigration to the United States by chartering ships for the passage of Rapp's followers. In these arrangements the spirit of brotherhood and community of property was already in practice, for those wealthier helped finance the passage of the poor and in this way defeated the redemptionist system. For years to come Frederick Rapp's planned migration was referred to as a model which other emigrants should follow.

The departure from Württemberg was basically apocalyptic in its motivation. The followers of Rapp were convinced that doom was coming and that all Europe would be destroyed by fire like Sodom and Gomorrah had been. They were convinced by Rapp's preaching that this church was the sunwoman who was to flee into the wilderness as prophesied in the Book of Revelation, and from this first move to America all later moves were guided by this prophecy — the later move to Indiana and the third move back to Economy. This is clearly documented in the sermons of George Rapp and also in the travel songs which the Harmonists sang upon their departure from Württemberg. From one of these I have translated the following verse:

*Auf, in America soll noch die Schafweid seyn;  
Dahin soll fliehn das Sonnen Weib,  
Dass sie entrückt zur bösen Zeit,  
Dann wirds Gericht enbrechen, zu rächen.*

*Let us go, in America the pasture for the sheep is to be.  
The sunwoman is to flee there so that she may be  
preserved from the danger in evil times,  
then judgment will break and take revenge.*

The coming of doom was impressed all the more on the people of Württemberg by plundering French armies which demoralized the countryside in Württemberg to such a degree that the duke felt himself compelled to issue a decree calling for the arrest of French soldiers who had abused the right of passage through Württemberg granted by the government. By the time the decree of 1803 was issued George Rapp had reached America and succeeded in bringing a major part of his church, the sunwoman, into the wilderness where, according to his and his followers' faith, God had prepared a place.

On February 15, 1805, through the formal Articles of Agreement, the Harmony Society obtained the legal status in America that had been sought for in vain in Württemberg. After the struggle for a separation from the established church and recognition of this status by the state which had begun in 1785 and which had continued in Württemberg with growing success for two decades, Rapp was able to establish his church according to the principles of the first apostolic church and as such it continued under his firm direction for nearly half a century, until his death. According to biblical prophecy, Rapp and his people lived at Harmony in Butler County for ten years. Before this time was up Harmony had become one of the most admired and most successful communities in America. In keeping with Revelation prophecy, George Rapp in 1814-1815 moved his body of about one thousand believers to the Wabash in Indiana where the Harmonists again built a settlement that aroused the admiration of travelers and was called "That Wonder of the West."

Mathew Carey, the American economist, in the preface to his *Addresses of the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of National Industry* in 1822 pointed out Rapp's Harmonists as a model for others to follow in establishing American industry. "This little commonwealth depended wholly on itself for supplies. It had, to use the cogent language of Mr. Jefferson, 'placed the manufacturer beside the agriculturist.' What was the consequence? The settlement made more rapid advances in wealth and prosperity, than any equal body of men in the world at any period of time, more, in one year, than other parts of the U.S., which depend on foreign markets for the sale of their produce and the supply of their wants, have done in ten."

Yet, the Harmonists were not actually interested in making money or getting rich but were primarily interested in their souls' salvation. For that reason, following prophecy and the Lord's command, after ten years on the Wabash they again left the comforts of

the settlement they had built with much hard work, sold their second town to Robert Owen from Scotland, started all over, and built what is now known as Ambridge. By this time they were so solidly fixed financially that they twice placed orders to have steamboats built for themselves; one according to the specifications of the famous Captain Shreve, for whom Shreveport, Louisiana, was named. George Rapp's Harmonists, in fact, were financially in better shape than the city of Pittsburgh, because Pittsburgh, as the state of Indiana had done earlier, approached them for a loan and received it. Utopians all over the United States and Europe heard of the fame of the "Rappites" and wrote them for the key to such success. There is probably not a single utopian scheme in nineteenth-century America that was not inspired by the success of George Rapp, but few if any equalled Rapp's success. When presented with new plans for other communist communities and asked for an opinion, the Rapps would invariably caution those who would copy them, or improve on them, that they would fail because their foundation was not built upon the Rock of Faith in Jesus Christ, and these communities usually failed very soon.

My original subject was George Rapp's and the Harmony Society's beginnings, so I must not branch out into this fascinating American phase of their existence, yet I would like to speak a word about the reasons for their phenomenal success:

1. Their organization had a firm faith in a special mission and they were Pietcongns in sticking to that faith.

2. They had excellent leadership with George Rapp, the folk priest, in charge of spiritual security and Frederick Rapp, the devoted business manager, in charge of social security.

3. They were a homogeneous group with the same past and the same future.

4. They had a minimum of democracy in the degenerate sense of that word today.

5. They were all hard-working Germans who did not believe that the world owed them a living.

6. They had many intelligent members but no intellectuals or eggheads to confuse the minds with false liberalism, with the exception of Peter Kaufmann, a friend of Emerson, who left the society to publish a liberal newspaper in Ohio.

7. They had an excellent balance of craftsmen, farmers, and plain hard-working laborers who could not even write their names, but who, while they remained in the organization, were part of one of the



most solid financial bodies in the world. Even the simplest laborer in the society not only had full social but also spiritual security. Where else in the world of 1824 could a simple laborer call himself part owner of a town like Harmony or Economy, and where else could he claim part ownership of steamboats like the *William Penn* and the *Pittsburgh Wheeling Packet*?

8. They were nonmaterialistic communists, firmly believing in God's word that one should first seek the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness and that all the rest would take care of itself.

When, quite contrary to Rapp's own expectations, death finally claimed this great prophet and leader, the *Pittsburgh Daily Morning Post* on August 7, 1847, celebrated him as the greatest communist of the age, using those very words. This was the same year that a congress of communists in London asked two comparatively unknown men named Marx and Engels to prepare the *Communist Manifesto*, which was published a year later. The *Pittsburgh Post* stated that Rapp had departed "respected and honored as a truly good man, and a most venerable patriarch."

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen, if Pittsburgh, this great citadel of capitalism, should ever be taken by communism, remember, Pittsburgh and all Pennsylvania already have their own communist patron saint right here. You need not go to Karl Marx who was still in his diapers when your great pioneer had already built three American towns on the communist system. You need not accept Marxist materialism which looks upon religion as the opium of the people when you have the example of George Rapp, that great pioneer of the West to whom religion was the quintessence of life.

### *Postscript*

Lest my words be interpreted as an endorsement of communism, let me refer the reader to my *George Rapp's Harmony Society, 1785-1847*, especially the chapter "George Rapp and Robert Owen." Inspired by the success of the Harmonists, there was in the first half of the past century a national interest in bringing the "blessings of communism" to bear on the United States, and even Thomas Jefferson, who had known the Harmonists from the time of their arrival in this country, was approached in this matter. After many years of study of communism in America and abroad, I have accepted the following statement of Thomas Jefferson as definitive for all such perfect societies as are being offered by communists or socialists:

That, on the principle of a communion of property, small societies may exist in habits of virtue, order, industry, and peace, and consequently in a state of as much happiness as Heaven has been pleased to deal out to imperfect humanity, I can readily conceive, and indeed, have seen its proofs in various small societies which have been constituted on that principle. But I do not feel authorized to conclude from these that an extended society, like that of the United States, or of an individual State, could be governed happily on the same principle. I look to the diffusion of light and education as the resource most to be relied on for ameliorating the condition, promoting the virtue, and advancing the happiness of man. That every man shall be made virtuous, by any process whatever, is, indeed, no more to be expected, than that every tree shall be made to bear fruit, and every plant nourishment. The brier and bramble can never become the vine and olive; but their asperities may be softened by culture, and their properties improved to usefulness in the order and economy of the world. And I do hope that, in the present spirit of extending to the great mass of mankind the blessings of instruction, I see a prospect of great advancement in the happiness of the human race; and that this may proceed to an indefinite, although not to an infinite degree.<sup>7</sup>

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7 *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, 1904), 15: 399-400.