

Visit by the Provost Magister, Israel Acrelius¹ to the Ephrata Cloister, August 20, 1753

Taken from "A History of New Sweden," by Israel Acrelius. Published in Stockholm 1759. Reprinted by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1874. Translated from the Swedish by William M. Reynolds, D.D.

Ephrata is a place in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, eleven and a half English miles from the town of Lancaster, in Cocalicoa Township, situate on the Cocalicoa Creek, between two hills. It is a Protestant cloister, having in possession about one hundred and thirty acres of land, well situated, and built with a number of wooden houses at some distance apart, with apple-trees planted in the intervening spaces. There are also grape-vines there of a good quality, but not in any great number.

The people who live here are called by the English, Dumplers, by the Germans, Dunkers, from "duncken" or "tuncken," "to dip," as they are a kind of Anabaptists. From this the town is called by a nickname, but generally Dunkers' Town.

The arrangement of the cloister-life was made by Conrad Beisel, formerly a German burgher, who still lives in Ephrata, or Dunkers' Town, as the Director of the whole community, and he is now about 64 years of age. He is a small, lean man, has gray and bushy hair, is quick in his utterance as well as in his movements. Twenty-two years since he first chose for himself the life of a hermit, building for this purpose a small house on the banks of the Cocalicoa. After some time he took a notion to establish a society of his own, upon principles derived in part from other sects, and in part the product of his own brain. His undertaking prospered, and Germans of both sexes came thither, united with him, and made him their priest, chief man, and director of the whole society, not only of the cloister, but of all the brethren in their faith living in this country. From this time he called himself "Friedsam" (Peaceful); as it is also an established regulation in their society, that all who are admitted among them shall receive a new name in baptism, as a sign that they have come into a new condition, different from that of the great and wicked world. The brethren and sisters call him Father Friedsam, which is also his common name in the country. He calls himself "Friedsam, the elder brother." He preaches among them, and administers the sacraments as a Minister. As a Director, he makes laws and regulations.

Next to him is a chief over the cloister, or, as they call it, the "Community." His name is Eleazar; suggested, undoubtedly, by the office which he exercises in the economy of the cloister, that is, to receive and distribute

¹ Israel Acrelius was a Swedish American Historian, born in Sweden, 1714, Provost of the Swedish Lutheran Churches on the Delaware, and pastor at Fort Christina (Wilmington, Delaware), 1749-56.

the provisions, to purchase clothing according to the wants of the convent, also food and the like. He was now 42 years old, and had lived nineteen years in the fraternity. His father, 60 years of age, was also in the convent, but, as he had come in later, his son was his superior. A similar arrangement also exists among the Nuns.

There was also a brother named Jabez, who, before his rebaptism, was called Peter Müller. He had been a German Calvinistic² Minister, came into the country, according to their custom, as a candidate for the Ministry in the Reformed Church of the country, was afterwards ordained by the Presbyterian Minister, Mr. Andrew, in Philadelphia, and for a long time preached in various parts of the country among the Germans before that, eighteen years since he betook himself to Ephrata. He is a learned man, understands the Oriental languages, speaks Latin, discusses theological controversies as well as other sciences; although, in his present condition, he has forgotten much. He is of a good stature, with a friendly face and friendly manners, on which account strangers always get introduced to him, and seek his society. He is open-hearted towards those to whom he takes a liking, and is modest and genial. The brethren have great respect for him, and not without reason, for he is a prudent man, upon whom their order chiefly depends, although he gives himself no higher name than that of a simple brother. In their Public Worship he reads the Scriptures, and also baptizes when so directed by Father Friedsam.

Father Friedsam lives by himself in a little house between the brothers' and the sisters' cloisters, being waited upon by the brethren, and has his food from their kitchen. He lives in entire solitude, except when messengers go out or in, or he performs his duties in the congregation.

The brethren have their convent below, for the houses stand near to each other, with their rear running back to the stream. It is three stories high, and contains about one hundred rooms. The cells are about four paces long and two broad, and there are usually three cells to each antechamber. There is one man to each cell. One iron stove usually serves to warm two or three rooms. The house has a wing. In the lowest story is the brethren's church, in the next their refectory, in the uppermost their store-rooms for their economical purposes. All their doors are unusually narrow, the stairs steep and narrow, so that other people find difficulty in getting along them. The windows are in like manner small. No chair is seen in their rooms, but only narrow benches; but these as well as the floor are just as clean and bright as though they had been newly scoured. The inside of the house is plastered and whitewashed.

The sisters' convent, standing by itself, is built on the hill above, and arranged in a similar manner, having its own refectory and its own church in a wing of the house. They have also some other small houses for work close by.

² That is, "Reformed," as distinguished from Lutheran.

The business of the brethren outside of the house is to work in the fields, meadows, and woods, as also at their mill. The greater part of them seemed to be brought up to agricultural labors. Others labor inside of the convent at all sorts of handicrafts, such as shoemaking, tailoring, weaving cloth and stockings, and the like, partly for the use of the cloisters and partly for sale, and so as to enable them to purchase other necessities. Others attend to other domestic duties, such as cooking, baking, housecleaning, washing clothes, etc., for all the work is done by the brethren without any female assistance in the men's cloister.

The sisters also live by themselves in their convent, engaged in spinning, sewing, writing, drawing, singing, and other things. The younger sisters are mostly employed in drawing. A part of them are just now constantly engaged in copying musical note-books for themselves and the brethren. I saw some of these upon which a wonderful amount of labor had been expended.³

The dress of the brethren is a long, close coat, the skirts of which overlap each other, and are fastened with hooks quite down to the feet, with narrow sleeves, and the collar fitted close around the neck; also a girdle around the middle of the coat. When they wish to be well dressed, a habit is also worn over the close coat, like a chasuble in front, which is thrown over the head; but back of the head is a cape or hood to draw over the head in bad weather, and below this a round cape which hangs down over the back. In summer-time the clothes are of linen or cotton, and entirely white; in the winter-time they are of white woollen cloth. On work-days they have coarse coats usually fastened around them by a leather girdle. But upon their Sunday-clothes the girdles are either of embroidered woollen stuff or linen. Members of the congregation living in the country dress like those in the cloisters when they come to their church. However, they have clothes of various colors and of the usual fashion. Some have inserted in front on their hoods a piece of pasteboard, which serves as a guard to the capoch when it is drawn over the head. The brethren of the convent wear no shirts, but have their woollen coats next to their body. In summer-time they go barefooted; if they wear shoes, they are either of the usual sort with strings, or they are of wool above and a leather sole below. Some wear straw hats when they are traveling over the country; but most of them use their cape or hood as a hat or cap.

The sisters' dress was also a long, close coat; but we noticed that they all had linen girdles. The hood which they always had over their heads was sewed on to the coat. Their coats are also of linen or cotton stuff in summer; in winter of wool, without any linen next to their body. They also go barefooted in summer.

This dress makes them look quite thin, which their scanty food aids, as

³ In a visit made to Ephrata in 1860, the translator [of this narrative] also had the pleasure of seeing these remarkable and beautiful musical collections. One of these beautiful books is in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia.

shall be described hereafter. Hence they are very quick and rapid in their movements, are not troubled by their narrow doors or their steep and narrow stairs. It seemed strange that they could go so thinly clad in the autumn.

Sometimes the brethren and sisters come together, when they invite each other to their love-feast, which, however, are celebrated in a very sparing style. If either party wish to hold a love-feast, it must be first notified to Father Friedsam, who grants permission thereto. If any of the brethren out in the country wish to hold this, he lets Father Friedsam know that his house can hold all the brethren and all the sisters, who are invited at the same time through Father Friedsam. If he informs them that his house can hold only a portion of them, then he has permission both to invite and to select his guests. If any love-feast is made within the convent, the brothers invite any sisters, or the sisters invite any brothers, at their pleasure. Sometimes the invitations are so secret that the others know nothing about it until the meal is prepared. No one goes to a love-feast without an invitation.

They are very hospitable to strangers, friendly, and cheerful. When, on the 7th of September, 1753, I went to visit them in company with Mr. George Ross, we were received and treated as old friends. He had visited them several times before, and was also a man of importance in the country, which had something to do with the matter. We first announced ourselves to Müller, and were heartily welcomed. I informed him that I was a Swedish Minister, and had long been desirous of seeing them. "So," said Müller, "will you also see this poor place? But however poorly we live here, and although we live here, and although we live almost entirely by ourselves, yet we have the advantage of seeing the most distinguished people in the country; for no one comes to the land, without visiting us in our isolated retreat, even though our visitors be the proudest people in the country. We thus get acquaintance enough, though but little advantage therefrom. If any new Lawyer or Advocate comes to Lancaster, it is certain that we shall soon make his acquaintance." He had known almost all the Swedish Ministers who had been in the country.

We requested Mr. Müller to show us the various rooms in the convent, and thereupon went into the brethren's church. In the middle of the church was a broad seat, or place for a chair for Father Friedsam; this was turned towards the congregation; back of this were two others turned towards each other and making a square; this was said to be intended for Eleazar, the Superior of the convent, and the oldest of the brethren. Back of this again was an altar, or a small and high table, and a pulpit to lay a book on. The altar stood somewhat away from the aisle, so that he who ministered there might always turn himself towards the congregation; on the right side of the altar there was also a little room screened by a curtain, within which no one was to enter except their Minister, which was called the Sanctuary. There were also places for benches on both sides of the church, which are used for the brothers and sisters of the congregation. Above, there was a gallery on both sides, so arranged with extending lattice-work that one could look through the openings and see down through the church. Müller said that that was

built for the sisters, so that if they should come to look at the brothers' service, they should, for the sake of modesty, be concealed, as also that the women's place in the temple at Jerusalem was arranged in the same way. "True enough," said I, "for we still see the same thing in the Jewish Synagogues; but why should modesty prevent the men from seeing the women any more than the women from seeing the men? Neither do I understand why they should not see the sisters of the convent just as well as they see the other sisters of the congregation down in the church." "O, well!" he answered, "it is still an old and becoming custom."

We sat ourselves down to rest on a seat in the church, and I asked him whether the Lord's Supper was celebrated at the altar? He answered, "Yes, that is done by Father Friedsam, when one after another goes forward and receives the Sacrament in Bread and Wine; but this must be done on some evening, and with feet-washing afterwards." "That," answered I, "may be as proper as for the Lutherans in some places to use burning lights, although in the middle of the day. But," I asked, "cannot the Lord's Supper be celebrated at any time in the day, although it is not the evening?" Müller answered, "A supper cannot be held at midday; its time is in the evening." I replied, "That which regards time cannot be anything more than an external ceremony. We know that the disciples of Christ, almost immediately after His resurrection, most carefully considered almost every circumstance in the institution of the first Supper, such as to receive the Supper in a sitting posture, to sit reclining against each other, to celebrate the Supper in a house of entertainment, up one flight of stairs, and various other things. But after they understood that the service of the New Testament is not inseparably connected with any church usages, but that these are only to be regarded according to circumstances of convenience and propriety, then one external matter after another was omitted; and it is enough for us Christians to regard the Sacrament as it is in itself." Müller answered, "It is our duty as Christians to regard the primitive state of the church,⁴ and not to make changes therein at our own caprice." I said, "The spirit of the primitive Church⁵ is sufficient for us; everything else that is external is less necessary, as also difficult to ascertain, and we now live in other times. How many Societies give themselves out as still retaining the usages of the primitive Church, which churches are, however, very different from each other?" He answered, "We can prove ourselves to have both the spirit and the state of the primitive Church. We keep our vows of chastity, we have all things in common among us, we observe the washing of feet, and other things." I said, "Each of these things were enough to talk about for half a day; but let us abide by the ceremonies of the Lord's Supper. If you will make any of those necessary which were in the first institution, why not all?" He answered, "It is enough to retain those which contain in them something that is symbolical, and which exhibits the value of the Lord's Supper." I said,

⁴ Orig., "Statum Primitive Ecclesiae."

⁵ "Spiritus Primitive Ecclesiae."

"Take them all together, and the act thus becomes more symbolical. There is none of those just mentioned in which I cannot show something especially notable; yet I regard them all as indifferent.⁶ If, now, you will regard them as absolutely necessary,⁷ then show wherefore this and not the others?" Thereupon I perceived that the man was somewhat changed, and he answered, "The brethren live in the simplicity of their faith, and do not place a high value upon disputations. You must consider that we have learned something from our immediate intercourse with God during that time." "Well," said I, "if that is so, it is more than I know." From that hour I determined not to go any further into controversy than he himself occasioned and took pleasure in, so that I might not make myself a disagreeable guest.

We went into the sisters' convent, and saw their rooms in some parts. The church was arranged in the same manner as that of the brethren above described, with the exception of the gallery. Upon the one side were benches for the brethren of the cloister, when they wished to come thither. The Lord's Supper is administered at the altar in both churches by Father Friedsam, so that they come one by one each time. He is also the Minister in both churches.

Mr. George Ross had a desire to see the sisters and hear them sing. Müller, however, would not go to them to urge this upon them, but said, "You may yourself ask them for this, and perhaps you can effect more with them than I can." We went and knocked at the convent door. Their Prioress came out, and when she heard our request, she bade us remain in the church until the sisters came in the proper order to sing. We received an invitation, and went up a still narrower set of stairs than any that we had before seen, and came into a large room; in that there were long tables, with seats upon both sides of them. Here there were some of the sisters sitting, and writing their notebooks for the hymns—a work wonderful for its ornaments. Six of them sat together and sang a very lovely tune. Both before and after the singing, the sisters talked both with us and with Müller quite freely about one thing and another, and seemed to be quite pleased. Both at our entrance and our departure we shook hands with each of them, and they testified their friendship, according to their custom, by a peculiar position and pressure of the hand.

Mr. Ross returned home and left me alone. A knot of brethren, to the number of ten, met in Müller's white and clean anteroom—I cannot say whether to visit me or to show their respect for Müller. At six o'clock they broke up and went to the sister's convent one by one, after each other, up the hill. I asked what that meant? Müller answered that they were going to a love-feast among the sisters. I said, "Come, I will go along," Müller declined, as he had not been invited, and also said, "I knew nothing of that meeting until they assembled here. You can have your supper with the brethren, which will be just as pleasant to you."

⁶ Orig., "Indifferentia."

⁷ Orig., "Absoluta."

The time came for the cloister brethren to go to their evening meal, and thereupon each one came out of his room immediately, and all went one after another up a pair of stairs into the refectory. This was large enough for one hundred persons, with two long tables; but now they were mostly seated at one table, as the number of the brethren at that time was scarcely twenty. Around the hall in the passages were small cases, each large enough to hold a Bible, for which indeed they were intended, and each had a small white linen curtain before it. The cloth was spread on the table, the food placed in deep stone dishes. The courses were pealed barley boiled in milk, with bread broken into it; another course was pumpkin mush, with slices of soft-crushed bread on a plate. Between these was butter, but only for me, as the brethren for themselves had a kind of cheese-curds on platters⁸ all around the table.

Each one took his place, and I was shown to mine, where the greater part of the brethren were behind my back. After they had sat for some time with downcast eyes, one of the brethren at the table read a passage out of the Bible, after which they sat still for some moments; then each one took out of his pocket a bag in which there were a wooden spoon and a knife. The spoon and knife given to me were taken out of a drawer under the table. We all ate with a good appetite, first of the barley, then of the pumpkin mush, and finally of the butter, in which this economy was observed—that when, at the finishing of the dish, one could no longer use the spoon, the remainder was taken up with pieces of bread. There was no other use for a knife than to take the butter and cut the bread; neither was any plate needed, as, in fact, none was there. I did not see that any piece of bread was broken. At the close, each one licked his knife and spoon, dried them with a cloth which they had in the same bag, and then the knife and spoon were restored to their former place. During the meal not a word was spoken; at its close another chapter was read out of the Bible.

After the meal, Müller and Eleazar remained with me in the refectory, and then Eleazar asked me what I thought of their arrangements? If I knew what I had eaten? And how long I thought I could live upon such a diet? We agreed that nature is satisfied with a small quantity of food; that both moderation in eating and drinking, and food suitable to the human body, preserves from sickness, makes the body active and the mind cheerful; that if all which may properly be called superfluous in meat and drink and clothing should be used for the suffering, there would be no need of so many hospitals in the old countries, and Christianity would have a very different aspect from that which it now presents. Eleazar said that the English, who could not live without flesh at every meal, wonder at our style of meals; but the German taste is different, many peasants in Germany do not taste flesh five times a year. I asked if they regarded the eating of flesh as sinful? Müller answered, "Nay; but the brethren do not incline to the eating of flesh. Our food is usually of vegetables, such as cabbages, roots, greens, also milk,

⁸ These platters are of wood. Two of them are in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

butter, cheese, and good bread always. At the love-feasts, the provision may be somewhat better than usual. We forbid none among us who desire it to eat meat. Wine is used when some one is sick."

I saw at the table a man who was not in their usual dress, also without a beard, and was told that he had lately come into their society; that he was a Doctor of Medicine, born in Saxony, educated at Halle. After he had visited a great part of Europe and Africa, without finding any genuine Christian society, he had finally remained with them, as, in his opinion, the best that was to be found. Müller said that he had had a Christian sickness; which means consumption, and is an abiding cross until death. It is to be observed that, according to their received opinion, the cross and affliction are the surest token of a genuine Christianity, whether they come through God's providence, or they take them upon themselves of their own accord. I said that, according to this, all incurable sicknesses are Christian, or, more correctly, with some they are preparatory, and with others means of strengthening in Christianity. But no suffering, whether external or internal, can, of itself, make us Christians, or be regarded as the surest token of Christianity, for "Pharaoh's magicians had boils as well as Job." "True enough," said he; "we may make a difference between God's punishments and God's corrections, but a Christian without the cross is no Christian."

We went down again into Müller's room, and there he showed me the "History of the Persecutions of the Anabaptists," a large and thick folio volume, which he himself had translated from the Holland into the German language, and had afterwards had it printed there in Ephrata, saying that it was the largest book that had been printed in Pennsylvania,⁹ as also that he had labored for three years upon the translation, and was at the same time so burthened with work that he did not sleep more than four hours during the night. He believed that the Anabaptists had not suffered any persecutions in Sweden. I, however, gave him to understand that King Gustavus had in his time had great difficulty in curing their infectious reformatory sickness, which would otherwise have gone very far, although he did this without persecution. The edition of Müller's book was one thousand two hundred copies, of which seven hundred have been circulated, and five hundred are still on hand.¹⁰ He said that they could be sold within ten years. I think he meant twenty. The price is twenty-two shillings. I asked him how they could be sold at so low a price! "Why not," he said; "for we do not propose to get rich?"

They conducted me to a cell, up a set of stairs, where there was a chaff bed laid upon the floor, a coarse sheet spread over it, with two blankets, and then a figured bedquilt. They told me to use this just as I pleased. They,

⁹ A copy of this work, known as the Martyr Book, is in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The press on which it was printed is also the property of the society.

¹⁰ Part of these five hundred copies were used during the Revolutionary War for making cartridges.

themselves, lie upon their hard benches, having either a stone or a piece of wood under their head. After I had lain down, I heard a splashing and shuffling late into the night, which was caused by their washing the feet of some strange brethren who had come from the country to make them a visit, whose feet the Brethren of the Cloister then washed.

Whilst we were waiting for the service, we fell into conversation on the hallowing of the seventh day. I wondered that they who professed to be Christians should so regulate themselves by the Jewish law, and separate themselves from all others who confess the Christian name. Müller answered, "That is no Jewish law, but a perpetual natural law,¹¹ which is written upon the hearts of all men, and is of the same force as all the other nine of the ten Divine Commandments, none of which can be changed, but stands to all eternity." "Pardon me," I answered, "that I, upon this your Sabbath, and at the same hour that you are proceeding to hallow it, take upon me to show that you have not got the correct meaning of the third¹² commandment, or, as you prefer to call it, the fourth. The hallowing of the seventh day is a moral, not a natural law, and thus perpetual, but is so without being fixed to any certain time. The subject is extensive, and our time short, and I shall therefore confine myself chiefly to your words. Is it a natural law which is inscribed upon the hearts of all men, why then did not the wise heathen regard the seventh day, whilst they externally observed the other commandments? Still more, if it is a perpetual moral law, the seventh day should be observed in heaven also. But where do we see that there are there six working-days, and the seventh a day of rest? Are not all the days there one eternal Sabbath?" "My friend," answered Müller, "has not God commanded, Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but on the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, etc. Where do you anywhere see a command to hallow the first?" "Beloved, do you not understand," said I, "that I have already answered thereon how far that command extends. But if it is so necessary that this should come upon the seventh day, do you believe that this Saturday is the seventh day in your week, according to the original arrangement? Consider that a whole day, or twelve hours, were abstracted from the natural course of time in the time of Joshua. (Josh. 10:2.) Again ten degrees, or five hours, in the time of Hezekiah. (Is. 38:8.) Palestine has one meridian and Pennsylvania another, and how now will your seventh day coincide with the first arrangement?" Müller answered, "We hold no other day as the seventh than that which you yourselves hold? Is it not sufficient that we observe the general computation of the country?"

"Well, my friend," answered I; "but if the general computation of the country does not coincide with God's reckoning, as He instituted it, how do

¹¹ "Lex naturalis perpetua," in the original.

¹² It is well known that the Lutherans, following Luther's Catechisms and the usage of the Western Church before the Reformation, make but one commandment of what are considered by Protestants generally as the 1 and 2.

you observe God's commandment? Is not that an erroneous conscience?"¹³ "Ah!" answered he, "is not that a command of the Lord? The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, etc. Who has changed that commandment? Not God, but men. To them Christ says, 'Who has demanded this at your hands?' Everything that stands in the Scriptures is ancient and true; all that does not stand there is new and false. The Scripture is our rule." I said, "It is just by the Scriptures that I will show that the Saviour himself changed the first command in regard to the seventh day, if not in express words, yet by express acts, which in an equally strong manner explained this holy will. He hallowed the first day as our day of rest when upon that day He arose from the dead, as a token that as the seventh day was in the Old Testament hallowed in commemoration of the creation, so should the first day be hallowed in commemoration of the resurrection. On the Jewish Sabbath Christ was laid in the grave, and so took away the eating of their Paschal lamb, and the celebration of their Sabbath. On the Christian Sabbath the Redeemer arose, and at the same time instituted a new church order. Throughout the whole of the Holy Scriptures you can nowhere find that the Redeemer after His resurrection at any time met His Apostles on the Jewish Sabbath, or that the Redeemer during the whole of the forty days had any intercourse with the Jews, a clear sign that the Old Testament had now passed away." My opponent now seemed to be somewhat warm, and it just then came to pass that the bell rang, which broke off our conversation, which otherwise might not have been terminated with equal satisfaction upon both sides.

He referred to Jonas Auren, who had come into the country along with the Pastors Rudman and Bjork, but afterwards turned to the Sabbatarians, and asked if I had been informed of that. I let him understand that I was aware alike of his fall and of his uprising. How, during the time that he held with the observers of the seventh day, he had written an Almanac called "Noah's Dove," which flew through that country to favor said sect. In opposition to which, the Provost Bjork, with manly sense and spirit, had written a reply entitled "A little Olive-leaf put in the mouth of that so-called Noah's Dove, and sent home again to let her owner know that the waters are abated from off the face of the ground." The Rev. Provost saw from this the blessed result that the man came back to his flock, and often afterwards performed service in his church.

This last conversation was held between us whilst we were going out and a part of our way, for in a moment the brethren were out of their cells and in full march. We now went to the third church, which stands on the hill by itself, in which service is held once a month, and the whole congregation comes together from both convents, as well as from the country. The people of the cloisters walk in their usual way, one after the other, the sisters as well as the brothers; and their walks are, therefore, all narrow, like footpaths. I took my place in the ranks of the white brethren, whilst Müller went upon my left side.

¹³ Orig., "Consciencia erronea."

During our walk up the long hill, Müller asked me if I believed that pains of hell are eternal? To which I answered, "Just as certainly as the joy of heaven is eternal. How else?" I asked, in reply. "Nay," said he; "I do not believe that the soul, which is a part of God's being, can perish eternally." "But," said I, "I understand that you believe that this part of God's being lies for thousands of millions of years in the punishment of hell in a sort of purifying fire. Dear Mr. Müller," said I, "you are a benevolent man, but let not your charity extend so far as to wish to extinguish the fires of hell. Remember that there was a great gulf between Abraham's bosom and the rich man's place of punishment, so that no one could go from the one place to the other." "Yea," said he, "as long as you are evil and I good, we shall never agree; but if we are both good, then we shall well agree. When thirty-nine thousand years have passed, the great Jubilee comes, when the Devil shall be chained." I understood well whence that came and whither it tended. When we had made the distinction between aeternitas (eternity) and aeviternitas (a great period), we arrived at the church door, and that was the end of the matter.

The church was not large, and could be filled by some hundred persons. The forepart of the church was the third part of its size, and there sat the cloister brothers in their order. Müller and Eleazar, together with some others, sat on cross-seats opposite to one another, the others on long benches on both sides, and also in the rear. Above, the sisters of the cloister had their gallery, so arranged that neither they could see the congregation nor the congregation see them. Father Friedsam had his seat separate between that high choir and the rest of the church. The cloister brothers went in through a little door to the high choir, whereupon the sisters immediately followed. But Müller conducted me in through the large door, and gave me in charge to the sexton, who immediately showed me my place in the foremost seats. In the church there were people both of their own and of other forms of faith.

When they were all assembled, they sat for some moments perfectly still. In the meantime Father Friedsam was seen to be preparing himself; he held his hands upon both his sides, threw his head up and down, his eyes hither and thither; pulled at his mouth, his nose, his neck, and finally sang in a low and fine tone. Thereupon the sisters in the gallery began to sing, the cloister brothers joined in with them, and all those who were together in the high choir united in a delightful hymn, which lasted for about a quarter of an hour. Thereupon Müller arose and read the third chapter of Isaiah.

Father Friedsam recommenced his former movements, and appeared rather ridiculous than devotional. Finally, he arose with his hands clasped together and his eyes turned upwards, and began to speak of the natural darkness of man's understanding, and prayed for enlightenment and a blessing. Then he sat down and preached about holiness of life, the danger of temptations, and the need of watchfulness. Examples of this were taken from the soldiers in Germany, who call out, "Who goes there? Who goes there?"

Finally, he began to speak of faith, hope and charity. Faith and unbelief are the points between which man fluctuates. Faith saves, but unbelief condemns. That hope and charity follow faith. But when he should have developed this point, he made faith the foundation of hope and love; but then again immediately said that just as love is so are hope and faith. All turned upon this, that faith was nothing else than an inward fear of God, and devotion. It seemed to me that Father Friedsam himself did not know where he was at home (what he believed). All this was spoken with an incomparable rapidity, in hasty language, with rapid gestures. Now he struck out his hands, now he pressed them to his breast, now he placed them upon one side, now upon another, and now upon both. Again, he scratched his head, then patted himself on the nose, and then wiped his nose on the back of his hand. Meanwhile, in the congregation, which he frequently called Jerusalem, some were moved and shook their heads, others wept, other slept, and so on. The sermon was concluded with an Amen.

Müller went forward to Father Friedsam and proposed that a psalm should be sung. It is to be remarked that every one has the liberty of speaking and suggesting anything profitable to the congregation. Then Father Friedsam hinted to a brother, who sat on a bench nearest to him in the church, that he should begin, and himself raised the tune; the said brother began the psalm and led it. Father Friedsam also united in it, as also the brethren and sisters, who sat in cross-seats in front, having psalm-books and also note-books; but the cloister people, as well as the rest of the congregation, were silent.

It is to be observed that to every psalm there are three different melodies, according to which the note-books are written by the sisters of the convent. Different brothers, as well as the sisters, understand vocal music, as also does Father Friedsam. When they sing, each one holds a note-book as well as a psalm-book, both of which are of quarto size, looking into both alternately, which custom would be more difficult if the singing were not performed so regularly every day.

After the psalm, Father Friedsam asked the brethren generally if any one had anything to suggest for the general edification? Thereupon a little man, quite old, with a heavy beard which concealed the greater part of his face, and with a soft voice, answered. "That he pictured the Gospel to himself as a beautiful flower, which had a delightful odor of still increasing strength, and that should bear glorious fruit. Also, that he had both a right to that flower and pleasure in it, when he could appropriate it to himself with a broken and contrite heart." Whereupon he burst forth into tears, so that the rest of his well-meant discourse was broken off and suppressed.

This part of their service consists, as it were, in common conversation, wherein each one relates what he has upon his conscience, in what state he finds himself, and what may be suggested as to the edification of the congregation. When any one announces anything of the kind, Father Friedsam gives his judgment thereupon.

When the service closed, it was eight o'clock. The women went out of church first, in such manner that those from the benches nearest to the door first marched off one after another, then those that were next, and so the whole of the women's side of the church. The same order was observed upon the men's side, whence they went through the large door of the church; so also did the brethren and sisters go through the smaller door from their high choir. They are not accustomed to many hours of attendance at church, as Müller stated to me; whereupon I asked him how the rest of the day was spent among them? Whether they go to visit one another, etc.? He answered: "The brethren remain most of their time within their cells; they work hard during the week, and so they must rest." Whence it followed that as the work was bodily, so must their rest be chiefly of the character.

I further asked why there were no prayers in their service. That question seemed to excite him, and his answer was "That the heart is not always open for prayer; that to pray with closed heart is only hypocrisy." "What," said I, "are there not many hearts in church? How can you tell which are open or which are not? You scarcely know your own heart, how much less that of others. But he who does not find his heart open, ought to pray that it may be opened." He answered, "Prayer is a gift of the spirit. They whose heart is not open have not yet received that gift, and cannot pray." "Pardon me, my friend," I answered; "God, through His prepared grace, gives us sometimes the will, but not at all times the immediate power; but if we persevere in prayer, we obtain both. We are now talking about general church prayers, which ought to be applicable to the condition of all in general. Ought not such to be made, that they who receive the spirit of prayer may unite their thoughts and offer their devotion there in? I hope that you, who are spiritual, do not come before the Lord with closed and hardened hearts." "All right," said he; "he who has a desire to pray has also liberty so to do among us, only he must report it to Father Friedsam." "So," said I, "one must ask leave of Father Friedsam to pray to God." "Nay, nay," said he; "but he keeps order in our congregation, and we cannot do less than pay him his respect, as he is the founder of the brotherhood."

It is to be remarked that, as they hold their Sabbath on Saturday, they are in the midst of their work on Sunday, which is not only in conflict with all Christian order, but also against the fundamental law of the land, which expressly declares that Sunday shall be a Sabbath for all. In consequence of this, the Magistrates of the country, when they first took up their abode there, took their horses and oxen from the plow, and imposed fines upon them; but this did not produce the slightest change in them. They were therefore arrested and driven in great flocks to the jail in Lancaster. But they were not cast down by this, but sang hymns in their place of imprisonment; but neither ate nor drank for many days; neither did they lie down to rest any further than that they leaned against one another as they sat. All which, with other things, moved the Governor and other Magistrates to leave them in peace from that time.

After Divine Service, whilst I went hither and thither among the brethren in their cloister, talking now with one and now with another, most of them being very stupid, Father Friedsam came to make me a visit,—an honor of which not every one can boast,—as is the custom of that place. He came in a white woollen coat, with a bare head and rapid gait. He bade me welcome to their brotherhood with friendly words and gestures. I perceived that the brethren had induced him to show me this politeness, as they also seemed to take pleasure in my society. We went into Müller's room, and the old man seemed more full of life than the others.

He asked what I thought of their Society. I answered, "It is not to be wondered at that, in a country where there is such toleration for all forms of faith, some well-meaning Christians should choose such a peculiar mode of life for themselves, according to the best of their understanding, and as tending to the promotion of that rest of conscience for which they long. I understood that they had seen in Germany every form of cloister-life, and established something of the kind for themselves here, retaining what appeared to them to be good."

"I doubt not, my friend," said he, "that you are aware that the cloister-life is older than the Papacy; as also that the Christian Church, whilst still in its state of innocence, had within it certain flocks that chose a life of celibacy, and had all things in common." "That is not denied," said I; "neither do I myself undertake to judge that manner of life, only through this, that no merit is aimed at before God. Or, how is that, my friends? Do you believe that you are nearer to the door of heaven than I am, because of your hard life—because you sleep upon these hard benches, and are so lean and haggard?"

"We by no means think of meriting anything hereby," said Father Friedsam. "God guard us from that. But we are commanded to depart from Babylon, or the sinful world; and as we are left at liberty to separate ourselves in this manner, so we have had a desire to do so." I answered, "Do you mean that the world, the flesh, and the devil do not trouble you here in this house?" Müller fell into the conversation by saying, "We believe that these enemies are everywhere, and even here also; but here we are not so much oppressed by them as you are in the great world, where there are more temptations. And you should also remember that the Apostle enjoins that each one shall walk in the vocation wherein he is called. We have found our calling to coincide with this mode of life. In this we are secure."

"But think you," said I, "that no one has the spirit of the Primitive Church except those who live in a community of goods?" "As regards that," continued Müller, "we admit that such a community can be observed only by those who arrive at the highest degree of perfection. It was not all Christians in the first Church who had received that gift. Among us, also, we have paid dearly enough for it, as several false brethren took the money which we had gathered for the common good of the congregation and, under the pretence of purchasing a piece of land for a new residence on the other side of

the river Susquehanna, ran away with it, which placed us in such straits that it was nearly the end of our mode of life here. To him who can live among us the door stands open. Those of our brethren who have their farms around us are of the same mind, although they do not live in the same way; so that if we should need the whole of any one's place, he would willingly give it to us out of love to the brethren."

I again turned myself to Father Friedsam, and said, "It gives me great joy to learn that you love the Lord Jesus Christ, honor His Sacraments, and speak of His gracious dealings in your Divine Services." He answered, "God preserve us from any thing else; it is upon Him that we must hope, obeying His commands and walking in His footsteps." I said, further, that I had not expected to see the brethren and sisters with such smiling faces and friendly demeanor beneath their outward cross. I doubted not that each one had his inward sufferings, which sometimes weighed heavily enough upon their hearts, which they kept silently within themselves without disturbing others therewith. I told them of a sort of Pietists, who over twenty years ago arose in Sweden, who were self-conceited, morose, and bitter, just as if they would eat other people up. One could not take it as a proof of Christian love and spiritual meekness, although they wore long coats like these of yours. Müller replied, "Indeed you touch my heart by your conversation. Such are also our thoughts. The children of God need not always show a sour countenance. That would be nothing else than to show one's self impatient of their Father's will. One never sees a discontented mind with a glad countenance, nor a contented mind with a sour face. If we are contented with our Heavenly Father's will, we shall always show ourselves satisfied, and with a glad countenance, even in the bitterness of death."

When I inquired whether the place where they live was healthful, Father Friedsam replied that, during the twenty-two years of his residence here, he had suffered from fever but once, and then he immediately got up and ran around through the hills until his sickness disappeared, and did not return again. There are seldom any sick among them, although the country all around is subject to various fevers and pleurisy. They are indebted to their diet for such good health. Eleazar related, in the presence of Father Friedsam, that Peter Kalm, the Swede, who was with them some years ago, had spoken to me about the brotherhood with great kindness, after which I had had a desire to come hither. They are very fond of hearing what others say in their honor. They now asked a great deal about Peter Kalm. Others again reported my age, and that I had hitherto lived unmarried, which greatly pleased the old man. Thereupon he took a friendly leave, and wished me happiness.

The time was further passed away by conversation between Müller and myself. I requested him to inform me as to their mode of baptizing, which he also did. "We seldom receive any others," said he, "than such as have been already baptized, and who thus have some knowledge of Christianity; but if they have been brought up in our Society, we first instruct them. When they come to the water, the Minister there puts to them the necessary ques-

tions, which are to be answered. Then the person falls down upon his knees in the water, places both his opened hands before his mouth, with the ends of his fingers turned towards his nose, so as to keep his nostrils closed, and the same with his mouth. The Minister then lays his right hand crosswise over the other's hands and presses them closely together, holding his left hand behind his neck, and thus plunges the person under the water. When the person who is to be baptized makes resistance during the performance of the rite, force and strength are employed for its completion. Without dipping them under the water, there can be no baptism. Is it not so?"

I answered, "I have nothing against your amount of water, but cannot understand why you will not allow of less water. When our Saviour, in St. John iii, speaks about what belongs to a true baptism, He says, 'water and the Holy Ghost;' but not that it should be a whole river, more or less." "Nay," said he, "that cannot be sufficient, for the person must be submerged. When Christ sent out His Apostles, He commanded them to baptize, which word cannot receive its significance in a small cup of water."

I referred to the English Baptists; how the Minister takes the person who is to be baptized, with one hand back in his collar, and the other in his waistband from behind, and so hurls him backwards, that his head is dipped into the water, and his feet turned up into the air, which must thus require the strength of two men in the Minister. On the other hand, the German Anabaptists, who are called Mennonists, conduct the person to the water, and there with their hands pour the water three times over his head. You of Ephrata, again, have your peculiar manner, which was never heard of nor seen before your time. You all profess to be Baptists, appeal to the first institution, and despise others. Which class of you all has now found the right way?" He answered, "I believe we have." I said, "I will believe the same, but not before it is proved."

I asked if he had been in Bethlehem and seen the Herrnhut Brethren? Whether Herrnhut and Ephrata could not become one brotherhood? "Nay," answered he; "there is a great gulf between us. Some years since we had a brother who had been in Bethlehem. He praised the Moravians, and exhorted us to union with them. Then four of us went to Bethlehem and stayed upon the other side of the river, sending over to the Moravians and desiring to hold a meeting with their Society. Thereupon they took counsel for two hours, after which they answered. 'That the Saviour did not will that their congregation should be called together on this account; but that on the following day they should be allowed to come over and see whom they would individually in their houses. In the meantime they should stay in the tavern that was there over night, either at their own expense, or that of the Moravian Brethren.' The plain meaning, however, was that the brethren of Ephrata should pay for themselves, which they also did. The messenger from Bethlehem had also to report that the Saviour had informed them of it the same hour that they set forth from Ephrata, so that their arrival had been known already for some days; although it had required two hours

to decide whether they should be received or not, as Müller said. The next day two of them turned back homewards. The other two crossed over the river to continue their journey to East Jersey. But when they went through Bethlehem, all the windows were full of people, who stared at them. The Swede Nyberg was here several times after he had joined himself to the Moravians," said Müller. "He asked me if I could explain mystic words for him; but I said that I could not, and that I did not busy myself with such things." He also informed Müller of one Israel Simor who had lived a half year with them, but last autumn had given himself up to drinking, lying, and deceit, and finally went over the country to Carolina. He said that they could perceive when any one was about withdrawing himself from the cloister—they showed themselves discontented at home, and desired to wander out into the country, until they finally returned no more.

We had much other conversation about marriage, defensive war, oaths, etc., which it would be too tedious to relate.

Among themselves these brethren live in great love, always calling each other brother or sister along with their proper name. They kiss each other when they meet, and wash each other's feet.

Their rules, whether of the church, the household, or other usages, are as yet only oral, and are frequently changed, as seems to be demanded by edification. It is said that the brotherhood lives in the freedom of its conscience, and therefore without laws; and it is thought that some of the brethren do not yet know what the others believe. At first they regarded it as a sin to kill any animal, and still more so to eat the flesh. Now they say that this is left to each one's freedom to eat it or not; but what liberty is there in eating what is not found in their storehouse? At first, also, it was regarded as a sin to use horses for working, and they themselves dragged home their own wood, and for this purpose put on themselves a suitable harness. Now they labor with horses and oxen, which, however, they treat very kindly. This, with other things, causes me to think that their work is still in its beginning, and stands, as it were, in a state of ferment as to whether anything shall come of hereafter or not; also, that the freedom so much talked of is nothing but an encouragement to others to unite with them. I am sure that no one is regarded as a genuine brother in that house, unless he sleeps upon a hard bench in his usual clothes, however they may prate about their freedom.

They talked there of Christ, of justification, of faith and unbelief; there Christ's Sacraments are used in the form and manner that have been mentioned, but I doubt much about the true meaning of all this; neither could I within so short a time investigate everything. Some persons in Lancaster told me that they were Arians, who denied Christ's godhead, or equality with the Father. Of the congregation in general, I believe that I have been right in thinking that their justification is "infused, not imputed;" that their salvation is not a fruit of faith, but worked out by a severe life. Regner, who lived among them for some time, testifies the same in Fresenius about the

affairs of Herrnhut. He calls them Beiselian Eckerlings; testifies that he united with them that he might gain sanctity by a severe life, and the forsaking of this world. That they offered him the Lord's Supper before he had had an opportunity to be baptized by them; that he constantly insisted that such a holy life should be begun, as had often been spoken about; that they directed him to regulate himself by the brethren; that they built him a hut for himself, wherein he became deranged. Then they took him into the cloister, and removed him from one room to another. When he finally came to his senses, they would no longer tolerate him among them. Müller told me about all this, and also that he was a severe burden to them, and that the brethren were glad when they got rid of him.

They have a great many Jewish customs. They all have their beard growing up to their ears. This, together with their white dress and their spare diet, is well adapted to gain their object, namely, to look pale, thin, and wretched. They go barefooted in summer, use feet-washing, keep the seventh day as holy, count their hours after the Jewish fashion, from the beginning of the day, so that our six o'clock is their one, and our twelve their seven. To which may also be added that when I heard them read the Scriptures five different times, it was always out of the Old Testament, the Prophets, and the Psalms, but never out of the New Testament. So, also, they had a taste for the Old Testament in their "Sanctuary," and their "Women's gallery."

They hold with the Quakers, inasmuch as they are a sort of Enthusiasts. They do, indeed, read the Scriptures, but believe themselves to be possessed of an "inward light," which transcends the outward. They, therefore, despise all outward instruction; give out that their sermons come from the immediate light and impulse of the Spirit in the same time in which they speak; that each and every one has liberty to teach publicly in their congregations, when the order therefor comes; that we are to use "thou" in conversation; to shake hands; exhibit absolute perfection in our life, and to use no prayers, unless they come extempore into the head.

They agree with the Anabaptists in that they take no one into their Society unless he has been baptized by them; baptize those who come from other churches; baptize only those who have come to years of discretion. Their baptism is performed with an abundance of water by immersion; other things, as already mentioned. They also hold services in their churches late at night. Father Friedsam, who lives in a little house between the brethren's and sisters' cloisters, has a rope, which goes upon both sides over the garden, with a bell at each end in both cloisters. When it so comes into his head, and he pulls thereon, and the bell rings, and even if it were in the middle of the night, all must get up and assemble in their church to hold service; a small paper lantern in each one's cell is used upon such occasions.

With the Papists, also, they have much in common, although they call themselves Protestants; they follow the same cloistered life, and have a cloister dress, and also rules for their meals; they seek their justification by a

severe life, and perfection in a life of celibacy; they believe in a purgatory, or purifying fire after death; on which account, also Father Friedsam at certain times offers prayers for the dead. Many Roman Catholics from Germany have been received into their Society, and live among them. The number of people in the cloisters was much greater in former years. Now the brethren are not more in number than twenty-five (25), and the sisters thirty-five (35) or thirty-six (36). However earnestly they strive for a chaste life, the untimely intercourse of some of the brethren and sisters with each other has subjected the whole society to the unfavorable judgment of many. Father Friedsam himself is not free from such charges, which are made with great particularity. They cannot deny that some members have been licentious, but say that they have been immediately discarded; during the time that Conrad Weiser lived among them, he once took the liberty of visiting his own house and family in another place.¹⁴ But upon his return, after a strict examination, he had to submit to a severe punishment for having slept with his own wife, which he willingly underwent. Around the Convent and its land, families belonging to their Society have settled themselves and bought farms and homesteads. In this there is a policy, namely, that people of other faith may not come too near and disturb them. They are also so peaceful with their neighbors, that if any dispute ever arises, they would rather surrender their rights, or give the matter into the hands of others in whom they have confidence, than trouble any Judge with it. Their congregations are widely scattered in several places in Chester County, and also in East Jersey. But at some distance from the Convent several Hermits live in houses by themselves, built mostly at the expense of the Society.

They have one Society in New Virginia, upon New river.¹⁵ There, however, they dwell in separate houses, but in one neighborhood, and so by themselves that they neither help or desire help from other people. The land that they cultivate has an excellent soil. The brethren often receive messages in these nests from travelling brethren, who always journey on foot, two and two together, never more and never less. Sometimes, also, the sisters are thus seen upon the roads.

In the cloister there is a printing-office, with a press, together with a new type, fair and clear, brought from Frankfort.¹⁶ But it has not yet repaid either its expense or its trouble. Some books have been printed there written by the brethren themselves. The "History of the Persecutions of the Anabaptists" has given them the most trouble and least return. They have had a proposal to print the Classic Authors for the Philadelphia Academy;¹⁷ but Müller said that he was now tired of that work, was alone in it, and his sight was growing weak. In the printing-office there were large pieces, some two, others three ells long, engraved on wood, for printing tablets, which were

¹⁴ At Heidelberg, in Berks County

¹⁵ In the western part of Virginia.

¹⁶ On the Mayn, from which place Beissel came.

¹⁷ The old Academy, in Fourth Street below Arch.—T. W.

placed either in their churches or in their cells, consisting of verses or passages of Scripture. There were also some school-books lying there. I inquired for their owner, and Müller answered that some time ago a German student had come to them, but became tired of their way of life, and took his departure. He, as well as many others, I understood, had made the trial, but had found neither pleasure nor profit in the regulations of that spiritual corporation.

The mills which belong to the convent are both a useful and an ingenious work. There are flour-, saw-, and paper-mills, a fulling-mill, and a flaxseed-oil press at the same place, and operated with the same water-power. The greater part of their support is derived from the oil-press. The flour-mill makes good flour, so that in view of this, and also because the toll is moderate, the people pass by other mills to come to this one. The saw-mill is also in a good condition. The paper-mill makes the best kind of card-paper. The fulling-mill was burnt down. About this, Müller related that one evening, when the brethren were together consulting about the next day's work, word came that the mill was in flames. That was occasioned by the carelessness of some of the brethren, who did not look after the fire before they went away from it.

As I had now been among these brethren from Friday noon until Saturday afternoon, it was time to return to Lancaster. The brethren asked me several times when I would come again to see them. This seemed to me as though they thought that I had some desire to unite with their Society. I took leave of the brethren, and invited them to visit me if their way was so directed. Müller, who, during all this time, had kept me company, followed me down to the mill a short distance from the cloister, where they had my horse. He bore my travelling-sack the whole way for me, and when I objected to it, he said, "You may permit me to carry it now, perhaps I can never do it again." The day was warm; and when I said that the weight was troublesome, and I would help him a little, he answered again, "You can see very well that what I do is done from love. If I did not love you, I would not do it."

Finally, I took a friendly leave of my companion. I thanked him that he did not dislike me for being of a different way of thinking. I hoped that if we did not see each other any more in this life, we might meet with joy in that place where there should be one fold and one Shepherd; where all controversies in theology would cease; where love should abide forever after all other gifts disappear. He took me in his arms and kissed me, thanked me, and said, "That is a good wish. I hope we shall meet in that place, although we travel different roads. I shall also pray to God for you. Farewell."