

PEOPLE OF CHOICE: DECISION MAKING  
IN AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY  
SWISS-GERMAN PEASANT FAMILY

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I

Dealing with decisions members of a peasant family have made during the early part of the eighteenth century faces two sets of problems, one documentary, the other interpretive. Even for leading historical figures sources revealing the reasons for actions taken are sparse or difficult to assess;<sup>1</sup> materials for the so-called common people are scarcer still and at best allow only fleeting glimpses. More serious, however, are interpretive issues because the undertaking faces major ideological systems that touch upon the nature and significance of human decision-making in historical contexts or, worse, declare its exploration as aberrant.

A first approach is the theory of modernization which has shaped much historical scholarship and continues to influence interpretations also of colonial North America.<sup>2</sup> This view claims that the past has but one real watershed, that between a traditional and a modern phase.<sup>3</sup> People in traditional societies, the theory holds, are objects of given historical forces rather than active agents who shape their destinies; they are backward-looking, remain tied to the ways of the past, resist innovation and bow to authority, be it male, parental, ecclesiastical, or governmental. Traditional people supposedly rarely experience or respect individuality in spouse selection or childrearing, in contrast to modern people who are future-oriented, experimental, and individualist in choice of mates and life goals.<sup>4</sup>

A second view is closely related to the first and deals with peasant life. It considers subsistence farming, the term used to describe it, as a lot marked by drudgery and bondage to the vagaries of climate, soil, and tradition, precisely because it remains basically outside the world-economy. As one commentator stressed: "Despite the idyllic image that many people have of the country side, the great majority of the world's peasants are in a state of culture shock produced by the hard conditions of rural life."<sup>5</sup>

A third proposition refers to immigration. Scholars have viewed migrations nearly universally as phenomena of crisis. Religious or political persecution, misharvests, socio-economic dislocations, or demographic pressures supposedly mark the background-world of people on the move. Migration is understood, in the phrase of an often repeated textbook cliché, as an effort of people to

better themselves, as the leaving of a world of bondage for a land of unfettered freedom.<sup>6</sup>

A fourth problem relates to the religious movement called Pietism, understood here not as a general term, but as a historical phenomenon of the years 1670 to 1750.<sup>7</sup> Denominational orthodoxies as well as proponents of empirical rationality have called especially Pietism's radical forms *Schwärmerei*, that is a sort of sentimentality in the religious domain, often fed by supposedly repressed eroticism and tied to Wayward magical, alchemical, and hermeticist assumptions and practices.

A final view involves the family. A recent source books proudly announces that "It has been long recognized that families have histories. But that *the* family has a history is a recent discovery." In this approach *the* family means foremost "such things [!] as fertility, nuptuality, and mortality, sexual ideas and behavior"<sup>9</sup> that have been reified into causally determining forces. This absorption of family into historical demography and sociology—both surely valuable subdisciplines in their own right and of long tradition—has been celebrated as new and exciting.<sup>10</sup>

Such widely held views, however, are offset by a series of less accepted propositions. People, be they high or low, formally schooled or educated by work, may be perceived, first, as people of choice, not merely in the sense of motivational calculation but of existential decision-making, understood as obedience to what Socrates had named the daimonion,<sup>11</sup> Jacob Boehme the "incorporate ground of grace,"<sup>12</sup> and George Fox "that inward Light."<sup>13</sup> This implies that each person is endowed with an irreducible "source of being certainty" (*Seinsgewissheit*), that is with "an oracle that intimates to each 'that what ought and the what not'."<sup>14</sup> Second, peasant life, that is familial agrarian pursuits only marginally involved with the world-economy, may be viewed not as a lower form of socio-economic existence, but as a viable and satisfying way of life.<sup>15</sup> Third, migration may be considered as not necessarily embedded in crisis, but rather as a constant in human affairs resulting from all sorts of positive or negative forces.<sup>16</sup> Fourth, Pietism in all its forms may be interpreted as neither better nor worse than, but merely different from, denominational orthodoxies or enlightenment postulates.<sup>17</sup> The family may be seen, finally, as only contextually biological, but essentially as a unit of people who shape their lives by personal choice within the potentialities and limitations imposed by a given place, time, and tradition as well as by the irreducible imperative at the core of each given individuality.<sup>17</sup> The following exploration will examine the data in the light of these two sets of propositions.

The family chosen for this investigation hailed from Niederdorf, part of the parish Waldenburg, situated in a rather forlorn side valley of the back country of the Canton of Basel which in 1501 had become a member of the Swiss Confederacy of semi-independent states.<sup>18</sup> When this family left for Pennsylvania in 1736, it consisted of nine people: The parents Theodor or Durs Thommen, age 57, and Margareth, his wife, born Rickenbacher, age 55; the daughter

Catharina, age 34; the son Martin, age 32, accompanied by Barbara, his wife, born Mohler, age 36, and their small child Johannes; the son Johann Jakob, age 28; the son Durs, Jr., age 25; and, finally, Anna, age 16.<sup>19</sup>

Historians sometimes state that "ordinary" people have left no or only few traces beyond what parish or civil registers preserved, but that numerical analysis rescues their history with reliable precision.<sup>20</sup> The claim is questionable. Take, for instance, the emigrant lists presented by William John Hinke in *Pennsylvania German Pioneers*<sup>21</sup> or the Adolph Gerber lists of Basel emigrants to the North American British colonies between 1734 and 1794:<sup>22</sup> A methodical search will yield fragment after fragment for many, if not most of those listed, surely insufficient for full comprehension, yet granting revealing insight into the lives of those people.<sup>23</sup>

The fragments left by the Thommens, for example, include personal letters, parish and governmental records, details about property transfers, and descriptions of observers. They are widely scattered in archives of Basel, South Germany, and Pennsylvania and highlight not only personal aspects, but also social and religious conditions of their time. This paper, however, will not explore the Thommen's full story, but one aspect only, the nature and context of their choices. First their decision to emigrate shall be scrutinized, then their various choices at destination be portrayed.

## II

On January 2, 1736, Niclaus Geymüller, bailiff of Waldenburg, informed the Basel authorities that Durs Thommen of Niederdorf and Christen Thommen and the Elder Schmitt of Oberdorf "were willing, if they could get the necessary permission, to remove with wives and children, also all their belongings, to Philadelphia, allegedly a kind of province or city in Pennsylvania."<sup>24</sup> They would, of course, the bailiff explained, have their plans publicly announced according to custom, pay all outstanding debts as well as the removal tax—it was ten percent for going permanently abroad and five percent of the assessed property for leaving to another part of the Confederacy<sup>25</sup>—although the petitioners would be grateful if the tax could be waived or at least significantly reduced.

The bailiff then reported in some tortured prose:

As for the reasons that led these subjects to such a decision, they complain mainly that it was quite impossible, given the quite dear present times and that they had to pay such high interest on the money they had borrowed, just to draw the necessary sustenance from their properties because these were in good part quite rough and could be cultivated only with much expense and effort and because they had to pay the large interest they owed on borrowed capital as well as the mortgage and the tithe.

To their grown children, furthermore, who in place of men and maidservants worked their fields which they themselves because of their fairly advanced age could not till anymore, they did not pay a cent in recompense, wherefore their children, some of whom were married, but had received little or nothing with their

spouses, did not want to stay with them under these conditions since they could not see anything else before them than that they could not only not save anything for their old age and their children, but also saw the parental property and wealth diminish from day to day which could not provide for all their needs and necessary interest.<sup>26</sup>

The bailiff's statement is not easily interpreted. Taken at face value it seems to imply some creeping economic crisis, a gradual impoverishment or, rather, threat of impoverishment of quite well-to-do people who had decided to remove to Pennsylvania therefore, where fertile land was reported to be plentiful and for the having. On leaving in 1736, the Thommens had an assessed wealth of 3497 Basel pounds;<sup>27</sup> eleven months after their departure they were to purchase "eighty miles from Philadelphia," as Durs Thommen wrote, "a place of 350 acres with two houses and barns, . . . 6 horses, 2 colts, 15 heads of cattle and about 35 sacks of oats, 46 sacks of wheat, 25 sacks of rye and 23 sacks of Indian corn" for 2700 Basel or 360 Pennsylvania pounds.<sup>28</sup>

On March 11, 1736/37, furthermore, Durs Thommen petitioned the "Honourable President and Council of the Province of Pennsylvania . . . in behalf of himself and others." The immigrants explained that, "having disposed of their old Household Goods and Utensils, which were very bulky, at their coming down the Rhine, for a very small quantity of new ones of the same kind, they were laden on board the Ship *Princess Augusta* at Rotterdam.' These goods, however, had been confiscated on arrival in Philadelphia on September 15, 1736, as illegal imports. That "very small quantity," of which Durs Thommen wrote, included however no less than "thirty stoves, five hundred and ninety six scythes, one hundred and three large . . . strawknives, twenty seven stewpans, . . . two dozen scissors, . . . two dozen and a half tobacco pipes, . . . three dozen spectacles" and many more such diverse items.<sup>29</sup>

What shall one make of all this? The family clearly did not face an immediate economic crisis, but harbored a sense of possible future economic decline due to high taxes and interest rates. On January 10, 1735, the government had indeed fixed the interest rate at a five percent minimum and had assigned severe penalties for any transgression or circumvention.<sup>30</sup> Yet the city's hinterland was on the whole not oppressively ruled; the bailiff was the city government's sole representative, and local matters were in the hands of the local inhabitants.<sup>31</sup> The Thommens clearly represented the "self-assured peasant" who liked his calling as tiller of the soil and cherished his "God-given place in the world order;"<sup>32</sup> yet they weighed their economic future and took such measures that reveal imaginative foresight.

The sources intimate that they had considered at least three options. They could stay at home in the hope of warding off a possible erosion of their economic status; they could decide to go to South Carolina, a province for which a Jean Pierre Purry (1675-1736) had launched a vigorous campaign, especially by his widely read pamphlet *The Now in the New World Merrily and Without Home-Sickness Living Swiss*;<sup>33</sup> or they could, finally, go to Penn's province that had also become fairly well known in the Basel region.<sup>34</sup>

Shortly after arriving in Pennsylvania, Durs Thommen wrote to a friend:

As far as Carolina is concerned, do not believe the little book of lies—the Lugenbuechlein—[of Purry] as to anything, because I have talked with honest Swiss people who have told me that there was in that country no other bread not even in Carl Stadt except from flower that had come from Pennsylvania. They had travelled 150 miles inland, but had been unable to get any bread; had baked Indian corn, rice and meat. It had been very hot there so that almost everything had dried out from the heat.<sup>35</sup>

Also Hans Jakob warned in one of his letters: "There is in Carolina very rotten land, no decent fruit grows there, one must get wheat from Pennsylvania, otherwise they do not have any good bread."<sup>36</sup>

But why did the Thommens reject the first option in favor of the second that involved much uncertainty also and serious risk taking? The sources do not grant any insight but intimate that besides economic considerations very different forces had come into play which guided the family to Penn's province.

Among the governmental papers on "Pietists, Separatists 1595-1785" is a report dated October 18, 1732, signed by Reverend Gürtler, pastor of the parish of Waldenburg. He had written it in response to a request from the ecclesiastical authorities to assess "the situation in his entrusted parish as to pietism or much rather separatism." Pastor Gürtler could report "thank God, that, as far as he knew, no such dangerous conventicula had been held in his parish nor had any such person that would give cause for such separatismo ascended his pulpit." There were, however, "some suspicious" people among his parishioners: "Jacob Meyer's wife of Oberdorf, then Margaretha Thoman, together with her daughter Cäthrina of Niederdorf." Although they did occasionally attend church, they "had stayed away from the Lord's Supper for quite some time and had joined such conventicles fairly industriously." Although they had been apologetic about it, the pastor stressed that most of it "could not make the mark with him;" yet he could not claim "that they were leading a godless life."<sup>37</sup>

In 1736, furthermore, the bailiff of Waldenburg had given quite a negative report on the Thommens so that the secular authorities felt compelled to ask the assembly of leading clergymen to pass judgment on the bailiff's "gravamina and remonstrances" against them. Their reply was quite brief and they denied jurisdiction for three reasons: They claimed, first, that the bailiff's report did not contain "a trace of items pertaining to religious matters;" they stressed, second, that their pastor had made no accusations whatever against them; third, they observed, "we are very much aware that in the newly built city of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania, an English colony, all Protestant religions, including the Reformed, had their performance and practice."<sup>38</sup>

This verdict is noteworthy in view of a 1742 entry in the "Ephrata Register: Names of Such as in the Lord Fell Asleep." It reads:

Thoma (Tomasin), Sister Catharina . . . she was a loving soul, had in Switzerland much persecution experienced for God's sake.<sup>39</sup>

Historians prone to viewing emigration as a phenomenon of crisis will cite such a statement as proof of religious persecution of a pietistically inclined woman. Yet the response of the churchmen shows little of the supposed narrowness and denominationalism, but rather a latitudinarian attitude comparable to that dominant in Penn's province.

A postscript to the report of the ecclesiastical authorities, dated January 4, 1736, strengthens this view. Hieronymus Burckhardt, the Antistes or chief ecclesiastic of the Basel Church, stated that the clergymen had not met with the petitioners; but that

Durs Thommen, one of these people, had announced himself to me, the Antistes; with whom I have had an extensive talk about religion and especially those points in which Anabaptists, Quakers, differ from us; who, however, declared for himself and his companion Christen Schäublin, that he was totally devoted to our Reformed Religion, and that he found in it not the least scruple, the same as his companion. They had always partaken in the Lord's Supper.<sup>40</sup>

It seems that Durs Thommen was genuinely at home in the Reformed faith; he was certainly respected by the Basel authorities who were to rely on his reports from Pennsylvania and also accepted various attests he later wrote in behalf of fellow-emigrants.<sup>41</sup> But how did Margareth Thommen, the mother, and the daughter Catharina influence the decision to emigrate? The sources do not allow a clear answer. It is certain, however, that both had been deeply touched by the Pietist movement and had known one of its most powerful proponents in Switzerland. The chronicle of the Ephrata community contains the following cryptic comment: "That is what a pious preacher in Switzerland named Lucius had advised when they took leave, namely that they were going to a country where there were many sects, but that they should keep close to the one that was most despised."<sup>42</sup> The Reformed preacher Samuel Lutz (1674-1750)<sup>43</sup> was the leading Pietist of the Bernese region, whereas Reverend Hieronymus d'Annone (1697-1770)<sup>44</sup> was the leading Pietist clergyman of the Basel Church. Both were the kind of pastors whom Reverend Gütler had been loath to admit to the pulpit of Waldenburg. Some of the Thommens had however dealings with both and kept in touch with d'Annone after their emigration.<sup>45</sup>

In the light of the available sources it is impossible to determine how far the Thommen's decision to emigrate had been based on the desire for a safer economic future, and how far the separatist leanings of Margaretha and Catharina had provided the main force. Later events intimate, however, that spiritual values had outweighed material considerations.

### III

At the very time when the Thommens purchased their homestead from a Johann Meili<sup>46</sup> in 1737, a monastic community was forming in their vicinity. It was led by Johann Conrad Beissel (1690-1768) who in 1715 at age 25 had experienced an awakening that led him into various Pietist circles. Eventually he joined the Brethren, gathered around Alexander Mack (1679-1735),<sup>48</sup> and

followed them to America in the autumn of 1720. After some years, however, Beissel withdrew from the Brethren, proclaimed the Sabbath as the Day of the Lord,<sup>49</sup> advocated celibacy,<sup>50</sup> and began the life of a hermit. In 1737 he gathered his followers into a monastic community that soon attracted many followers. Among them was Johannes Meili who had sold his homestead to the Thommens in order to join the new community, named Ephrata, as Brother Amos.<sup>51</sup> The various members of the Thommen family responded differently to Ephrata's challenge.

In 1742 Anna Thommen sent a letter to her "dear worthy friend" Hieronymus d'Annone who in 1739 had accepted the pastorate of Anna's home parish Waldenburg. "My brothers in the flesh have departed from our community," she lamented, "although they are not against it."<sup>52</sup> She referred to Martin, her oldest, and to Durs, her youngest brother. Both had their farms adjacent to that of their parents and opted to continue their accustomed life. They rejected celibacy and remained members of the Reformed faith. Durs, Jr., if the printed record is to be trusted, served in the so-called French-Indian War and held minor political office such as that of overseer of the poor in Heidelberg Township.<sup>53</sup>

Anna Thommen, in contrast, as the *Chronicon Ephratense* proudly notes, "was the first in the family to be chosen—die erste in der Familie, die in die Wahl kam—and in the blossom of her youth entered the sisters' convent." <sup>34</sup> The *Chronicon* praised her as a "finely built, proportioned persons," endowed with "beautiful gifts of nature" and an exquisite voice.<sup>55</sup> As Sister Tabea she soon gained the confidence of Vorsteher Beissel and assisted him especially in the important *Singarbeit*, the creation of sacred hymns when song had found an ever more important place in Beissel's evolving theology that strove towards the mystical union with the divine and the reconstitution of all things.<sup>56</sup> Anna's spirituality remained however rooted in the Reformed tradition. Her compositions reveal hardly a trace of Beissel's theosophist cosmology, but celebrate the Lord's kindness who asks his chosen to suffer many trials, but will reward them with eternal bliss. In one of her hymns Anna praised God as the "Great Heavenly King" and implored him to call many more into the fold of the chosen until "the number had been reached which the Lamb has decided upon." "O Du herrlich-schöne Pracht, in des Lammes Niedertracht," she exclaimed, "O Thou glorious-beautiful Splendor, in the Lamb's Debasement!" And she concluded:

I will count my steps  
Everywhere in the Cross' Valley  
And choose nothing else otherwise  
But to stay among the number  
That is called twelve times twelve thousand  
Of those who have been drawn to the other world.  
And there, after so many trials, will I  
Praise God without time and end.<sup>57</sup>

A letter Anna wrote to Reverend d'Annone contains mainly news about her family. "It would take too many words to tell," she commented, "how an unusual turn of mind and community had been born out of the witness of God's Holy Spirit. I would not know how to write it, but my spiritual brothers can surely give a better report."<sup>58</sup> Yet later in the letter she summarized her spiritual outlook in these words:

The foolishness of man in these our times is so great that almost nobody asks about God anymore, and nearly everyone lives in the security of the flesh. But blessed are those souls that learn to know the blindness of the heart and keep away from all falseness and sham; they will be able to prevail even when fear and terror sweep all of the earth. Meanwhile I am on guard and serve my God who has drawn me away from the world's vanity and life's lusts, to the praise of His Eternal Name.<sup>59</sup>

Soon after, this "humble disciple of Christ," as she called herself at the end of her letter, underwent a severe test of her spiritual choice. The solitary brethren had purchased an indentured servant, named Daniel Scheibly, probably an emigrant from the Canton of Bern.<sup>60</sup> Anna and Daniel fell in love, exchanged secret letters and, finally, announced their intention to marry. The community was shocked. "Sister Tabea has thrown oil her yoke," the *Chronicon* commented. The brethren confronted her with the inquiry "why she had seduced their servant" whom they had hoped eventually to admit to the Brotherhood. They also demanded that she pay them the amount they had spent on his purchase, but "for conscience's sake they . . . cancelled her debt in the end." The *Chronicon* then reported the following scene:

Finally the day of her marriage had arrived; a house-father was to officiate. As she now stood before him, in the dress of a house-mother after having put off the garment of the order, and the time had come to be married, the Vorsteher called her in a special way, received her again unto his tutelage, then she gave leave to her bridegroom and reentered the house of the sisters.

Daniel Scheibly left the order, but Anna did penance with many bitter tears so that her name was changed from Tabea to "Anastasia which means someone resurrected from the dead." She renewed her efforts in choir work. When the sisters decided to quit singing after one of Vorsteher Beissel's enraged outbursts, Sister Anastasia secretly took over the task of choir master, then surprised the community by leading the choir in singing one of her new compositions, "God, we come to meet Thee, in five voices performed, which received such a reception in the Lager that everybody had his or her name entered in the choirs."<sup>61</sup>

Anna remained at Ephrata for some thirty years. But the world beckoned once more. After Conrad Beissel's death on July 6, 1768, Sister Anastasia undertook ever longer journeys and, finally, left the community.<sup>62</sup> On August 27, 1771, she made a third major choice: She married the well-to-do John Wister, the 1727 immigrant from Heidelberg, Germany, whom the Thommens had befriended thirty-five years earlier on reaching Philadelphia in the fall of



1736. Anna was to die seven years later at age 59 and was buried in the Quaker cemetery.<sup>63</sup>

Margareth Thommen, the mother, as well as the daughter Catharina had also joined the solitary sisters, but both died in 1742, Catharina in June, Margareth in December. "Catrina was ill for eight days only," Anna reported to d'Annone, "but she had been afflicted very hard in body and soul, yes so to speak in very difficult and great temptations because she sensed that she had to die in the half of her days." But finally she passed away "blissfully in quiet peace, and mother no less. . . . Both had greatly treasured the pure virginal life."<sup>64</sup>

Durs Thommen, Sr., joined Ephrata, if at all, only as a lay associate and continued to work his farm. He was greatly respected, especially by John Peter Miller (1709-1796), a leading member of the brethren who called him "a serious lover of all souls sanctified in God."<sup>65</sup> In his 1737 letter to the authorities of Basel Durs Thommen, Sr., expressed his spirituality in these words:

Whereas I cannot think that I will see you again with my bodily eyes, so I will hope nevertheless that all of you will view and see in heaven the light of life who is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Yes, there will be God in Christ the Alpha and Omega in you, the beginning and the end. Yes He will be the One and the All, and you will enjoy it very highly for eternity and without end. Halleluja, Amen. So be it, that I wish from the bottom of my heart.<sup>66</sup>

Hans Jacob, the second son of the Thommens, had chosen yet another path. In 1738 the four Eckerling brothers had joined the Ephrata community. They followed a religiosity quite different from that of Vorsteher Beissel or John Peter Miller, yet the precise source of their outlook has not yet been determined. Despite some similarities with the Mystic Order of Freemasons, no direct link has been established.<sup>67</sup> The "Egyptian" orientation and the tone of their pronouncements allow the conjecture that they may have been immersed in the writings of Hermes Trismegistus whose work had appeared in a German version in 1706 as *Erkenntnis der Natur und des darin sich offenbarenden Gottes*.<sup>68</sup> Hans Jacob seems to have been a close associate of Gabriel Eckerling who served as "Perfect Master" during the first 40-day retreat of the Zionitic Brotherhood. Benedict Juchli from Kirchenthurnen, Canton Bern, who had crossed the ocean on the same boat as the Thommens, had put up the money so that the brotherhood could buy a tract of land, de facto outside of Beissel's jurisdiction, and build there a unique structure called Zion. It was three stories high, with one large room on the groundfloor to serve as refectory; the second floor was a round, windowless chamber with a lamp-pedestal in the center toward which thirteen cots were arranged like rays in a circular fashion; the third floor was a plain room of eighteen square feet with an oval window at each cardinal point.<sup>69</sup>

The Eckerlings had first hoped to build Zion near the Cocalico in the valley, but Vorsteher Beissel had insisted that it be built on a hill. "By this the spirit of wonders indicated from the very beginning," commented the *Chronicon*, "that

the Brotherhood would at first build its structure on the heights of reason, and thus soar aloft until at length by a great storm they would be cast down into the valley; all of which was afterwards fulfilled to the minutest detail."<sup>70</sup>

Hans Jacob Thommen and Benedict Juchli were both among the thirteen brethren who in May 1738 locked themselves into Zion for forty days, devoting daily six hours to silent reflection, three to common prayer, nine to the study and practice of mystic ritual, and six to "communion among themselves looking towards the regaining of the lost ineffable word."<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately no account has surfaced that would reveal Hans Jacob's faith after he had joined the Zionitic Brotherhood. His stay was to be only very brief. In mid-1739 he fell suddenly ill and died, aged only 81. He had chosen the most radical Pietist path that led him furthest from the faith of his youth.

We now must briefly return to Martin Thommen, the oldest son, to his wife Barbara and their son Johannes. On May 25, 1767, the *Wöchentliche Philadelphiaische Staatsbote* announced that Martin Thommen "had decided to depart from here in four weeks and to return to his fatherland." He wanted his countrymen to know that he was willing to take letters along for half a crown each.<sup>72</sup> By the fall of 1767 Martin and his people were indeed back in Waldenburg after 31 years. Why did he and his people take this step? The known sources do not provide an answer. It is perhaps significant, however, that after three decades Martin still spoke of the Basel region as his "fatherland." After reviewing various possibilities he had decided to purchase the homestead "Cholmatt," a fairly substantial property located within the jurisdiction of the parish of Zytzen.<sup>73</sup>

But then things changed once more. The bailiff Carl Kündig distrusted the returners and viewed them as secret emigration agents; thus he watched their every move. He also summoned those who had visited with the Thommens in order to cross-examine them. Among them was the blacksmith Michael Vogt who had applied for permission to leave for Pennsylvania:

Q. What did the Thommens say about the New Land?

A. He (the deponent) had asked about his relatives there, to which Johannes answered that they were in good health; he, deponent, then asked whether he would return again to the New Land . . . To which the old Thommen replied that he was too old; the young Thommen, however, had said he did not know whether he wanted to go or not, he had not yet made up his mind.

Q. Did the Thommens encourage him to emigrate?

A. The Thommens had rather made him hesitant about it than encouraged him: Die Thommens haben es ihme ehnders erlaydet als ihne darzuo angefrischt.<sup>74</sup>

In the end, the bailiff's attitude was so bothersome that the Thommens decided to leave his domain, but their destination has remained unknown. They went possibly down the Rhine and settled somewhere in Baden-Württemberg.<sup>76</sup>

#### IV

What light do the decisions the Thommens made in their life time throw on the interpretive issues raised above?

First, the Thommens came undoubtedly from a so-called traditional society but their behavior conforms neither to the claims made by traditionalism nor by modernity. They simply followed their own paths which made them at times conform to the traditions of their age, at times choose radical innovation. None seems to have been unduly awed by constituted authority. Durs Thommen discussed matters of faith with Antistes Burckhardt with remarkable ease, corresponded with Hieronymus d'Annone, a leading Pietist clergyman as with an equal, and wrote to members of the Basel government in a factual self-assured, respectful, yet by no means submissive manner. His wife opted for the life of a solitary sister without any known interference from her husband, although it meant the de facto dissolution of their marriage. The children too, chose quite separate paths, yet the sources do not indicate the least parental pressure on their decisions. Also Martin's son felt apparently totally free to decide for himself whether to stay in Europe or to return to Pennsylvania.

Second, the Thommens were surely peasant folk, but neither Durs, Sr., nor his sons Martin or Durs, Jr., showed any desire to escape the farmer's lot. They were certainly astute in economic matters, but "individual gain was not the driving force behind their actions."<sup>76</sup> The documents rather intimate a firm and proud commitment to the Alemannic farming way of life that granted them a good measure of economic independence as well as personal satisfaction.

Third, the Thommens were certainly emigrants and three of them were also returners who then moved on to unknown destinations. Yet they were in no way simply victims of immediate crisis. Rather, the establishment of Pennsylvania and South Carolina as regions for white settlement had expanded their perimeter of choice. Letters of previous emigrants, reports of returners, and advertisements of entrepreneurs like Jean Pierre Furry had presented them with additional economic and religious options for the construction of their lives. They made use of them in partly similar, in partly quite different fashion in conformity with their own individual propensities.

Fourth, the Thommens were surely Pietists, except for Martin and Durs, Jr., who remained content with their accustomed Reformed faith. The other followed various forms of Pietism, but none deserves the label *Schwärmer*. Durs, Sr., stayed within the Reformed Church like his friend, the Reverend d'Annone, Margareth, his spouse, and their daughters Catharina and Anna however, chose separatism and adopted the solitary life, although their religiosity remained in outlook close to that of the South German and Swiss Reformed tradition. Only Hans Jacob joined a most radical branch, the Zionitic brotherhood, and immersed himself in its Hermetic, Rosicrucian, or gnostic theosophy.

Fifth, the Thommens were surely a close-knit family, but do not conform to the postulated demographic patterns of *the* preindustrial family. Durs, Sr., and Margareth had six children, one of whom died in infancy.<sup>77</sup> Martin had one son only, Durs, Jr., possibly seven children;<sup>78</sup> the others died without issue. The life spans also varied: Durs, Sr., died at age 70, Durs, Jr., at age 65; Martin was 64 of age according to the last known source that refers to him; Margareth,

the mother, reached age 61, Anna 59, Catharina 40, and Hans Jacob 31.<sup>79</sup> Property rights, furthermore, seem to have been shared equally between Durs and his spouse Margareth, and after their passing between Martin, Durs, Jr., and Anna.<sup>80</sup> The sources reveal, finally, not a trace of either parental or male authoritarianism, but simply men and women of independent views and actions. One may object that the Thommens were a quite unusual family, the exception that proves the rule. An inquiry into a host of other emigrant lives reveals however that they were not unique as to their independent decision-making, but rather as to the relative wealth of available and known data. The portrait of the Thommens, sketched here merely from the angle of their decisions, shows that they simply shared the basic human condition that remains at the center of historical humanistic analysis: They were lodged between the spiritual and the mundane, between interdependence and individuality, between the trends of their time and their personal calling. Their varied decisions cannot be reduced to either economic, social, religious or psychological forces. Within the common context of time and place they each remained ineffably people of choice.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Darrett B. Rutman, *John Winthrop's Decision for America: 1629* (Philadelphia, 1975), 105 for a discussion of sources. On decision-making see Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis* (New York, 1969), 34-43.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Richard D. Brown, "Modernization and the Modern Personality in American, 1600-1865," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2 (Winter 1972) 201-228; also *Modernization: The Transformation of American Life, 1600-1865* (New York, 1976). An incisive critique offers James A. Henretta, " 'Modernization': Towards a False Synthesis," *Reviews in American History* 5 (1977) 446-452; see also his "Social History as Lived and Written," *American Historical Review* 84 (1979): 1293-1322, with "Comments" by Darrett B. Rutman and Robert F. Berkhofer, 1323-1330 and a "Reply" by Henretta, 1331-1333. Daniel S. Smith gives a suggestive account of the state of the art in "Early American Historiography and Social Science History," *Social Science History* 6 (Summer 1982) 267-291, with special reference to the modernization theory 277-279.

<sup>3</sup> Myron Weiner, ed., *Modernization. The Dynamics of Growth* Basic Books, 1966, (New York, 1966), is a basic formulation of the theory, as is Walt Whitman Rostow, *Stages of Economic Growth. A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge, UK, 1960), for the economic dimension. Influential is Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen. The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914*. (Stanford, 1976); for a critique see Charles Tilly, "Did the Cake of Custom Break?" in *Consciousness and Class Experience in Nineteenth Century Europe*. Ed. John Merriman (New York, 1980), 17-44. An extended critique of the theory is also offered by Joyce Appleby, "Modernization Theory and the Modernization of England and America," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1978) 259-285.

<sup>4</sup> Alex Inkeles, "The Modernization of Man," in Weiner, ed., *Modernization*, pp. 135-150, offers a concise summary; he postulates pp. 141-144 eight traits that are supposedly modern. Openness to innovation; egalitarian stance; future-orientedness; planning; environmental mastery; reasonable, controllable world; individual dignity; faith in science and technology; belief in distributive justice. Proponents in varying degrees are Peter N. Stearns, "Toward a Wider Vision: Trends in Social History," in *The Past Before Us. Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*. Ed. Michael Kammen. (Ithaca, NY, 1980), 205-230, esp. 218-220; and Robert Swierenga,

"Agriculture and Rural Life: The New Rural History," in *Ordinary People and Everyday life. Perspectives on the New Social History*. Eds. James B. Gardner and George R. Adams. (Nashville, Tennessee, 1983), 91-113, esp. 106.

<sup>5</sup> Inkeles, "Modernization of Man," p. 145. For a recent application see for instance John W. Shaffer, *Family and Farm. Agrarian Change and Household Organization in the Loire Valley 1500-1900*. (Albany, NY, 1982). A challenging critique of such views offers James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 35 (January 1978) 3-31; an incisive further critique is Timothy H. Breen, "Back to Sweat and Toil: Suggestions for the Study of Agricultural Work in Early America," *Pennsylvania History* 49 (October 1982) 241-258; the essay supports much of Henretta's critique, but stresses the varied agricultural experience based on the type of crop and its concomitant growth cycle.—The concept world-economy is developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Politics of World-Economy*. (Cambridge, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Textbooks as well as general works on immigration to the United States repeat the crisis interpretation; some examples are Michael Kraus, *Immigration, the American Mosaic*. (Princeton, NJ, 1966); despite some disclaimer also Philip Taylor, *The Distant Magnet. European Emigration to the USA*. (London, 1971); also Thomas J. Archdeacon, *Becoming American*. (New York, 1983). Most often, overpopulation is invoked, based on Malthusian or Neo-Malthusian assumptions; see for example Peter Marschalck, *Deutsche Überseeauswanderung im 19. Jahrhundert*. (Stuttgart 1973); an article length version is Wolfgang Kollmann and Peter Marschalck, "German Emigration to the United States," *Perspectives in American History* 7 (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), 497-554; Günter Moltmann, ed., *Deutsche Amerikaauswanderung im 19. Jahrhundert Sozialgeschichtliche Beiträge*. Stuttgart, 1976. Klaus Wust, "The Old Homeland," in: *Three Hundred Years of German Immigrants in North America 1683-1983*. Edited by Klaus Wust and Heinz Moos (München, 1983), 17-54, states concisely on p. 17: "The decision to emigrate has always been a highly individual one." The chapter offers a concise survey of major migratory contexts, but takes statements of emigrants perhaps too much at face value. The laments of Pietists about the world's depravity, for instance, are to be seen as statements of faith, not as mirrors of actual conditions; depending on viewpoint, the *same* situation is praised by some and decried by others. A review essay is Leo Schelbert, "Themen und Antithemen zur europäischen Auswanderung: Vom Forschungsstand der englisch- und deutschsprachigen Sekundärliteratur," *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 80 (1984) 147-159. A counterview to the crisis interpretation is sketched by Leo Schelbert, "Emigration from Germany, 1870-1914: Contours, Contexts, Experiences," in *Imperial Germany*. Ed. Volker Dürr (Madison, Wisconsin, 1985), 112-133. An extended critique of the Malthusian position is David S. Kleinman, *Human Adaptation and Population Growth. A Non-Malthusian Perspective*. Montclair, NJ. 1981. The most incisive critique of the "American fever" view, a crisis interpretation of migration by implication, remains Frank Thistlethwaite, "Emigration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Comité International des Sciences Historiques, ed., Rapports* 5 (Stockholm, 1960) 32-60.

<sup>7</sup> Among the extensive literature the following proved especially helpful: Martin Schmidt, "Pietismus," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 5 (Tübingen 1961), cols. 370-381; Martin Schmidt and Wilhelm Jannasch, eds. *Das Zeitalter des Pietismus*. (Bremen, 1965); Martin Schmidt, *Pietismus*. Stuttgart, 1972; F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century*. (Leiden, 1973); F. Ernest Stoeffler, ed., *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*. (Grand Rapids, MI, 1976), Martin Greschat, ed., *Zur neueren Pietismusforschung*. (Darmstadt, 1977). Erich Beyreuther, *Geschichte des Pietismus*. (Stuttgart, 1978.) A descriptive analytical overview is Dale Brown, *Understanding Pietism*. (Grand Rapids, MI, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> Brown, *Pietism*, pp. 9-10; a useful overview on religious by-ways is Kurt Seligmann, *Magic, Supernaturalism, and Religion*. (New York, 1971). Fritz Braun, "Beissel," *Neue deutsche Biographie* 2 (Berlin, 1955) uses the epithet "religiöser Schwärmer" as a matter of course.

<sup>9</sup> Donald M. Scott and Bernard Wishy, eds., *America's Families. A Documentary History* (New York, 1983), xv.

<sup>10</sup> A useful guide to the voluminous literature is Gerald L. Soliday et al., eds., *History of the*

*Family and Kinship: A Selected International Bibliography*, Millwood, New York, 1980. Three recent essays celebrate the field: Carl N. Degler, "Women and the Family," in Kammen, ed., *The Past*, 308-326; Mary P. Ryan, "The Explosion of Family History," in *The Promise of American History. Progress and Prospects*. Edited by Stanley I. Kutler and Stanley N. Katz, eds. (Baltimore, 1982), 181-195; Maris A. Vinovskis, "American Families in the Past," in Gardner and Adams, eds., *Ordinary People*, 115-137.

<sup>11</sup> See Leo Strauss, *Xenophon's Socrates* (Ithaca, NY 1972), 4-7; for a history of the concept *daimonion* and *daimonion saemaion* see Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 2 (Stuttgart, 1935), 1-20, and 7 (1964), 199-206; in Socrates' sense it meant probably a general divine force that made cognition possible.

<sup>12</sup> Jacob Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, chapter 74, 22; "den eingeleibten Grand;" see 1730 facsimile edition by Will-Erick Peuckert, *Jacob Boehme. Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 8 (Stuttgart, 1958), 833.

<sup>13</sup> See Rufus M. Jones, ed., *The Journal of George Fox* (New York, 1963), 103; in the Quaker tradition "the Light Within" or the "the Inner Light" has received various interpretations; compare *Faith and Practice of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends*. Fourth Printing (Philadelphia, 1965), 166-173.

<sup>14</sup> See Arnold Metzger, *Dämonie und Transzendenz* (Pfuldingen, 1964), 12, note 2; based on Xenophon, *Memorabilia*. I,4,15.

<sup>15</sup> See for example Manuel Maldonado-Denis, *The Emigration Dialectic. Puerto Rico and the USA*. (New York, 1980), 27-29.

<sup>16</sup> This position claims the primacy of the individual mind not as rationality nor as atomistic monad but as mind-guided existence and agent within a given network of supra-personal forces; it derives in part from R. G. Collingwood "Epilegomena" in *The Idea of History* (New York, 1956), 205-334. Related controversial issues are featured in *Theories of History*. Ed. Patrick Gardiner. (New York, 1959), esp. 476-515.

<sup>17</sup> The underlying philosophical problems are lucidly treated by Fernando Molina, *Existentialism as Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962), 56-72.

<sup>18</sup> For the general historical context see Edgar Bonjour et al., *A Short History of Switzerland* (Oxford, 1952), 140, 146, 154-155, and 186-208; the governmental system is featured by Paul Roth, "Die Organisation der Basler Landvogteien im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Schweizer Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft* 13 (Zürich 1925) 1-143.

<sup>19</sup> For genealogical overview see Appendix.

<sup>20</sup> See for example J. Morgan Kousser, "Quantitative Social-Scientific History," in Kammen, ed., *The Past*, 433-456, esp. 447.

<sup>21</sup> Ralph B. Strassburger and William J. Hinke, eds., *Pennsylvania, German Pioneers* 3 vols. (Norristown, Pennsylvania, 1934).

<sup>22</sup> Adolph Gerber, "Special Investigations," in Albert B. Faust and Gaius M. Brumbaugh, eds., *Lists of Swiss Emigrants in the Eighteenth Century to the American Colonies*, II (Washington, 1925), 81-217.

<sup>23</sup> For a sampling of such documents see Leo Schelbert and Hedwig Rappolt, eds., *Alles ist ganz anders hier. Auswandererschicksale in Briefen aus Jahrhunderten*. (Olten, Switzerland, 1977).

<sup>24</sup> Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, Auswanderung A, 1732-1738, No. 18.—All translations of sources in German are by the author of this study.

<sup>25</sup> Georg Kurz, "Auswanderung und Aufgabe des Landrechtes im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert," typescript, Staatsarchiv Bern, Switzerland, "Gutachten und Berichte," XIV, 17 (1934), discusses the regulations in force in the Canton Bern, *mutatis mutandis* also applicable to other regions.

<sup>26</sup> Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, Auswanderung A, 1732-1738, No. 16.

<sup>27</sup> Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, Raths-Protocoll, 1735, Juni 28—1736 Juni 30; Protokolle, Kleiner Rat, Bod. 107, p. 409; "Durfß Thommen von Niederdorf samt Frauen, fünf Kindern, des Sohns Frau und ihrem Kind habe 3497 Pf. 1 sh."

<sup>28</sup> Letter to the authorities of the City of Basel; Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, Auswanderung A, 1732-1738, No. 97; printed in Leo Schelbert, "Von der Macht des Pietismus. Dokumentarbericht

zur Auswanderung einer Basler Familie im Jahre 1736," *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 15 (1975) 104-105; English version in "On the Power of Pietism: A Documentary

on the Thommens of Schaefferstown," *Historic Schaefferstown Record* 17 (1988) 55-56.

<sup>29</sup> *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania* 4 (Harrisburg: Theo Fenn, 1851), 172; list of confiscated goods, 178. The "Court of Admiralty," established in 1684, was charged with enforcing the Acts of Trade.

<sup>30</sup> A. Gerber, "Special Investigations," p. 88.

<sup>31</sup> Ulrich Im Hof, "Ancien Regime," *Handbuch der Schweizer Geschichte* 2 (Zürich, 1977), 758.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 759.

<sup>33</sup> *Der nunmehr in der neuen Welt vergnügt und ohne Heim-wehe lebende Schweitzer*. Bern: Joh. Bondeli, 1734.

<sup>34</sup> See A. Gerber, "Special Investigations," 92-94.

<sup>35</sup> Copy of letter Meister Fisher; General-Landesarchiv Karlsruhe, No. 9847.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, letter of Hans Jacob.

<sup>37</sup> Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, "Pietisten ....," Kirchenarchiv, A 16, No. 98.

<sup>38</sup> Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, Auswanderung A, 1732-1738, No. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted by Friedrich Sachse, *The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania 1708-1742* (Philadelphia, 1900), 487.

<sup>40</sup> Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, Auswanderung A, 1732-1738, No. 12, postscript.

<sup>41</sup> Attests for Barbara Börlin, Hans Jacob Keller and Wernhardt Stohler *ibid.*, 1740-1748, No. 41, and 1749, No. 86; the Börlin story is further documented in Schelbert and Rappolt, eds., *Alles ist ganz anders hier*, 132-135.

<sup>42</sup> *Chronicon Ephratense, Enthaltend den Lebens-Lauf des ehrwürdigen Vaters in Christo Friedsam Gottrecht, Weyland Stiffers und Vorstehers des geistlichen Ordens der Einsam in Ephrata in der Grafschaft Lancaster in Pennsylvania*. Zusammengetragen von Br. Lamech und Agrippa (Ephrata, PA, 1786), p. 139. An English version is J. Max Hark, transl. *Chronicon Ephratense; a History of the Community of Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata, Lancaster County Penn'a*, by Lamech and Agrippa. (Lancaster, 1889). All references to the *Chronicon* in this article refer to the German original. On pietism in the Basel region see also Donald F. Durnbaugh, ed., *European Origins of the the Brethren. A Source Book* (Elgin, IL, 1958), 87-105; Andrew Boni (1673-1741) of Frenkendorf, Basel, was among the first Brethren who followed Alexander Mack.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Wernle, *Der schweizerische Protestantismus im XVII. Jahrhundert* 1 (Tubingen, 1923), 254-282.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 326-341.

<sup>45</sup> Letter of Durs Thommen to d'Annone, October 20, 1736; copy in General-Landesarchiv Karlsruhe, No. 9847; (14 copied documents relating to Pennsylvania and Basel emigrants; microfilm copy in possession of author;); letter of Anna, October 12, 1748, Universitätsbibliothek Basel Nachlass d'Annone, F II, No. 921; both documents printed in Schelbert, "Von der Macht des Pietismus," 99-100, 110-112.

<sup>46</sup> John Meili took out a patent on January 17, 1736, on 347 acres; see Harrisburg, Land Records Division, Warrant Index A-8-174; survey in C-121-83; deed D-460. (Clyde Groff kindly provided this information which is gratefully acknowledged.) Meili sold the property on March 19, 1736/37 to the Thommens.

<sup>47</sup> An excellent introduction is E. G. Alderfer, *The Ephrata Commune. An Early American Counterculture*. (Pittsburgh, 1985); a forthcoming essay of Wendy Everham in the *Yearbook of German American Studies* 1987 sketches the various persuasions within Ephrata.

<sup>48</sup> See Albert T. Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church* (Ashland, Ohio: Brethren Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 25-62; Durnbaugh, ed., *European Origins*, pp. 19-150.

<sup>49</sup> Donald F. Durnbaugh, ed., *The Brethren in Colonial America*. (Elgin, IL, 1958), 68-111. See also *Das Büchlein vom Sabbath*, printed 1728; the title page of the English version reads: *Mystyrion Anomias*, by Conrad Beysell. The Mystery of Lawlesnes or Lawless Antichrist. The

seventh Day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. Printed in the Year 1729, by Andrew Bradford at the sign of the Bible in Second Street, Philadelphia.

<sup>50</sup> Conrad Beissel, *Die Ehe, das Zuchthaus fleisehlicher Menschen*. Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1730.

<sup>51</sup> Sachse, *German Sectarians*, I, 205, 307.

<sup>52</sup> Schelbert, "Von der Macht des Pietismus," 111.

<sup>53</sup> William H. Egle, *History of the Counties of Dauphin and Lebanon in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1883), 602; Egle's data on the Durs Thommen family are a mix of valid and invalid detail.

<sup>54</sup> *Chronicon Ephratense*, 139, footnote.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141; sacred song was "to reveal the wondrous play of eternity;" see also Julius F. Sachse, *The Music of Ephrata. Also Conrad Beissel's Treatise*. (Lancaster, PA, 1903; reprint: New York 1971); *ibid.*, 59-65 facsimile of Beissel's "Vorrede."

<sup>57</sup> L. Alien Viehmeyer, "Anna of Ephrata," *Historic Schaefferstown Record* 8 (March 1974): 22-31, contains a selection of hymns in German and English translation.

<sup>58</sup> Schelbert, "Macht des Pietismus," 110.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>60</sup> *Chronicon Ephratense*, 138; this is possibly the same Daniel Scheibly whose father had settled in the vicinity of Shepherdstown, Berkeley County, [West] Virginia, and who married a daughter of Jacob Tschumi, a Bernese immigrant of 1750; see Faust and Brumbaugh, eds., *Lists* 2, 75-76.

<sup>61</sup> *Chronicon Ephratense*, 139; see also 138, on the break with Beissel, 140, on the resumption of ties.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>63</sup> *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series II, (Harrisburg, 1896), 243: "1771, August 27; Thoman, Anne, and John Wister;" see above, note 26, for Wister.

<sup>64</sup> Schelbert, "Macht des Pietismus," 111.

<sup>65</sup> John Peter Miller to Hieronymus d'Annone; original in Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Handschriftenabteilung, Nachlass Hieronymus Annoni, F II, No. 461; see Leo Schelbert, "Die Stimme eines Einsamen in Zion: Ein unbekannter Brief von Bruder Jaebez aus Ephrata, Pennsylvanien, aus dem Jahre 1743," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 85 (1974) 77-92.

<sup>66</sup> Schelbert, "Macht des Pietismus," 105.

<sup>67</sup> Sachse, *German Sectarians* I, 350-364, a portrait of the Zionitic Brotherhood. On various schools of Freemasonry in the eighteenth century see Mervyn Jones, "Freemasonry," in *Secret Societies*, ed. Norman MacKenzie (New York, 1971), 139; on the relationship of Freemasonry to Rosicrucian traditions Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London, 1972), 206-219.

<sup>68</sup> Wayne Shumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance. A Study in Intellectual Patterns* (Berkeley, 1972), 201-248, offers a concise portrait of Hermes Trismegistus as document as well as doctrine. The German edition is entitled: *Erkänntnis der Natur, und des darin sich offenbarenden grossen Gottes. Begriffen in 17. unterschiedlichen Büchern ... ire die Hochteutsche Sprache übersetzt. Nebenst . . . Nachricht und Beweiss von der Person und Genealogie Hermetis . . . mit . . . anderen Curiosa berührende Passagen*. Verfertiget von Aletophilo. Hamburg S. Heyls und G. Liebezeits, [1706].

<sup>69</sup> Sachse, *German Sectarians* I, 356-358.

<sup>70</sup> *Chronicon Ephratense*, 90.

<sup>71</sup> Sachse, *German Sectarians* I, p. 359; the formula seems to have gnostic or hermeticist roots; see e.g. Shumaker, *Occult Sciences*, 225: Ascl. 16: "Mente sola intelligibilis, summus qui dicitur deus: through the mind only is intelligible the highest who is called god." Alchemy as a cognitive rather than naturalistic system is sensitively featured by Titus Burckhardt, *Alchemie. Sinn und Weltbild*. Olten, 1960).

<sup>72</sup> "Daß er entschlossen ist, . . . wieder in sein Vaterland zu ziehen;" *Staatsbote*, 279. Stück; Anita L. Eyster, "Notices by German and Swiss Settlers . . ." *The Pennsylvania Folklore So-*



city 3 (Allentown, PA, 1938), p. 22, renders "wieder in sein Vaterland zu ziehen" too freely to "intends to go abroad."

<sup>73</sup> "Lehnsbrief"—rental agreement—between "Deputaten-Ampf" and the "Alpmeyer;" Staatsarchiv Basel-Land, 1758, 388 Cholmatt; quoted in Franz Stohler et al., *Heimatkunde von Ziefen* (Liestal, 1978), 114; the property description is somewhat reminiscent of that bought by Durs Thommen in 1737:" Die Kohlmatt imm Banne des Dorfes Zyfen bestehend in Behausung, Scheuren und Stallung samt den dazu gehörenden Güttern ...".

<sup>74</sup> Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, Auswanderung A, 1750-1770, No. 116: Report of April 6, 1768, read in Council April 9, 1768; No. 117: Report of April 23, 1768; No. 118: First page of a letter of Elisabeth Strohmann from Pennsylvania; No. 121, April 27, 1768: Cross-examination of Michael Vogt of Zyfen.

<sup>75</sup> Staatsarchiv Basel-Land, Lade 48, Niderdorf, All. 364, 1-151, No. 24: Report of Carl Kündig, April 28, 1768; the bailiff reports gleefully that instead of presenting themselves to the authorities of Basel, they had made their escape, the father having left Waldenburg during the day, the son the following night. It seems unlikely that Johannes, Martin's son, returned to Pennsylvania; at least his name does not appear on any of the available lists.

<sup>76</sup> Breen, "Back to Sweat and Toil," 244.

<sup>77</sup> Staatsarchiv Basel-Land, Kirchenakten E 9, Waldenburg St. Peter 1 (1660-1735), p. 239: "Durß Thommen, Dursen Sohn und Margareth Kickenbacherin, Inf. Hanß."

<sup>78</sup> Egle, *Dauphin and Lebanon*, 602.

<sup>79</sup> See appendix for documentary base.

<sup>80</sup> See above, note 46.

## APPENDIX

### Genealogical Data of the Family of Durs Thommen of Niederdorf Near Waldenburg, Canton Basel-Land

#### PARENTS

Durs Thommen: b.\* 1679, September 21<sup>1</sup>  
m. 1701, April 19<sup>2</sup>  
d. 1749<sup>3</sup>  
Margareth, born Rickenbacher:  
b. 1681, September 11<sup>4</sup>  
m. 1701, April 19<sup>2</sup>  
d. 1742, December<sup>5</sup>

#### CHILDREN

1 Catharina: b. 1702, March 14<sup>6</sup>  
unmarried  
d. 1742, June<sup>5</sup>  
2 Martin: b. 1704, April 27<sup>7</sup>  
m. 1729, August 16<sup>8</sup>  
d. ? (returned to Switzerland 1767)<sup>9</sup>  
Barbara, born Mohler:  
b. 1700, February 18<sup>10</sup>  
m. 1729, August 16<sup>8</sup>  
d. ? (returned to Switzerland 1767)<sup>9</sup>  
Johannes, son of Martin and Barbara:  
b. 1730?  
m. ? (in Pennsylvania)  
d. ? (returned to Switzerland 1767)<sup>9</sup>  
3 Hans Jacob: b. 1708, January 1<sup>11</sup>  
unmarried  
d. 1739, June, at Ephrata<sup>12</sup>  
4 Durs, Jr.: b. 1711, October 18<sup>13</sup>  
m. ? (in Pennsylvania): Regina<sup>14</sup>  
d. before March 13, 1775<sup>14</sup>  
5 Hans: b. 1714, February 13<sup>15</sup>  
d. ? (in infancy?)  
6 Anna: b. 1720<sup>16</sup>  
m. 1771, August 27<sup>17</sup>  
d. 1778<sup>18</sup>  
\* b = baptized.

### Notes to Appendix \*

<sup>1</sup> Staatsarchiv Basel-Land (hereafter cited as StABL), Kirchenakten E 9, Waldenburg/St. Peter 1 (1660-1735), p. 298. Durs. (Durst, Dorst) derives from Theodore.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Julius F. Sachse, *The German Sectarrians of Pennsylvania 1742-1800*, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1900), p. 487.

<sup>4</sup> StABL, Kirchenakten E 9, Bothenfluh 2a (1675-1751), p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Letter of Anna Thommen, Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Nachlass d'Annone F II, No. 921. printed in Leo Schelbert, "Von der Macht des Pietismus," *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 75 (1975): 110.

<sup>6</sup> StABL, Kirchenakten E 9, Rothenfluh 2a (1675-1751), p. 74.

<sup>7</sup> StABL, Kirchenakten E 9, Waldenburg/St. Peter 1 (1660-1735), p. 320.

<sup>8</sup> StABL, Kirchenakten E 9, Diegten/Eptingen 2 (1712-1827), fol. 238.

<sup>9</sup> For documentation see Schelbert, "Pietismus," pp. 117-119.

<sup>10</sup> StABL, Kirchenakten E 9, Diegten/Eptingen 1a (1564-1712), fol. 73.

<sup>11</sup> StABL, Kirchenakten E 9, Waldenburg/St. Peter 1 (1660-1735), p. 323.

<sup>12</sup> Letter of Anna Thommen; see Schelbert, "Pietismus," p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> StABL, Kirchenakten E 9, Waldenburg/St. Peter 1 (1660-1735), p. 327.

<sup>14</sup> A document recorded June 20, 1776, in the Court of Common Pleas states that on March 13, 1775, "Regina Thoma Widow & Belict of Durst Thoma late of Heidelberg Township in the County of Lancaster & Province of Pennsylvania Yeoman deceased" appeared before "John Philip deHaas." A copy of the document was kindly sent to me by Mr. Phil Thuma of Ironton, Ohio, which is gratefully acknowledged. William H. Egle, *History of the Counties of Dauphin and Lebanon in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia 1883), pp. 601-620, "Thomas of Heidelberg," contains a host of data that seem to be a hopeless mix of valid and erroneous information.

<sup>15</sup> StABL, Kirchenakten E 9, Waldenburg/St. Peter (1660-1735), p. 327. No further data could be found about this child.

<sup>16</sup> W. F. Leach, "Genealogies of Old Philadelphia Families, Published in the *Sunday North American*," Vol. 3, "Wister"; copy in Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia.

<sup>17</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography* 20 (New York 1936), p. 434.

<sup>18</sup> Leach, "Genealogies," like 16, above.

\* Mr. Matthias Manz of the Staatsarchiv Basel-Land has kindly rechecked the data pertaining to records of that archive as to accuracy which is gratefully acknowledged.