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Harmonist Poetry Provides Glimpse into Sacred Communal Life

When the Harmonists started their exodus from the Duchy of Württemberg in 1804, they left behind not only an oppressive government, but a rigid form of Lutheranism as well (see Arndt, *George Rapp's Separatists 1700-1803*).¹ Few were the officials who appreciated Georg Rapp, but many the citizens who came to his home to hear the sermons of the "Prophet of Iptingen" (Arndt, *George Rapp's Harmony Society 1785-1847* 30).

Georg Rapp, who lived from 1757 to 1847, was the charismatic but controversial leader of a group of rebellious Lutheran Germans from Iptingen, in the vicinity of Stuttgart, who were encouraged to emigrate because of their divergent religious views in a state where civil and spiritual leadership were one. For about a year, the group looked for a suitable location to live along the Ohio, settling in 1805 near today's Butler, Pennsylvania. From there they moved to New Harmony, Indiana, and finally back to what is today Ambridge, Pennsylvania. Believing that Christ would come a second time during their lifetime, members lived exemplary and fruitful lives until the Society's dissolution in 1906.

Perhaps the question about Rapp's achievements before his emigration is not so easy to answer, but we do know from meticulously kept records what he and his faithful followers achieved after their arrival in the promised land of America. What remains Rapp's secret, however, is how he and his flock came upon a biblical way of life which was uniquely their own, modeled simultaneously on the first Christian community as described in Acts 2 and 4 and Revelation and on the Old Testament community which is addressed in the Book of Psalms, the Song of Songs, and the Prophets. It is quite certain that the Harmonists consulted more than the Luther Bible. The group had strong leanings towards esoteric teachings, especially the theosophy of Jakob Böhme, but also the writings of Johann Arnd(t), a sixteenth-century mystic. Karl Arndt observes that "Frederick [Rapp] was writing in terms of Jakob

Böhme and of the Berleburg Bible" (*George Rapp's Harmony Society 1785-1847* 101), while Richard Wetzel reports that "Martin Luther's translation of the Bible was widely used by the Harmonists . . ." (69). Both seem to be correct. Except for Karl Arndt's extensive and pioneering historical publications not enough research has been done on Harmonist details to answer the question of precisely what their position was with regard to the Bible. The Harmonist Library at Old Economy Village in Ambridge contains close to a hundred Bibles, including several Luther versions, different Berle(n)burg editions, French and English Bibles, and a fascinating *Polyglotten Bibel* which carries the Hebrew original, Septuagint, Vulgate, and Luther translations side by side.

Connected with the need to explore the Harmonist relationship to the Bible is our desire to understand the philosophy which provided the foundation for and which guided the Harmonists in their daily lives. The group was not very public about their way of life nor did they leave us reams which explain theoretically why they did what they did. We only know that their conduct was based directly on the Bible, but there have been many groups throughout history, in both Judaism and Christianity, who based their existence on the Word of God and who differed vastly in their interpretation and application. The only writing which expresses Harmonist philosophy is the anonymous *Thoughts on the Destiny of Man*, a volume of 96 pages, printed on the Harmony Society Press in 1824, and which is traditionally attributed to Georg Rapp.

While there are many eyewitness accounts of the exemplary and efficient practical life of this religious group as well as their hospitality to visitors and their forthright dealings with the outside world, very little is known about the intimate aspects of their communal life. What were their individual sorrows, joys, problems, hopes, not only as a communal body, but as individuals? If the guidelines did not need to be spelled out in detail or, if the Harmonists did not want to spell them out in writing, then what testimony do we find regarding their views? If members of a group do not feel inclined to express themselves in theoretical language, what other ways are there?

One such avenue of articulation, verbally and non-verbally, is art. Indeed, there has been some scholarly interest during recent years in the rich artistic heritage which the Harmonists have left us. Richard Wetzel and Lee Spear investigated the music of the Harmonists, Nancy Bhamé shed light on the sacred choral works of John S. Duss, Nancy Kraybill wrote on the pictorial arts of the Harmonists, and Hilda Adam Kring looked at the Society from a folk-cultural perspective.

One area of creativity which has hitherto been touched only incidentally is Harmonist poetry. What better way to express one's feelings about matters in a way both pleasurable and didactic than through measured language? There is ample evidence that Harmonist aesthetic sensibilities were highly developed. Their poetry might therefore provide a suitable entry into the inner world of Harmonist life. Unwilling to voice their individual concerns in a prosaic manner or to tie down their

expectations within a formal framework, the Harmonists chose instead to vent their feelings through poetry. Thus, poetry takes on part of the function traditionally served by philosophy. We might therefore look to Harmonist poetry for the thoughts which are ordinarily expressed in prose form.

The notion that poetic language is intrinsic to the Harmonist way of life has not been previously advanced. Such an assumption makes the study of Harmonist poetry an imperative for the study of the Harmonists. Perhaps it is not accidental that there is only one volume of less than a hundred pages which voices the prosaic thoughts, while hundreds of poems express Harmonist philosophy in the form of odes, hymns, elegies, prose poems, sung and spoken cantatas and folk songs. While the formal structure of the poetry is often simple, the images are indeed complex. The Harmonists created pieces for a mosaic, little pebbles, and it is up to the scholar to piece together the puzzle and form a coherent picture of the community's collective personality.

Only a fraction of the poetry was printed during the existence of the Harmony Society. This makes the task of extricating their thoughts doubly arduous. The *Allentown Gesangbuch* (1820) is the first text which consists of both original and previously existing poems. This *Gesangbuch* was revised in 1827 and reprinted in 1889. In 1826, the Harmonists printed a volume of 361 original works under the title, *Feurige Kohlen*. Two scholars have commented on this work. Karl Arndt writes:

In 1826 at Economy 361 such pieces (*Stücke*) were printed and bound with the following title page: *Feurige Kohlen der aufsteigenden Liebesflammen im Lustspiel der Weisheit*. . . . Like the *Meistersänger*, the Harmonists encouraged everyone to try his soul at praising God or Harmonie or Sophia in verse, a kind of democratic approach to poetry. (*Harmony on the Wabash 1824-1826* 129)

In an interesting and informative article, "Education in Utopia: The New Harmony Experience," Donald Pitzer explains the evolution of this work in more detail. Pitzer writes that daily classes included

. . . writing exercises in blank books, spelling bees, handicrafts, choral performances, and physical activities. Competition was encouraged, and the best exercises each week were put on display before the entire congregation during the 9 A.M. Sunday morning service. Father Rapp divided the whole membership into five groups (old men, old women, young men, young women, and children of both sexes) for competition in prose and poetry. This literary effort resulted in the selection of 361 original works which were printed on the Harmonist press in 1826 as *Feurige Kohlen der aufsteigenden Liebesflammen im Lustspiel der Weisheit* (*Fiery Coals of the Ascending Flames of Love in the Happiness of Wisdom*). This collection, offering an intimate perspective of the Harmonists' own attitude about religion, devotion, virtue, labor, unselfishness, and daily living, still awaits an English translation [emphasis mine]. (86)

Not only does this already published collection of poetry await translation, but interpretation. While there has been some scholarly

interest in the legacy of the Harmony Society during the last twenty years in addition to the continuing publications of Karl Arndt, none of these scholars has investigated the poetry of the Harmonists for its own sake. All scholars mention Harmonist texts, and even reprint and translate them (Arndt and Kring), but these scholars' interest in the Harmonist poetry is connected with their specific non-literary areas of inquiry. To date, the poetry of the Harmonists, both printed and unprinted, has not been critically analyzed.

Since the published poetry is easily accessible, I do not wish to linger on it in this study. Rather, I would like to draw attention to the poetry which is at present extant in manuscript form and whose existence is not generally known. It is not the function of this study to provide an in-depth analysis, but rather to interest the scholar in a treasure which waits to be mined.²

The unpublished poetry can be found either on loose sheets, sometimes only scraps of paper; or in narrow memorandum books or pieces of paper folded to such a size,³ or in songbooks the size of a church hymnal. No place is too obscure. While the poetry in Harrisburg is located primarily in MG-185, General File, Box 3, containing poems, aphorisms and proverbs, there are also other files of interest: Box 13 contains school materials and exercise books; Box 11 Gertrud Rapp's mathematics notebook; Box 10 German-English phrases; Box 8 scriptural material; and Box 14 individual songbooks. At Old Economy Village, the loose sheets are gathered in a box marked MG 185.I, Series 19 in the Music Library or in a folder marked "Miscellaneous," but much of the poetry can be found in the form of song lyrics along with the musical scores.

The individualized songbooks, roughly fifty of which exist, contain between 50 and 100 texts (no music). Some of them bear an inscription with the name of the owner, and the frontispiece is often elaborately decorated. No two songbooks are the same. They are personalized. Each seems to contain whatever lyrics were important to a particular individual, sometimes including Lutheran hymns. The books may contain arias from operettas or operas, or folk songs, or texts which cannot be otherwise located. The Jonathan Lenz songbook is by far the most artistic and was perhaps created with an eye to posterity. On display at Old Economy Village, the book contains approximately 100 texts, on light blue paper, ornately decorated with flowers and other small designs. Christoph Müller, physician and musical genius, wrote all the songbooks for Gertrud Rapp, Father Rapp's granddaughter, who was one of the outstanding women of the Society and possessed poetic and musical talent as well as a shrewd business sense. In addition to singing at Sunday services to the accompaniment of Jacob Henrici, she took charge of developing the silk industry of the Harmony Society.

Apparently songbooks were passed on from one owner to another, and some contain one set of lyrics in the front, while another set starts from the back. Several hypotheses about the function of these personal songbooks have been advanced. Spear feels that students, who used the song texts for exercises in penmanship, gathered them into elegant

manuscript volumes (131). While this may be true in some cases, it surely was not true of Jonathan Lenz who was no adolescent when he crafted his outstanding piece of artistry in 1886. Hilda Adam Kring feels that the handwritten hymnals obviously predated the printed ones (111), while Wetzel reports that "the manuscript hymnbooks [sic] contain the hymns most often used by the Harmonists from 1811 to 1820" (46). But according to Wetzel, some texts and tunes were omitted from the 1820 *Harmonisches Gesangbuch*, so that the hymnals remained in use (46).⁴

Even German-reading scholars will find these manuscripts a challenge, for the poetry is written in the old German script. This handwriting, sometimes called *Kurrentschrift*, can be traced to the Baroque. Kraybill refers to the "archaic German script" (50); others generally classify the handwriting as *Fraktur*, Spear calls it "nineteenth-century kursiv Fraktur" (VI). Among the loose poetry, there are many versions of some lyrics, often with corrections; or multiple copies of the same version, but there are also single, unduplicated pieces which stand alone, mute as to any information other than the words on the page. Thus, one ends up with very few answers and a great many questions.

If one is able to overcome the mechanical difficulties, the poetry does bear witness to the Harmonist way of life. Wetzel writes: "[The 'Harmonie Geist'] is most apparent . . . in the vocal music, for here texts written by Society members reveal the principles which were at the heart of this peculiar brotherhood" (30). Later he continues: ". . . the 'travel songs' . . . show how deep was the religious fervor which drove them to leave Württemberg. . . . Many of the doctrinal and theological principles upon which the Harmony Society was founded and by which it was governed appear in these hymn texts" (39). And finally, Wetzel concludes, "Rationalist poetry served especially well to express the religious philosophy of a communal society like that of the Harmonists" (44). In discussing their singing, Kring states:

Expressing themselves in song the Harmonists achieved a dual purpose, a respite from the sameness in their being and a call to worship. Song for them spelled charisma, whether it was a psalm or a song of their own composition. It not only drew them to it, but to each other, creating the unity and brotherhood of which they sang. . . . Nor was singing reserved for formal worship; it was a way of life. . . . (104)

In fact, Kring, following the example of a traveler who experienced the Harmonists firsthand, John Melish, feels that Robert Burns' "The Cotters' Saturday Night" strongly resembles the Harmonist philosophy and language (108). Finally, Wetzel also recognizes the educational value of this mode of communication: "Hymns were an important tool for teaching Harmonist principles. Many . . . emphasized a common goal and the power of faith in overcoming all forms of corruption" (49).

Since poetry had an inclusive function for the Harmonists, there is no aspect of their existence which did not either generate or was infused with personal expression in the form of lyrical poetry—be it in the fields, in the factory, in school, at home, at communal, religious or civic affairs. Kring quotes from the Duke of Saxe-Weimar's report on his travels:

. . . the girls had especially requested this visit that I might hear them sing. When their work is done, they collect in one of the factory rooms, to the number of 60 or 70, to sing spiritual and other songs. They have a peculiar hymnbook, containing hymns from the old Württemberg collection, and others written by the elder Rapp. . . . (106)

Poetry, though expressing individual attitudes and emotions, likes and dislikes, was put in the service of the community.

Very broadly, there are two general categories, the poetry which seems to have originated with the Harmonists and that which came from previously existing sources. Most of the poems which the Harmonists authored are tied either to their "goddess" Harmonie who is also Sophia and collected in *Feurige Kohlen der aufsteigenden Liebesflammen* or they are tailored to a celebration or personal event, such as a birthday or death. Since the Harmonists did not acknowledge authorship, be it for reasons of modesty or communal solidarity, there are only a handful of poems which can actually be tied to a specific author with some certainty. Different scholars have advanced differing comments on this situation. Wetzel writes:

By far the greater part of the hymnody of the manuscript books was written by members of the Harmony Society. Except for Christoph Mueller, however, authorship is generally difficult to determine . . . the subject of the texts sometimes gives a clue as to authorship. . . . (45)

This I certainly agree with in the case of occasional poetry. Kring echoes Wetzel, when she writes: "Anonymity shrouds their hymnal . . . since the Harmonist belief in common ownership and self-denial was all-embracing it follows that no personal glory was expected from authorship. They are sacramental acts of private devotion showing much spiritual passion" (108). Lee Spear formed this opinion:

The Harmonists were often not very concerned that the composers of the works they performed receive credit. . . . Some researchers have suggested that this demonstrates a kind of communal modesty in practice. More likely it simply showed a lack of concern for posterity. . . . (108)

Arndt refers to one poem with the observation that the "original manuscript is not dated or signed but is part of a collection of early Harmony Society poetry . . ." (1700-1803 246). Later, referring to the "Klaglied der Kinder Zions," Arndt writes: "This and other important anonymous Separatist poems were found in a beautifully written Harmonist's book of algebra and geometry . . ." (1700-1803 301).

We simply do not know what the reasons for the anonymity were. They may have been as simple as those advanced by the previous researchers, or as complex as those which were behind mystical writings throughout history, whose authors hid either behind pseudepigraphy or anonymity for a variety of reasons—from an effort to shield their private thoughts from public exposure to the hope of escaping ridicule or even persecution because of their views, or to gain authority for their views by attaching them to a figure already well-known in history. Except for a

very few, the poems do not even give an indication that they were written by members of the Harmony Society.

Jacob Henrici, a school teacher, gifted musician and all-around creative spirit, dated only certain poems. He never signed any with his name. But his handwriting, which we know from correspondence and numerous music notations, was so distinct that it stands out quite clearly from that of others. I would say that Henrici *wrote* the poems which he dated, and only *adapted* those which he did not mark in any way.⁵

Signatures and dates, when they can be found, are not necessarily reliable. Well-meaning individuals sometimes added a signature or date to a poem in later years, detectable by the different handwriting, and the information needs to be checked carefully.

There are many different categories of poetry. There is poetry in praise of God and as an encouragement to human beings in difficult times. This we might call sacred poetry. "Ode an Gott" (MG 185.I, Series 19) celebrates God's omnipotence:

Alles Leben strömt aus Dir,
Und durchwallt in tausend Bächen
Alle Welten! Alle sprechen:
Deiner Hände Werk sind wir.
Daß ich fühle daß ich bin,
Daß ich Dich, Du Großer, kenne,
Daß ich froh Dich Vater nenne,
O, ich sinke vor Dir hin.
Welch ein Trost und unbegrenzt,
Und unnennbar ist die Wonne,
Daß gleich Deiner milden Sonne
Mich Dein Vateraug umglänzt.
Deiner Gegenwart Gefühl,
Sei mein Engel der mich leite;
Daß mein schwacher Fuß nicht gleite,
Nicht sich irre von dem Ziel.

(unattributed)

"Glück eines Christen" (MG 185.I, Series 19) encourages the suffering to persevere and challenges the taunters to leave since they cannot persist where the pious person is comfortable. The first of six verses reads as follows:

Entfernet euch, unsel'ge Spötter.
Ihr zittert, wo der Fromme glaubt:
Mein Herz hat einen Gott zum Retter,
Und eine Hoffnung, die nichts raubt.
Ich sehe meinen Heiland leben;
Ich weiß, daß ich nicht sterben kann.
Weiß, mit verklärtem Leib umgeben
Schau ich ihn einst im Himmel an.

(unattributed, in Henrici handwriting)

Stanza six of a poem which begins, "Mir ist der Heiland heut geboren,/Des Vaters Kind und Davids Sohn" (MG 185.I, Misc.), defiantly celebrates Jesus as a brother who will triumph in saving the author in the battle with evil until the goal is reached:

So ist der Heiland mir geboren,
Trotz Teufel, Sünde, Höll und Tod;
Ich bin in Christo auserkoren;
Mit mir hats ewig keine Noth.
Der Himmel steht mir wieder offen;
Ich hab ein ewigs Reich zu hoffen
Aus meines treuen Bruders Hand;
Er wird mich nimmermehr verlieren,
Durch Dück und Dünne sicher führen,
Bis er mich bringt ins Vaterland.

[Ten more verses] (unattributed, in Henrici handwriting)

Other poems are written for specific occasions. They convey birthday wishes, lament a friend's death, or commemorate a loved one who has passed away. Although the form and language are generally simple, the imagery is not necessarily obvious. One poem, written for Father Rapp's eighty-second birthday on 28 October 1839, celebrates Mother Rahel. This needs explaining, following the text (MG 185.I, Series 19):

Willkomm du Mutter Rahel,
Du Gründer von dem Sonnen Weib,
Heut freut sich hoch dein Beth-El
Daß du gesalbt aus deinem Leib,
Dein hohes Ehren-Alter,
Von zweiundachtzig Jahr,
Sey künftig noch Verwalter,
Biß wir sind aus Gefahr,
Nun wollen wir Gott bitten
Er möcht dein alten Leib,
Mit Jugend Kraft beschützen
Daß er erhalten bleib.

The Harmonists believed that they were like the sun woman from Revelation in the wilderness. They had left behind Babel, the place of sin, by leaving Germany. The individual who led them in this endeavor was Georg Rapp, who then became the founder of the sun woman, namely Harmonie (Harmony), like Jacob became Israel and then gave his name to the entire people. Thus, the founder of Harmony (the Harmony Society) together with all the members is the new beginning which will mother the Son of God like Rachel bore Benjamin, with her last breath. This means that the Harmony Society will bring forth the Kingdom of God on earth, or the second coming of Christ by their efforts to perfect the world. Rapp is the administrator of Beth-El, the sacred place where God revealed Himself to Jacob and where Jacob erected an altar for sacrifice. They all are the body of Mother Rahel (Gen. 35). The corrupt world of Babel is replaced by the new, pure sun woman. Or, the conditions of Babel are reversed, undone.

Not all personal poetry is so powerful. An author with the initials J. H. commemorates a friend's birth as a day of joy. We do not know who the recipient is:

Der Tag, an dem zuerst Dein Aug dem Licht sich öffnete,
Ist uns mit Recht ein Freudentag;
Weil Du, ein Kind des Lichts, Dein ganzes Leben jetzt
Dem Herrn u. seinen Brüdern weihst.
Was könnt ich geben Dir, Du Lieber, heut an Deinem Tage?
Mein Herz sey Dein, und Deiner Lieb und Freundschaft immer werth,
Um mit Dir Gott und seinen Kindern ewig treu zu seyn.
Dies wünscht
Dein Freund und Bruder,

J. H.

(MG 185, General File, Box 3)

Another poem celebrates a friendship which goes back to the two friends' youth. We know that the recipient is Eva Stilz, who celebrates her forty-seventh birthday, but we do not know the author. The four-stanza poem, which was to be sung to the melody, "Harmonie du Bruderstadt," begins this way:

Gute Freunde wurden wir,
Früh in Jugend-Zeiten.
Bis zur Gegenwart allhier,
Soll uns nichts mehr scheiden,
Von der Lieb und Freundschafts-Pflicht,
Süß ist sie im Leiden,
Freund vergeße meiner nicht
Müßten wir noch scheiden.

(MG 185, General File, Box 3)

Not all occasions are happy ones. A poem by Louise Weil tries to give Gertrud Rapp moral support in her grief over the loss of her mother. Entitled, "Der lieben Freundin Gertrud Rapp," the first verse reads:

Wer so wie Du dem Herrn sein ganzes Leben
In treuer Liebe hat dahin gegeben
Dem wird gewiß auch bei dem schwersten Gang
Um wahren Trost u. Frieden niemals bang.
Und doch, auch das gestählte Christenherz
Es ist noch *menschlich* und empfindet Schmerz.

(MG 185.I, Miscellaneous)

John S. Duss, who gained some fame by taking the Harmony Society Band on nationwide concert tours, wrote a poem upon the death of Jonathan Lenz on 24 January 1890. He prefaced it with a lengthy dedication:

Dem geliebten, im Herrn
entschlafenen Bruder
Jonathan Lenz
zum Begräbniß; und den

überbleibenden Brüdern und
Schwestern zum Trost u. zur
gegenseitigen Ermunterung
gewidmet.

1. Ein treugesinnter Christ
Und guter Harmonist
Hat hier vollendet seinen Lauf:
Er hat auf Christus hin
Gerichtet seinen Sinn
Bis er ihn hat genommen auf.

The sixth and last verse reads:

6. Laß uns in dieser Stund
Erneuern unsern Bund
Zu leben wie es dir gefällt,
Bis daß in jenem Land
Von deiner Vaterhand,
Ein jedes seine Kron' erhält.

(MG 185, General File, Box 3)

The anniversary of Romelius Baker's death was 11 January 1869. To the melody "Morgenroth," the following words were sung in church:

Bald ja bald;
wird die schöne Lichts-Gestalt,
Unsers Bräutigams erscheinen,
wohl dem der sich kann vereinen,
Und ihm froh entgegen gehn.

[Four more verses] (unattributed)

(MG 185, General File, Box 3)

It is not surprising that a large group of poems came into existence as part of communal events. The Harmonists had three feasts unique to their Society—the Founder's Feast (*Harmoniefest*) in February, the Love Feast (*Liebesmahl*) in October, and the Harvest Feast (*Erntefest*) in August. It is conceivable that the poetry will eventually help us to acquire a better understanding of the nature of some of the occasions, such as the Love Feast, whose critical definition so far has been lacking. This event seems to have been much more complicated than its traditional definition of "agape" implies.

For the *Liebesmahl* of 1855, we have an eight-stanza poem. The melody, if it was sung, is not indicated. The first and last stanzas read as follows:

1. Was für ein Geist durchdringt das Haus?
Was will der Glanz so vieler Kerzen?
Bricht wohl das inn're Licht heraus?
Findt sich im Grunde Herz zum Herzen?
Sind wir gestimmt, den Bruderbund
In Wahrheit gründlich zu erneuern?
So finden sich zu dieser Stund
Gewiß auch Engel, mitzufeiern.

8. Nehm hin den Kelch u. trinke ihn,
Im Glauben, des Erlösers Wunden,
Der Wein begeistre deinen Sinn,
Weil du in Jesu Gnade funden.
Dein ganzes Wesen bücke sich
Vor Jesu' Majestät und Höhe;
Sein Feur u. Licht durchdringe dich,
Und bring dir seines Geistes Nähe.

(unattributed)
(MG 185.I, Series 19)

The year 1832 turned out to be one which most Harmonists would have preferred to forget, but could not. A man who called himself Count Leon had come into the community, at first warmly welcomed by Rapp. But his ideas were incompatible with those of Georg Rapp and when the dust settled, Rapp had lost over thirty percent of his flock, among them the irreplaceable Johann Christoph Müller. An untitled text in the files nearly slipped by unnoticed, except for the modest notation at the end, "auf das verschobene Harmonie Fest 1832" (MG 185.I, Series 19). It begins like this:

1. Halleluja dem großen König,
Dem Fürsten, Gott u. Bräutigam!
Ihr Völker, seydt Ihm unterthänig,
Verehrt das theure Opfer Lamm!
Auch dieser Tag sey Ihm geweiht,
früh vor dem ersten Morgen Strahl
der Sonne, die die Nacht zerstreuet
vor unserm nahen Liebesmahl.

There are a total of five verses, plus a two-line refrain. The festival piece closes in this way:

Liebe und Freundschaft sey unsre Zier,
Wahrer Gemeinschaft, huldigen wir.

5. So segne heute die Gemeine
Mit Wahrheit Geist und Einigkeit,
Laß prangen Sie vor dir die Eine
In neuem Schmuck u. Feierkleid,
Sie ist der Preis von Millionen,
Sie hat geliebt gelitten hie;
Sie blüth für alle Nationen,
bringt Gunst in Liebes Harmonie.

Ganz unser Leben, sei dir geweiht,
all unser Streben, nur Einigkeit.

(unattributed)

In 1835, the Harmonists had somewhat recovered from their shock, though perhaps not from their loss. Again, we find a poem for the *Harmoniefest*. It consists of five verses, the first and third will be given. (MG 185.I, Series 19):

1. Harmonie du auserkohnre
 der Ewgen Einheit Erstgebohrne,
 vor aller Creatur und Zeit
 bis heut thatst du dich behaupten,
 wie alle deine Helden glaubten,
 drum sey dir heut dies Fest geweiht
 du schöne Sulamith,
 in deinem Geistestritt,
 kehre wieder,
 im Geistes Hauch,
 nach deinem Brauch,
 und fördre vollends unsern Lauf.

3. Dieses Spiel bei jung und alten,
 macht Bruder-Lieb so oft erkalten,
 drum weck uns heute Geist und Kraft
 daß wir uns heut recht vereinen,
 der Sanftmuth Quell uns möcht erscheinen
 von innen aus dem Geistes Saft.
 Damit die Leiblichkeit,
 zu deiner Wonn und Freud,
 bald erscheine im Salz der Kraft,
 den Geist umfaßt,
 daß eines zu dem andern paßt.

(unattributed)

In addition, the Harmonists celebrated various established religious holidays, such as Pentecost, Christmas, Easter and New Year's Day. One Christmas poem, numbered merely "4," progresses from a celebration of the Christmas season as the giver of heavenly joy to a total offering of self in gratitude (MG 185.I, Series 19):

[. . .]
 Zu gering
 Ist, Herr, jedes Lob und Ding
 Das als Dank wir könnten bringen;
 Darum nimm von uns Geringen,
 Leib, Seel, Geist und Alles hin.

For the New Year, the author prays for a total restoration of body, soul and spirit, "until everything is well and sacred." Strophes six through eight read as follows (MG 185.I, Series 19):

6. Errette uns, Herr Jesu Christ,
 Von Bosheit, Falschheit, Trug und List,
 Mach uns von allem Übel frei,
 im Glauben fest, im Lieben treu!

7. Erfüll mit Wahrheit unsre Brust,
 Dein Wort sey unsre höchste Lust,
 Dein Wille sey uns Speis und Trank,
 Gehorsam unser Herzensdank.

8. So, lieber Heiland, laß uns seyn,
 Daß Jung und Alt, daß Groß und Klein
 Nur denke, wünsche, red und thu,
 Was Du belohnst mit Fried und Ruh!

Pentecost 1835 celebrates the anticipation of God's Kingdom on earth, in whose perfection the Harmonist group has a leading role (MG 185.I, Series 19):

1. Wer schwebt so schön auf Zions Hügel?
 Ists nicht die Harmonier Schaar?
 Entfalte deine goldnen Flügel,
 Enthülle deinen Einfaltsspiegel,
 Und stelle deine Reize dar!
 [Six more stanzas] (unattributed, in Henrici handwriting)

Not only did the Harmonists draw on the talent of the Society members for the creation of new poetry, but they incorporated already existing poetry and lyrics into their repertory as well. Some poems they adopted directly, other poetry they adapted to their needs, some they translated from other languages, primarily English, Italian and French. In connection with Harmonist music it has been noted by other investigators that in a musical program the Harmonists mixed and matched secular and sacred tunes freely. Lee Spear noted:

When dealing with a community devoted to achieving the "temporal and eternal felicity" of its members through religious enlightenment, it is not surprising to find an overlap of religious and instructional music with social and concert music. That the Harmonists permitted their musical life to extend far beyond religious functionalism sets them apart from religious utopians. (68)

In reference to Harmonist adaptation, Wetzel explains: "The great German poets Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, and Lessing had little sympathy with evangelical religion, but their poetry was adapted by the Harmonists whenever it proved useful" (44).

That is certainly true. In the archives in Harrisburg, there is a sheet listing Württemberg poets (MG 185, General File, Box 3) as well as a sheet headed, "Die aus den Harfen-Klänge [sic] gelernten Lieder sind folgende" Unfortunately the actual song lyrics are not there.

Richard Wetzel, in discussing Harmonist appropriation, speaks of the Harmonists' "poetic license" which, he says, is sometimes carried to extremes (50). He further comments: "There is more than a slight suggestion that some texts and tunes of the 1820 *Harmonisches Gesangbuch* are traditional items which were so severely altered that the original forms are barely recognizable . . ." (54). It is the task of the literary scholar to determine just exactly how these materials evolved.

Lest we think that all this poetic adaptation is accidental, a note from Georg to Friedrich Rapp of 23 September 1824 might be of interest. Father Rapp writes:

. . . von wegen den sing stücken kanst Du Dir leicht helfen, überseze Englische Stück ins Deutsche, u. verändre darin nach unserem Sin, was

nicht taugt, vielleicht hast solche poisie stücke, die man brauchen kan
wan Du daran änderst bis es recht ist (Arndt, 1824-26 177)

The Harmony Society Library did indeed contain a wealth of poetry from the most diverse sources, and many of these items have survived to this day. Both Wetzel and Spear treat the sources in the Library in detail. Among the treasures are German Lutheran hymn books, American hymn books, and hymn books from other religious societies, such as Ephrata (see Wetzel 63). Count Zinzendorf's poems can be found, as well as the poetry of leading German poets such as Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Höltz, Kotzebue. Some of these were copied into a notebook which is still in the archives (MG 185.I, Series 19, pM 20). German folk songs retained their popularity, and arias from operas and popular passages from operettas can be found, as well as many of the well-known libretti. In the files there are poems out of magazines, and the Harmonists translated what they wished to make available to the membership at large into German. One sheet in Harrisburg bore the notation, "banner song." In reading the text it became apparent that it was a translation of the "Star-Spangled Banner" (MG 185, General File, Box 3).

Identifying sources and authors of Harmonist texts is most difficult. Simple, direct attributions to a particular author, within the Harmony Society or outside, are extremely rare. One might think that the voluminous handwritten materials would aid in the identification process. This is true only as far as the identity of the handwriting is concerned, not for the texts. Whenever multiple copies of a particular song were needed, people went at the task as a team, each person producing several copies of the song. Thus handwriting can be synonymous with copying, not with authorship. Another way in which multiple copies of a series of texts were handled was by dividing the work according to poem. One person would write the same poem in all the books, and another individual a different one, and so forth, until the job was done. Thus, handwriting tells us nothing about authorship as such. The handwriting mystery is further compounded when one looks at the correspondence. There are letters signed by Frederick Rapp, Father Rapp's influential adopted son. Yet, when one looks closely, it becomes apparent that the handwriting is not that of Frederick Rapp, but that of Romelius Baker, who, as the Society's business manager, was entitled to write and sign for others for whom he transacted business. The same is true of letters attributed to Gertrud Rapp as well as to other Society members, including Georg Rapp.

One gets the sense that those who excelled at calligraphy were asked to do the major part of the writing. This was true of Jonathan Lenz and Christoph Müller. In later years, Jacob Henrici distinguished himself for two reasons: His handwriting was so distinct that he did not need to sign his name. The flow and musicality of his style just float on the page, giving the impression of an extremely cultured individual. But Henrici was also clever, so clever that in time I did not dare assume that anything borrowed from another source had not been tampered with, always looking for the one word which would alter the text's character

from the original intent. The hymn, "Nearer My God to Thee," is only too obvious in its adulterated version, "Näher, mein Gott, zu mir!" (MG 185.I, Series 19, pM 16, 1-15).

N: 14. P. 71.

*Näher, mein Gott, zu mir,
 Näher zu mir!
 Du bist es würdest Du
 Näher sein sein.
 Oh, Herr, Du Ungeheuer
 Du bist ja doch ja doch ja doch;
 Nächst dem Herz sind wir nicht,
 Du bist ja doch ja doch ja doch.*

Two adaptations or creations which are good examples of the phenomena discussed follow. Both are in the hand of Henrici, but without a date. The Goethean flavor of song No. 8 in manuscript book No. 2, "Herz, mein Herz," was obvious, but what followed was definitely not Goethe. Goethe's poem, entitled "Neue Liebe, neues Leben," was set to music by Beethoven. Both texts follow:

Goethe

Herz, mein Herz, was soll das geben,
 Was bedrängt dich so sehr?
 Welch ein fremdes, neues Leben—
 Ich erkenne dich nicht mehr.
 Weg ist alles, was du liebtest,
 Weg, worum du dich betrübtest,
 Weg dein Fleiß und deine Ruh—
 Ach, wie kamst du nur dazu?

[Two more eight-line verses]

Henrici

Herz, mein Herz, warum so traurig?
 Und was soll das Ach und Weh?
 'Sist so schön im Heimathlande;
 Herz, mein Herz, was fehlt dir mehr?
 Warum solches Trauerleben?
 Freue dich der schönen Welt!
 Was du wünschest, kann sie geben:
 Freunde, Freude, Gut und Geld.

[Eleven more four-line verses]

(MG 185.I, Series 19, pM 16, 1-15)

The second poem consists of a fusion of the popular German folk song, "Freut euch des Lebens," and an apparently original composition of nine strophes which alternate with the folk song lyrics as a refrain. At first, only two little words in the last line of the refrain are altered, later the entire strophe is adapted to the new need. Hence, when the original text is alternated with the adapted folk song lyrics, the meaning of the folk song is reversed. The text is, in fact, put in the service of a devotional poem which, assuming that the poem was sung to the popular melody (and we do not know that it was) could indeed have been a clever didactic device to remind the Harmonists of their creed. Because it is so striking, the text is given in its entirety, followed by an attempt at interpretation.

Freut euch des Lebens

M. Usteri

Bewegt

H. G. Nägeli

mf

1-7. Freut euch des Le-bens, weil noch das Lämpchen glüht; pflücket die Ro-se,

eh' sie ver-blüht! 1. Manschaft so gern sich Sorg'und Müh,sucht Dor-nen auf und

Fine.

fin-det sie, und lässt das Veilchen un-bemerkt,das uns am We-ge blüht.

D. C. al Fine.

2. Wenn scheu die Schöpfung sich verhüllt
Und laut der Donner ob uns brüllt,
So lacht am Abend nach dem Sturm
Die Sonn' uns doppelt schön!

3. Wer Neid und Missgunst sorgsam flieht
Und G'nügsamkeit im Gärtchen zieht,
Dem schiesst sie schnell zum Bäumchen auf,
Das gold'ne Früchte trägt.

4. Wer Redlichkeit und Treue liebt
Und gern dem ärmern Bruder giebt,
Bei dem baut sich Zufriedenheit
So gern ihr Hütchen auf.

5. Und wenn der Pfad sich furchtbar engt
Und Missgeschick uns plagt und drängt,
So reicht die Freundschaft schwesterlich
Dem Redlichen die Hand.

6. Sie trocknet ihm die Tränen ab
Und streut ihm Blumen bis ans Grab;
Sie wandelt Nacht in Dämmerung
Und Dämmerung in Licht.

7. Sie ist des Lebens schönstes Band.
Schlingt, Brüder, traulich Hand in Hand!
So wallt man froh, so wallt man leicht
In's bessere Vaterland!

Source: *Deutsche Weisen*, Herausgegeben von August Linder (Stuttgart: Lausch & Zweigle) 165

Transcription

Freut euch des Lebens
Weil noch das Lämpchen glüht,
Pflücket die Rose,
Die nie verblüht.

1. Das neue Leben meinen wir,
Das Jesus Christus mir und dir
Vom Himmel hat herwiederbracht
Als Er auf Erden kam.
Freut euch des Lebens, etc.
2. Das Lämpchen ist des Geistes Licht,
Das klein und schwach in uns anbricht,
Doch durch das Wort in Geisteskraft
Uns einst zur Sonne wird.
Freut euch des Lebens—
3. Die goldne Rose ists gemeint,
Die Gott, als wir noch waren Feind'
Durch des Propheten Micha Mund
So gnädig uns verhieß.
Freut euch des Lebens—
4. Die Himmelsros' ward uns gebracht
Als in der heil'gen Weihenacht
Ein goldnes Knösplein sich erschloß
Im reinen Mutterschooß.
Freut euch des Lebens—
5. Doch größer ward die Rosenpracht
Als in der heil'gen Passahnacht
Zwölf goldne Blätter sich vereint
Zu einem goldnen Kelch.
Freut euch des Lebens—
6. Noch größer war die Rosenpracht
Als durch des Heil'gen Geistes Macht
In tausendfacher Blätterzier,
Die goldne Ros' erschien.
Freut euch des Lebens—
7. Die höchste Pracht wird dann entstehn,
Wann man den Herrn wird kommen sehn
Mit seinem Heer der Heiligen
Zum goldnen Liebereich.
Freut [euch] des Lebens,
Das uns der Herr erwarb
Als er aus Liebe
Am Kreuze starb.
8. Die vor'ge Herrschaft ist dann da,
Wie sie der heil'ge Micha sah;
Das Königreich Jerusalem
Mit Davids ew'gem Thron.
Freut euch des Lebens,
Das uns der Herr erwarb

[Als er aus Liebe
Am Kreuze starb.]

9. Wir bitten Dich, Herr Jesu Christ,
Mach uns so, wie du selber bist,
Daß du dein heiliges Ebenbild
Vollkommen in uns siehst.
Freut euch des Lebens,
Das uns der Herr erwarb
Als er aus Liebe
Am Kreuze starb!

(MG 185.I, Series 19, pM 16, 1-15)

It is not very controversial to suggest that the verses depict a biblical evolution from Creation through Redemption. However, the creation which Henrici discusses is the birth of the Christ child (v. 1) who then ignites the Divine Light in us (v. 2). Then he backtracks to the Old Testament and reminds us that God predicted such an event through the Prophet Micah (v. 3). Verse four repeats the "creation story," that is to say the birth of Jesus, and the narrative then proceeds through the Passion (v. 5) to Pentecost when in a thousand-fold brilliant light the golden rose, symbol of the Harmony Society, was first revealed (v. 6). From the past, Henrici looks to the future, when in infinite splendor the Lord will return with his army of saints to his golden kingdom of love (v. 7). Now the refrain changes. After each of the first six verses we were asked to enjoy life while the lamp still glows and to reach and pick the rose, namely the Harmonist way of life, which will exist always, that is to say, until the second coming of the Lord. But now, from verses seven through nine, the refrain admonishes us to enjoy the life—a spiritual life—which the Lord obtained for us by his death on the cross. This attitude assumes that we have made the choice for the Harmonist way of life, otherwise this option is not available! Verse eight glories in the anticipation of the Kingdom of God which will then prevail according to Micah's prophecies. The ninth verse is a prayer to Jesus Christ to make us perfect so that we will be in His image.

The golden rose which Henrici has in mind is the Rose of Sharon from the Song of Songs 2:1 (an asphodel [according to notes: a flower; perhaps a daffodil] in the Oxford Study Edition of *The New English Bible* and a rose in *The Jerusalem Bible*) which for the Harmonists became fused with Micah 4:8, who in the *New English* and *Jerusalem Bibles* says nothing of a flower. Neither do some editions of the Luther Bible (but see Kring 54), yet when we return and look at Luther's translation of the Song of Songs passage, we are astonished to see that the second-line lily of the valley has become a rose in the valley, synonymous to the first-line flower of Sharon. Perhaps this complex symbolism which is characteristic of the Harmonists gives us an idea of what analysis of their poetry involves. One must also understand that the symbol of the rose already played an important part in Ephrata, a society with which the Harmonists were very familiar (Ernst 249-63).

Jacob Henrici, who was able to preserve the mystery of the Harmonists as well as his predecessors also gets the last word where Harmonist scholarship is concerned. In a multiple-verse poem, "Herr Jesu, Freund

der Kinder," which Henrici probably authored, since it is dated 19 February 1875, he added another verse, dated 26 February 1875, a week after completion, with the addition "Ann Arbor." There are numerous copies of the poem in both archives, but there is only one copy which has this verse added in red ink:

Kritik, was willst du flicken
Am Kinderfreundeslied?
Vor dem mußst du dich bücken
Der es so lieb beschied.

(MG 185.I, Series 19, pM 16, 1-15)

What happened in the week between 19 February and 26 February 1875 that prompted Henrici to postscript his poem with this thought? Even today, many of the Harmonists' secrets will remain safe from the prying eyes of the world.

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Notes

¹ A shorter version of this paper was read at the Annual Symposium of the Society for German-American Studies, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, April 25-27, 1985. A sincere note of thanks to all the individuals who have been and are assisting me with this ongoing project, especially to Pat Belich and Ruth Hahn at Old Economy.

² During the past year, a colleague has translated all of the poems introduced in this paper as well as others into English. We are in the process of completing the manuscript for a bilingual edition of approximately 50 poems, with introductory essays and short Harmony Society history.

As a first step towards the larger task of piecing together the puzzle of a precise picture of Harmonist philosophy, I undertook, with the financial support of the Ethnic Heritage Studies Center, University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh, a survey study to see what poetry, if any, existed in addition to that published. Both Old Economy Village in Ambridge and the State Archives in Harrisburg served as the bases for this research effort.

³ The strange size of approximately 3×8 inches puzzled me until I saw a wooden storage box for documents in the Schiller Nationalmuseum in Marbach, dating from the early nineteenth century, for just that size of paper.

⁴ For an interesting analysis of Harmonist hymnals, see Wetzel's chapter on "Harmonist Hymnody," 37-70.

⁵ One author who did show a concern for attribution was Louise Weil, who wrote several personal poems on the occasion of a birthday or death. Karl Arndt pointed out to me that she was not a member of the Harmony Society.

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