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"I WILL SHOW WONDERS IN THE HEAVEN ABOVE": HOW THE COMETS OF 1742 AND 1743 INFLUENCED THE ESCHATOLOGY OF EPHRATA, AN EARLY AMERICAN BAPTIST COMMUNITY

FRANCIS X. GUMERLOCK

I. *THE EPHRATA COMMUNITY IN EARLY AMERICA*

The scene is early America circa 1735. John Adams and Paul Revere were born that year, and three years earlier Ben Franklin issued his *Poor Richard's Almanac*. In matters of religion, the congregation of Jonathan Edwards in New England was experiencing spiritual awakening through his sermons on justification. But deep in a forest in Pennsylvania, something a bit unusual was happening. Every evening like clockwork Conrad Beissel and his German Baptist congregation, called Ephrata, were donning themselves in white robes and gathering for midnight prayer meetings, hoping each night that the Lord would return from heaven for them.

Over the next few years George Whitefield would be instrumental in the First Great Awakening in Georgia, and up north, Edwards preached his famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." However, in Pennsylvania, the Lord did not return as the Ephrata community had anticipated. Nevertheless, they persevered in hope. In fact, a whole decade passed before the community stopped its midnight watch meetings.

This article offers an explanation of why the Ephrata community discontinued its nightly vigils of waiting for Christ to return in 1745. After briefly introducing how the Ephrata community began, this article will examine the group's eschatological beliefs. It will then show that significant changes in its views on last things, spurred on by the appearance of comets in 1742 and 1743, led to the cessation of the midnight watch meetings and greater civic involvement on the part of the community.

II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EPHRATA COMMUNITY

In February 1728, the German immigrant Conrad Beissel (1690–1768) resigned from his pastorate of the German Baptist Brethren congregation in Conestogo, Pennsylvania, and sought solitude in a wilderness area some eight miles away in the uninhabited forest near the Cocalico Creek, about 70 miles west of Philadelphia. Later that year, others from his former congregation joined him, and over the next few years a settlement and religious community grew called Ephrata.

Ephrata advocated separation from the world, celibacy, and communalism, and was organized into three orders—solitary brothers, solitary sisters, and married householders. The solitary brothers and sisters, who practiced celibacy, lived communally in separately gendered quarters. The householders with their families resided nearby, contributed to the material support of the community, and shared in its social and religious life. At its peak the Ephrata community boasted a membership of 350.

These mystical seventh-day Sabbatarians eventually became known throughout the colonies for their spirituality, printing press, classical academy, and unique antiphonal and polyphonic music. Distinguished personalities, such as Count Zinzendorf, visited them, along with American government officials; and Ephrata received mention in Ben Franklin's *Autobiography* and Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique*.

The community continued after Beissel's death in 1768 under the leadership of Peter Miller. By 1786, Ephrata abandoned its communal economy, and after Miller's death in 1796 the society rapidly declined. By 1800 the celibate orders were almost extinct. The year 1814 marked the legal end of Ephrata, when the householders incorporated as the Seventh Day German Baptist Church. The Seventh Day Baptists continued to use the buildings at Ephrata until 1934. From 1941 to the present, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission has been managing the grounds of what is now the Ephrata Cloister in the town of Ephrata, Pennsylvania. Many of the buildings have been restored, a small on-site gift shop and bookstore is operational, and tours of the cloister and its graveyard are conducted during regular business hours.

III. EPHRATA'S NIGHTLY WATCHES FOR THE SECOND COMING

Around 1735, the Ephrata community began holding *Nachtmetten*, midnight watch meetings. Based upon an ancient belief by some Christians that Christ would return at midnight, the brothers and sisters, regardless of the weather, would gather at that hour in the meeting hall. Clothed in white habits, the monks would walk in single file to the hall singing hymns polyphonically. The service, which was the only daily communal gathering for worship, was penitential. Once together, the members of the community would confess their sins, forgive any grudges, and engage in prayer and singing.

In the beginning Beissel would preach at the night meetings, but later those duties were shared with the prior of the solitary

brothers. For the first few years the night meetings lasted for four hours, and the monks would begin their morning duties with only the sleep they managed to get, if any, before the *Nachtmetten*. However, as Ephrata grew and the work duties increased, they shortened the meetings to one or two hours, after which the solitaries returned to their convents and went back to sleep. In 1745, however, the meetings seem to have stopped completely. Why, after ten years, did the Ephrata community no longer gather for midnight watch meetings?

E. G. Alderfer, in *The Ephrata Commune*: *An Early American Counterculture*, explained the cessation of the midnight watch meetings as part of the many changes that occurred in 1745 after the expulsion of Israel and Gabriel Eckerling from the community. In 1745, a struggle for the leadership of Ephrata between Israel Eckerling and Conrad Beissel resulted in Israel being placed under the ban. Consequently, he and a few other community members left Ephrata. After their departure Beissel initiated economic changes that made Ephrata more self-sufficient, and changed the daily routine for the solitaries, which included abandoning some of the work duties related to the mills that Israel had created. Ephrata also burned Israel's writings and uprooted the orchards he was responsible for planting. Alderfer suggests that Israel Eckerling had been the one who initiated the *Nachtmetten* ritual, and that the discontinuance of these meetings was part of the Ephrata community's conscious attempt to rid itself of the memory of that usurper.

In all likelihood Alderfer's conclusion is based on statements in the anonymous *Chronicon Ephratense* (*The Ephrata Chronicle*), written in 1786 by persons associated with the community. It says that Israel appointed divine worship at midnight, and that the solitary brothers were dissatisfied with him because of the inconvenience of the time of the meetings.

While the immediate catalyst for the termination of the night watch meetings may have been related to the conflict with Israel Eckerling, as Alderfer suggests, there is evidence that Conrad Beissel's theological development was also a major factor in the cessation of the watches. The abolition of the midnight gatherings seems to have been reflective of a significant shift in the eschatology of the Ephrata community from apocalyptic expectation in its early years, to a more "realized" eschatology as time progressed. This development will be demonstrated through a contrast of passages from treatises of Conrad Beissel and others from the early years of Ephrata with those written in later years, and through changes in the daily activities of Ephrata, namely, the community's increased attention to music.

IV. THE EARLY APOCALYPTIC ESCHATOLOGY OF CONRAD BEISSEL AND THE EPHRATA COMMUNITY

Concerning Beissel's early eschatology, it is known that around 1720 he shared some affinity with the views of Johannes Kelpius, especially his "chiliast thought." Kelpius was a follower of Johann Zimmerman, a pietist in Germany who had predicted that Christ would return in 1694. Zimmerman believed that the church, symbolized by the woman in Rev 12, would be in the wilderness when Christ returned, and that wilderness was America. Zimmerman and his followers, as God's remnant church, planned to "come out of Babylon" and immigrate to America in early 1694, but Zimmerman died unexpectedly. A group of his followers, however, under the leadership of Johannes Kelpius left Germany for the wilderness of America. Once in the colonies, this band of apocalyptic-minded believers settled in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and was called "The Woman in the Wilderness." In Germantown, the community set up telescopes on the roof of one of the buildings, from which they would gaze into the heavens at night for signs of the imminent second coming of Christ. After Kelpius's death in 1708, however, the members of that assembly dispersed to different parts of the colonies.

Conrad Beissel, a pietist from Germany with Baptist sentiments, came to America in 1720 hoping to join up with Kelpius's community; but he arrived in Germantown to find that the "Woman in the Wilderness" had already dissolved. Around 1721, Beissel and three others, desiring to "live the life of hermits in the wilderness" settled in the Conestogo area approximately 60 miles west of Germantown. Although a hermit, over the next few years he did some itinerant preaching in that region. In 1724 Beissel helped with the missionary enterprises of the Church of the Brethren in America, which was expanding into that area, and later that year became pastor of the congregation. The congregation eventually split from the mother church located in Germantown over Beissel's growing convictions about seventh-day worship. In 1728, his congregation began observing a seventh-day Sabbath. He also encouraged celibacy; thus the church was made up of married householders, the Brotherhood of the Angels, and the Spiritual Virgins. In February 1732, Beissel abruptly resigned his pastorate, packed his few belongings, and took up residence in a hut about eight miles west, near the Cocalico Creek. Later that year, members of his former congregation joined him in the wilderness, forming what would eventually become Ephrata.

Beissel's quest for solitude, manifested in his journeying to the American wilderness, in his escape from the "world" of Germantown to the Conestogo frontier, and in his retreat to a hut near the Cocalico Creek, seems to have been driven in part by a conviction that judgment was coming upon the world soon, and that the "wilderness" was the most fitting place in which to prepare for it.

This belief is seen in Beissel's earliest literary work, a 1728 treatise entitled *Mysterion Anomias* or *Mystery of Lawlessness*. This tract on the subject of the Sabbath begins by establishing the abiding character of the Law upon which his seventh-day Sabbath views were based. It continues, "[T]he Time is near at Hand, wherein God the Truth, will set on the Candlestick again, and that whore . . . shall be destroyed . . . ." Beissel goes on to say that the end is near, and likens himself to a prophet who will not fail to deliver the mystery of the seventh angel and seventh trumpet of Rev 10:7 committed to him, which was, in his opinion, seventh day Sabbatarianism. The mark of the Antichrist, 666, he believed was the rejection of seventh-day worship. He wrote:

> Moreover, It is admirable, that Antichrist hath exalted himself so high, in the 6th Number, until that on[e] six is encreased [sic] into Three, and these three Sixes are very equal and alike to one another in those three Head Sects, and especially in rejecting of the Lord's Sabbath for they are all living in the 6th Number, and so every Sect produceth a 6, which makes together 666, Six hundred sixty six, the Number of the *Beast*. These 3 Sixes now multiplied by 3, make 18, but by Addition make 9, which are the Nine Commandments, for they have rejected the 10th, the Lord's Sabbath. And this indeed is in him a right Figure, because he doth not belong to the 10th Number, for in the 10th Number the End findeth its beginning again; but the Ninth Number is the highest Number in Division, wherein *Babylon* shall be destroyed, when she is come to her highest Degree; for she doth not reach the 10th Number, where 1 and a 0 stand together, which 1 as the Beginning, carryeth the End of all things into that great Circuit or Rest of God again, which that o in the 10th Number demonstrates as 10, and is the eternal Rest of God.

The tract ends with a quotation from Rev 14:8–12, which speaks of the fall of Babylon, God's fury on those who received the mark of the beast, and the endurance of the "saints who obey God's commandments."

Beissel's early writing on the Sabbath, cited above, reveals his apocalyptic beliefs. The time is at hand when Babylon will fall; and Antichrist, represented by the three main branches of Christendom that do not believe in seventh-day worship, will be defeated. The treatise continues teaching that in this "evening of the sixth day" before the coming of the Sabbath millennium, believers should leave Babylon, understood as the churches of the more established Christian denominations.

One disinterested observer from Germantown, Johann Adam Gruber, wrote in 1730 that Beissel and his associates had "prophesied against the Dunkers and Quakers." Most likely they had warned their fellow enthusiasts that they would soon be judged by God for nonobservance of the seventh day.

A 1729 treatise of Michael Wohlfahrt (d. 1741), an associate of Beissel, was entitled "The Naked Truth Standing against All Painted and Disguised Lies, Deceit, and Falsehood, or, The Seventh-Day Sabbath Standing as a Mountain Immoveable Forever." The treatise says that those who reject seventh day worship are enemies of God, and that first-day, that is, Sunday worship, is the mark of the beast, 666. In an obvious reference to Antichrist, the tract claims that first-day worship was instituted "that the Scripture might be fulfilled in Daniel, Chap. 7, verse 25: He shall blaspheme the Most High, and take upon him to alter and change times and laws." But in these last days, says Wohlfahrt, God is making his truth of seventh day worship known again; and blessed are they who heed. He concluded:

> All ye people, tongues and nations, that hear these words, turn to the true God; worship no longer gods which are the works of man's hands, and of human invention; be no longer deceived; the light of God shineth very clear in these latter days wherein God maketh known his truth again, which has been many years hidden. . . . But let me tell you, the time is very near at hand, that God will destroy the worshippers of images. . . . O happy are they that take notice of these signs of the times.

According to this associate of Beissel, judgment day was very near at hand.

V. EPHRATA'S SHIFT TOWARDS REALIZED ESCHATOLOGY

Along with this expectation of imminent judgment in the early writings of Beissel and Wohlfahrt, there were also aspects of realized eschatology. Both writers speak as if they themselves are God's end-time prophets; and both believe that before the judgment day God was actively restoring through them an end-time church that would walk in this so-called "truth" of seventh day worship. According to Beissel, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in the book of Revelation is related to the restoration of seventh day worship, and it is only through the restoration of the true church, that a last-days harvest of Jewish converts would take place. Over time these more "here and now" aspects of Beissel's eschatology would overshadow his earlier apocalyptic expectations; and those aspects which the community previously hoped for in the future tended to be drawn into their present.

The *Chronicon Ephratense* gives one indication of this shift to a more realized eschatology from events around 1737. In that year Beissel began to prophesy in hymns during the nightly watch meetings, and the Ephrata community believed they were experiencing a new Pentecost. The chronicler writes that the community

> took a new form; for it appeared as if Joel's prophecy would again be fulfilled, and the last temple be built up as the temple of the Holy Ghost. Prophecies streamed forth from the Superintendent [Beissel] at all the meetings, witnesses whereof are still to be found in the hymns then composed by him.

The glories of the millennial kingdom, which had previously been Ephrata's object of future hope, seemed to have been now taking on present reality. From that time, what is described as "inspired" hymn writing continued to be a regular feature of the nightly meetings.

The *Chronicon Ephratense* reveals another period of rather intense prophesying that occurred in the early 1740s. In 1742 and 1743 comets had appeared in the heavens, and Beissel interpreted them as having eschatological significance. He wrote a treatise explaining their meaning, entitled *Ernstliche Erweckungs-Stimm in ein Lied verfasst* (*Earnest Awakening Voice Composed in a Song*), but if the treatise survives, it is in private hands. Interestingly, Beissel seems to have interpreted the comets not as signs of Christ's coming for judgment, but as indicators that God's kingdom was being established in the New World or that the New Jerusalem was taking shape within Ephrata. The *Chronicon Ephratense* relates that the main import of Beissel's prophetic hymns during this time concerned the "sixth time period" before the eternal Sabbath. According to Beissel, whose eschatology was clearly changing, God's intention was to set "the wonders of the last times" upon a candlestick in America through the revelation of the heavenly virginal estate and true priesthood of God. And he believed that the Lord was doing this presently in Ephrata. To the

chronicler who witnessed the prophecies it seemed "as though the kingdom were already dawning." The fact that Beissel and the solitary at Ephrata started to believe that "the kingdom" had now begun accords harmoniously with what Delburn Carpenter observed in his study of radical pietists in the New World, namely, that after "the passing of the comets, expectations of an imminent second coming lessened considerably." When Christ's return did not occur and God's judgment of "Babylon" did not coincide with the arrival of the comets, the Second Coming seems to have been postponed and replaced with a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Although many of the prophetic songs of Beissel have been lost, some of them were gathered and printed as *Paradise Wonders*. The first hymn in this collection, entitled "The Tree of Life," illustrates Beissel's adoption of a more realized eschatology. The last stanza reads:

> Hence, wisdom has contrived a plan,
> To send her glories down to earth;
> That long were hidden unto man,
> But now anew are breaking forth:
> And pressing on in streams of light,
> To plant a new and heavenly mind:
> Her path shall be our chief delight,
> So shall we full redemption find.

Full redemption was no longer being looked for in the future bodily resurrection associated with a physical return of Jesus, but had already arrived in the impartation of a heavenly mind through the Holy Spirit.

Beissel's shift to a more realized eschatology is again confirmed by a 1744 writing of one of the solitary brothers named Lamech. It shows that he, and probably others, were no longer expecting the return of Christ imminently. Rather, the object of their attention was the active restoration of a "true apostolic church" on earth, one that Lamech thought might exist for some time before Christ's return. He writes,

> Furthermore, if we pay close attention, we can perceive that we are approaching a time when God wants to build a true apostolic church once again which will never perish, but rather will last until the coming of Christ, even if it would be long before his arrival. For there must be another church on earth which can be taken by Christ upon his arrival . . . even if it consists only of a small number of Brothers and Sisters.

Less and less are the eschatological promises of Christ's Second Coming, the resurrection, and judgment day subjects of concern in the writings produced by Ephrata and its leader. More and more the community was celebrating the present heavenly glory that they believed had been recently poured out upon them. The community seems to have come to believe that the present age would last longer than they had originally expected. The millennium or "Sabbath" period of history seems to have been transferred from the time *after* the imminent coming of Christ to the present age *before* a not-so-imminent return.

VI. EPHRATA'S ANGELIC CHOIR

One of the chief means of giving expression to the latter day glory believed to have been poured out recently upon Ephrata was music. Beissel, an accomplished musician and composer, started a music school among the solitaries about 1741. For a time, the music lessons were held in the early evening and lasted until it was time to go to *Nachtmetten*. But eventually the music school replaced the midnight vigils altogether. Interestingly the daily music instruction and rehearsal lasted about four hours, the same amount of time that was spent in the watch meetings when they had first been instituted in 1735.

The music was founded on the tones of the aeolian harp. The Reverend Jacob Duché, an Anglican divine, visited Ephrata in 1771 and described the singing as the aeolian harp harmonized:

> It is very peculiar in its style and concords, and in its execution. The tones issuing from the choir imitate very soft instrumental music; conveying a softness and devotion almost superhuman to the auditor.

He went on to relate that the music was set in four, six, and eight parts, and that although there were no instruments, some voices resembled organs, others concert horns. The Anglican priest was so enamored with the music, that in addition to attending the Sabbath service for which the daily rehearsals prepared, he used to ride miles on his horse in the evenings, and sit outside the house where the choir was practicing. The music "transported my spirit for a time, to regions of unalloyed bliss—tones which I never before nor since heard on earth."

The *Chronicon Ephratense* referred to the unique sound as "heavenly music, a prelude of a new world," and said that it was "arranged in accord with the angelic and heavenly choirs." Also, it was believed, that the music of Ephrata was arranged after the manner of the singing of the angelic choirs, and "the powers of eternity were embodied within it." The large music book created by the choir at Ephrata was even believed to possess powers like those of the ark of the covenant. According to historian of communal societies of colonial America, Donald Durnbaugh, "Ephrata choir members claimed that 'the angels themselves when

they sang at Christ's birth had to make use of our rules.'" Revelation 14, a biblical passage central to Beissel's eschatology and ecclesiology, reads:

> The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing on their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne. . . . No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who . . . kept themselves pure. (Rev 14:1–3)

The Ephrata choir, made up of virgins dressed in white robes, singing songs of the Lamb that sounded like the harmonies of harps, most likely were attempting to pattern their singing, or to channel so to speak, to that of the angelic choirs in the Apocalypse. Ephrata became the embodiment of the "Sabbatic Church," a name they employed which referred to the restored church of the last days.

Another scholar of pietistic communities in early Pennsylvania, Ernst Benz, wrote that the music of Ephrata was a proclamation that the kingdom of heaven had already arrived. According to the *Chronicon Ephratense,* the reason for Beissel's establishment of the choirs was to manifest the wonderful work that God was doing in North America.

> And now the reason appeared which induced him [Beissel] to establish such choirs of virgins. It was with him as with Solomon, he was zealous to make manifest the wonderful harmony of eternity, in a country which but lately wild savages had inhabited; for God owed this to North America as an initiation into the Christian church, therefore these choirs belong to the firstlings of America. The contents of these songs were entirely prophetic, and treated of the restoration of the image of Adam before his division, of the heavenly virginity, the priesthood of Melchizedek, etc. The gift of prophecy overflowed the Settlement like a river at that time; and close observation showed that the beautiful sun of Paradise had then already reached its meridian.

The glories of the music of Ephrata became known throughout the colonies and even overseas. When a commissioner from England paid a visit to Ephrata after the French and Indian War, he was so enthralled with the music that he requested that a copy of their hymnbook be sent to the royal family, a request with which the community complied.

VII. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE EPHRATA COMMUNITY

The *Chronicon Ephratense* says that those who started Ephrata went to the Cocalico Creek in imitation of the desert fathers of the early church. It is well known that many of the desert fathers of early Christianity saw the wilderness as a way to paradise. For example, Basil the Great wrote, "I am living . . . in the wilderness wherein the Lord dwelt . . . here is the ladder which leads to Heaven." For many of the desert fathers, paradise was not simply found in the wilderness, it was *made* there. Like their mentors, the solitaries of Ephrata fashioned their own version of paradise, a restored last-days church believed to be dear to God because it alone was keeping the Sabbath command of the Lord in the midst of what they believed was an ungodly world of Sabbath-breakers.

Regarding the question of why Ephrata stopped gathering at midnight, the inconvenience of the time of worship and the effort to erase Israel Eckerling's memory may have contributed to the cessation of the *Nachtmetten*, as historian E. G. Alderfer observed. But Conrad Beissel's shift from an apocalyptic to a realized eschatology also rendered the midnight watches unnecessary. Waiting for the kingdom was replaced by celebration of the kingdom glory that had already arrived, and the comets of 1742 and 1743 were signs of that.

The comets were catalysts for replacing the hope of Christ's imminent coming from heaven with a belief that the present age would continue for some time, that the glory of Christ's kingdom had now been diffused upon them before the Second Coming, and that New Jerusalem was beginning to take shape in their midst. The arrival of the comets pointed Ephrata away from apocalyptic eschatology toward utopianism.

When Christ did not come visibly and catch up Ephrata's members to heaven, the appearance of comets became indicative that a new era had dawned upon earth, more specifically, in the remnant church on the Cocalico Creek. Ephrata's hope in the future bodily coming of Christ to a large extent was replaced by belief in a present outpouring of the Spirit. Heaven had come down to Ephrata, but not through Christ in bodily form. Rather, God came in the form of spiritual light that allegedly produced prophetic utterances and angelically inspired music. The community sincerely believed that a restoration of God's true church was now taking place in them. Consequently, these quasi-monastic members, with Conrad Beissel at the helm, began to create the millennium in the forest of Pennsylvania. For the remainder of the eighteenth-century they acted out their paradisiacal hope, and some very positive social advances followed.

During the Revolutionary War the Ephrata community opened its buildings to be used as hospitals for about 500 soldiers wounded in the Battle at Brandywine (1777). Beissel's successor at Ephrata, Peter Miller, became secretary of state for the United States before that position had been officially created. On behalf of the new government he translated the Declaration of Independence into seven different languages. Ludwig Höcker, the schoolmaster of Ephrata's academy for the children of the householders, is believed to have started the first Sabbath Schools in North America. His academy at Ephrata later became so reputable as a seat of learning and fine arts in the colonies that many families from Philadelphia and Baltimore sent their children there for classical training. Ephrata's printing press published the first American edition of *Pilgrim's Progress*; and its music profoundly influenced those who heard it. One historian noted that in the eighteenth century Pennsylvania there were "two great centers of culture": Philadelphia and Ephrata.

This early Pennsylvanian community's adoption of a more realized eschatology, spurred on by a religious interpretation of the appearance of comets in 1742 and 1743, propelled Ephrata from an isolationist, countercultural religious sect to a major hub of cultural advancement in early American education, music, and citizenship.

[*]Francis X. Gumerlock received his Ph.D. from Saint Louis University in Historical Theology. He currently teaches Latin and theology in Colorado.

Bernard Grun, *The Timetables of History* (rev.ed.; New York: Touchstone, 1982), 337–38.

J. H. Edwards, "Edwards, Jonathan (1703–1758)," in Daniel G. Reid, Robert D. Linder, Bruce L. Shelley, and Harry S. Stout, *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990), 380–81.

Grun, *Timetables*, 340.

Debbie A. Bittle, "The Ephrata Cloister," *Brethren Life and Thought* 30 (1985): 248.

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Random House, 1944), 130–131; cited in E. G. Alderfer, *The Ephrata Commune: An Early American Counterculture* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh, 1985), 38, 39, 223. Voltaire, *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (vol. 4; Amsterdam: Chez Marc-Michel Ray, 1789), 81; cited in Mark Holloway, *Heavens on Earth: Utopian Communities in America 1680–1880*, (2d ed.; New York: Dover, 1966), 52.

An early Christian belief that Jesus would return at midnight is mentioned in, but not necessarily advocated by, Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 25:6. CCSL 77:236–7; Braulio of Saragossa, *Letter 14*. FC 63:40; Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, *Collections on the Epistles and Gospels*. PL 102:550; Rabanus Maurus, *Commentary on Matthew*, 25:6. CCCM 174A:651; Christian of Stavelot, *Exposition of Matthew*, 24:42. PL 106:1461; and Paschasius Radbertus, *Commentary on Matthew*, 25:6. CCCM 56B:1218–9. Biblical justification draws upon Exod 12:29; Matt 25:6; and 1 Thess 5:2.

Alderfer, *The Ephrata Commune*, 57. The *Chronicon Ephratense* says: "Even before Kedar [one of the buildings] was completed, the nightly divine services among the Solitary in the Settlement had been commenced. They were called Night Watches, because at that hour the advent of the Judge was expected. At first they lasted four hours, so that from this severe spiritual exercise one had to go at once to one's physical work, which was a sore crucifixion of the flesh; afterwards, however, the time was fixed at two hours" (Brother Lamech and Brother Agrippa [Johann Peter Miller], *Chronicon Ephratense: A History of the Community of Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata, Lancaster County, Penn'a.* [trans. J. Max Hark; New York: Burt Franklin, 1889, repr. 1972], 77–8).

Alderfer, *Ephrata Commune*, 56, 75.

Chronicon Ephratense, 131, 133.

For an explanation and history of the phrase "realized eschatology," see F. F. Bruce, "Realized Eschatology," http://www.mb-soft.com/believe/text/eschatol.htm, 6-7; Jay E. Adams (*The Time Is at Hand: Prophecy and the Book of Revelation* [Woodruff, S.C.: Timeless Texts, 1966, 2000], 39) describes "realized" millennialism saying: "By definition, 'realized' millennialism is the belief that the millennium is a present reality."

Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrata* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 32.

This belief may be related to one mentioned, but not necessarily held, by the early American theologian Cotton Mather (d. 1728), that the American hemisphere would escape the end-time conflagration (Reiner Smolinski, ed., *The Threefold Paradise of Cotton Mather: An Edition of "Triparadisus"* [Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995], 291). On the church of the wilderness of Rev 12 in America, see Robley E. Whitson, "Wilderness and Paradise: Symbols of American Religious Experience," *Religion and Intellectual Life* 5 (1987): 7–15; Avihu Zakai, "Theocracy in New England: The Nature and Meaning of the Holy Experiment in the Wilderness," *JRH* 14 (1986): 133–51; Peter N. Carroll, *Puritanism and the Wilderness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); and George H. Williams, *Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962).

On Kelpius's "Woman in the Wilderness," see Holloway, *Heavens on Earth*, 37–40; Daniel Cohen, *Prophets of Doom* (Brookfield, Conn.: Millbrook, 1992), 19–20.

Bittle, "Ephrata Cloister," 244.

Quoted in Delburn Carpenter, *The Radical Pietists: Celibate Communal Societies Established in the United States Before 1820* (New York: AMS, 1975), 78.

Quoted from the 1729 English translation by Michael Wohlfahrt in Walter C. Klein, *Johann Conrad Beissel: Mystic and Martinet, 1690–1768* (Philadelphia: Porcupine, 1972), 65–66. The 1728 German edition is no longer extant.

Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves*, 32–3.

Klein, Johann Conrad Beissel, 78.

Michael Wohlfahrt, "The Naked Truth," in Peter Erb, ed., *Johann Conrad Beissel and the Ephrata Community: Mystical and Historical Texts* (Studies in American Religion 14; Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1985), 237–46; quote from p. 243.

Ibid., 245.

Klein, *Johann Conrad Beissel*, 64–5.

Chronicon Ephratense, 90.

Alderfer, *Ephrata Commune*, 232 n. 2. There was one copy of the Comet book known to exist in 1900. The *Chronicon Ephratense*, 136, says that many of Beissel's prophecies during that period were written down, but "now no one knows anything of them."

Alderfer, *Ephrata Commune*, 87.

Chronicon Ephratense, 134: "The Superintendent in those days was lifted above the world of sense, and had surmounted time with its changes. His hymns composed then are full of prophecy, and belong to the evening of the sixth time-period, that is, to the holy Ante-Sabbath. They represent the mysteries of the last times so impressively, that it seems as though the kingdom were already dawning. It appears that it was the intention to set upon a candlestick the wonders of the last times through the revelation of the heavenly Virgin-estate and of the Melchizedekian priesthood in America; for that these hymns were given unto him in visions he at times betrays, when he adds, 'This we see in the spirit. . . .'"

Carpenter, *Radical Pietists*, 79.

Beissel, "Tree of Life," in Samuel G. Zerfass, *Souvenir Book of the Ephrata Cloister* (Lititz, Pa.: J. G. Zook, 1921; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1975), 36–7.

"Lamech's Introduction with Regard to the Ephrata Chronicon," Journal of the Historical Society of the Cocalico Valley 4 (1979): 15. Reprinted in *Life and Conduct of the Late Brother Ezechiel Sangmeister* (trans. from the German, *Leben und Wandel*, by Barbara M. Schindler; Ephrata, Pa.: Historical Society of the Cocalico Valley, 1986).

Chronicon Ephratense, 162; Klein, *Johann Conrad Beissel*, 145.

A large portion of Duché's letter is reproduced in Klein, *Johann Conrad Beissel*, 146–48. On Ephrata's music, Betty J. Martin, *The Ephrata Cloister and Its Music, 1732–1785* (Ph.D. diss.; University of Maryland, 1974); Hans T. David, "Musical Composition at Ephrata," *The American-German Review* 10/5 (1944): 4–5; and Julius F. Sachse, *The Music of the Ephrata Cloister* (Lancaster, Pa.: Pennsylvania German Society, 1903).

Chronicon Ephratense, 162–8.

Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Communitarian Societies in Colonial America," in Donald E. Pitzer, ed., *America's Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 25.

Chronicon Ephratense, 135–36. According to Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves*, 45, Ephrata was not the "eternal Sabbath," which was still to come, but "a fore-Sabbath."

Ernst Benz, "La littérature du désert: chez les *Évangéliques allemands et les Piétistes de Pennsylvanie*," *Irén* 51 (1978): 356.

Chronicon Ephratense, 165.

Chronicon Ephratense, 65.

Quoted in Whitson, "Wilderness and Paradise," 9.

Ibid., 8.

Notwithstanding Beissel's leadership style, which, to me, seems tyrannical.

Elmer Q. Gleim, "The Ephrata Community and the Brethren," *Brethren Life and Thought* 15 (Summer 1970): 159–65.

Zerfass, *Souvenir Book*, 10.

Jobie E. Riley, "Ephrata Community," in *The Brethren Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia, 1983), 451; Durnbaugh, "The Brethren in Early American Church Life," in Ernest Stoeffler, ed., *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976): 244–45.

Samuel H. Ziegler, "The Ephrata Printing Press," *Pennsylvania German Folklore Society* 5 (1940): 3; cited in Warren S. Kessinger, "The Ephrata Cloiser: The History and Output of Its Press," *Brethren Life and Thought* 13 (Summer 1968): 164.
