

NEUWIED-AM-RHEIN:  
TOWN GROWTH  
AND RELIGIOUS TOLERATION  
A CASE STUDY

I

The very founding of the town Neuwied-am-Rhein was closely linked to policies and practices of religious toleration. It was the hope and intent of Count Friedrich of Wied (1618-1698) that a town, well planned and advantageously located, would bring economic relief and eventually prosperity to his small land, which had suffered particularly in the last years of the Thirty Years' War. From the outset he saw that the best means of attracting residents would be to guarantee as large a degree of religious freedom as possible.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The unusually rich archival material at the Fürstlich Wiedisches Archiv offers a very full record of religious life at Neuwied in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I am grateful to the Archiv for permission to use its material, and to Dr. Coors-Warhem who has expertly guided me to its records

The Treaty of Westphalia provided a viable legal framework within which Protestants, adherents to the Augsburg Confession be they Lutherans or Reformed, and Roman Catholics could exercise their religion within the German Empire. The treaty basically defined three types of religious practice:<sup>2</sup> the *exercitium religionis publicum*, which gave the members of the minority religion in any territorial unit full freedom to worship openly; the *exercitium privatum*, restricting the worship of the congregation to specific places; and finally the *devotio domestica*, which allowed the “individual exercise of religion by the common subject, practiced by him alone, without further ecclesiastical ceremony, ... within the walls of his own living quarters.”<sup>3</sup> The treaty further offered the *beneficium emigrandi*, and specified the conditions under which forced or voluntary emigration was to take place. When one considers the forms persecution took among Catholics and Protestants, Protestants and Protestants—ranging from expulsion to wholesale slaughter—it is not surprising that the treaties and agreements, which reduced aggression and substituted various arrangements of coexistence, should be considered progress towards religious toleration. The treaty explicitly excluded all Christians dissenting from the three officially recognized Churches.<sup>4</sup> While “religious toleration” was legally defined in the Treaty of Westphalia, it took on a different meaning for Christians who were not members of the Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed Churches. For these outsiders, dissenters, Separatists, “*Chrétiens sans Église*,” the question of religious toleration was, as G.E. Rupp has stated, “how much latitude was allowable to deviationists and rebels?”<sup>5</sup> Their fate indeed was left to the willingness, from whatever source or motive it sprung,

and documents. Albert Meinhardt, City Librarian and historian of Neuwied, has generously provided me with much valuable information. The Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung, Bad Godesberg, has given me great support and encouragement for this study as it has done on past occasions.

<sup>2</sup> Konrad Müller, ed., *Instrumenta Pacis Westphalicae, Quellen zur neueren Geschichte*, no. 12/3, Bern, 1975, Article V, paragraph 31.

<sup>3</sup> Johann Christian Majer, *Deutsches Geistliches Staatsrecht*, 3 vols., Leipzig, 1773, II, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Müller, *Instrumenta* Article VII, paragraph 2.

<sup>5</sup> E.G. Rupp, “La Tolérance religieuse et les hérésies à l’époque moderne (Introduction),” in *XIIIe Congrès International des Sciences Historiques 1965 Rapports, Grands Thèmes*, Vienna, 1965, p. 103.

of authorities to allow individuals and groups to pursue their way of Christian worship according to their own conscience. It is in this context that the religious policies at Neuwied have to be viewed. In his typology of emerging towns since the late sixteenth century Heinz Stoob has established the category of *Exulantenstädte*, which he considers unique in Western history. These are towns that owed their growth, if not their origins, to a population policy which attracted religious refugees to come and settle. The reception of religious refugees did not necessarily mean that the authorities were “tolerant.” In Freudenstadt, in Württemberg, the strict Lutheran territorial Duke Johann Friedrich received only persecuted Lutherans. *Exulantenstädte* were, however, of importance as places where policies of toleration were introduced, and Neuwied is regarded by Stoob as a splendid example.<sup>6</sup>

In some respects Neuwied is a more interesting example than the other “*Grafenhöfe*” where a rich and diversified religious life flourished in the early eighteenth century. While it is true that Büdingen, under Count Ernst Casimir I (1687-1749), and Berleburg, under Countess Hedwig Sophie (1669-1738) and her son Count Casimir of Sayn-Wittgenstein (1687-1741) were centers of refuge for Huguenots, Herrnhutters, and Separatists, the origins of these places are not linked to religious toleration. Further, the period when toleration was practiced was limited, and ended in both places with a new generation of rulers and administrators around 1740. For them the tax exempt dissenter became a burden; population replenishment was no longer a pressing issue, and the hearts and minds of the rulers were no longer inspired by the message of early pietism, as they reverted to orthodoxy. Fortunately for Neuwied the count of the “new generation,” Alexander (1706-1791), shared the vision of his grandfather and brought his land into the Age of Enlightenment when religious toleration became a cornerstone of good government.

<sup>6</sup> Heinz Stoob, *Forschungen zum Städtewesen in Europa*, Cologne, 1970, p. 273.

## II

With impressive vigor Count Friedrich of Wied began to establish a household in the village of Langendorf, which had been ravaged by friend and foe in the last years of the Thirty Years' War. As early as 1647 the work on the new residence had begun. By fortifying the residence with walls and ditches, he was trespassing on the ground of the monastery of the Premontstratense, who had cultivated the area since the late thirteenth century.<sup>7</sup> What Friedrich initiated was far more than the revival of a village; it was the foundation of a new town auspiciously located on the right bank of the Rhine. A recently discovered request of April 1650 to the archbishop of Cologne, to sail a freighter exempt from duties between Cologne and Neuwied, is only one example that illustrates the commercial ambition of Friedrich and one of the reasons he chose the site of the village to which by then, if not a year or two earlier, he had given a new name.<sup>8</sup> In 1357 Charles IV had extended a privilege to elevate Nordhofen, in the possession of the Count of Wied, to a town; Friedrich succeeded in having this reactivated and transferred by Emperor Ferdinand III to "Neuenwiedt" on August 26, 1653.<sup>9</sup> The newly-drawn document takes account of the new site and the hopes attached to it: "... some houses are already occupied, and in view of the convenient location persons from the Netherlands and other places outside the Empire will surely be inclined to move there."<sup>10</sup> The need and wish to repopulate is here recognized. Yet almost a decade elapsed between the issuance of the imperial document and the actual steps Count Friedrich took to implement what he planned and was empowered to do. Friedrich had pushed hard for construction of the castle at Neuwied and particularly for the building of Schloss Friedrichstein, between Irlich and Fahr on the Rhine,

<sup>7</sup> Albert Meinhardt, "Seit wann hieß Langendorf Neuwied..." in *Heimatkalendar des Landkreises Neuwied*, Neuwied, 1968, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 90/91.

<sup>9</sup> Albert Meinhardt ed., *1653-1953, 300 Jahre Neuwied*, Neuweid, 1953, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> *Kaysrerliche und Gräffliche Wiedische Privilegia Den Orth und Platz Neuenwiedt Zu einer Statt zu machen und zu befestigen*, Herborn (Typis Tobiae Jacobi) n.d. Copy in Fürstlich Wiedisches Archiv zu Neuwied. Future references will refer to FWA.

the foundation of which had been laid in 1645. Thus the burdens of *corvée* became increasingly heavy and the peasants took to protest and revolt. They found help and encouragement from their inimical neighbor, the archbishop of Trier, whose rapidly expanding might on the Rhine the fortification of Friedrichstein was to check. What began as local unrest quickly ignited into a struggle between the powers of Wied, Trier, and even the Electorate of the Palatinate. With the help of Cologne matters were finally resolved diplomatically.<sup>11</sup> Trier and the Electoral Palatinate, who first supported the peasants, had soon abandoned their cause. The peasants were forced to pay retribution and to give up fields and woodland. Some villagers who had abandoned their homes returned when promised pardon. The finale, as is so often the case in peasants' revolts, was the hanging of two men from the village of Selters who had plotted against the life of Friedrich.<sup>12</sup>

With these matters settled, Friedrich felt free to pursue his plans for Neuwied. The building of the first castle had been finished by 1649 and court officials began to build houses, completion of which was recorded in 1655, 1658, and 1660.<sup>13</sup> They were, of course, not the only ones to build, yet settlement appears sparse.

The impetus was to come from Friedrich's proclamation of June 7, 1662.<sup>14</sup> This, "*Das andere Graffliche Wiedisch Privilegium*," was to make explicitly clear the privileges and rights to be extended to all those who had settled and planned to settle at Neuwied. The success of such a proclamation, intended to attract newcomers from neighboring as well as far away lands, obviously depended on how attractive the offer was and who the potential immigrants were. The Imperial Privilege specified Netherlanders and surely it was in this direction that Friedrich's expectations were directed. Yet the great waves of refugees from Spanish Catholic persecutions, who had flooded into Germany in the second part of the sixteenth century, had now subsided. The

<sup>11</sup> Hellmuth Gensicke, *Landesgeschichte des Westerwaldes* (Veröff. d. Historischen Kommission für Nassau XIII) Wiesbaden 1958, pp. 334 and 448.

<sup>12</sup> Hellmuth Gensicke, "Graf Friedrich von Wied, der Gründer Neuwieds" in *Heimatkalender für den Kreis Neuwied*, Neuwied, 1957, p. 104.

<sup>13</sup> Meinhardt, *300 Jahre Neuwied*, p. 69.

<sup>14</sup> Copy in FWA.

second great exodus of Protestant refugees, that the revocation of the Edict of Nantes was to set in motion, belonged to a future not then to be foreseen. Friedrich could not expect adherents to his own Reformed faith to seek access *en masse*. Their flight and settlements in German towns like Frankfurt, Hamburg, Neu Hanau, Mannheim, and Altona belonged to an earlier period. The net which Friedrich was to cast had to be made of wider mesh. Of the nine major concessions that Friedrich extended in the *Privilegium*, the phrasing of the first well supports these intentions.

The first concession deals with the religious affiliations and practices of the settlers. "*Punctum Religionis*" is ranked as of fundamental and foremost importance. "The ... arrangements of the peace of Osnabrück and Münster guide the exercises of religion in this town, ruled by a count belonging to the Reformed religion." This said, a statement is added "*specialiter*" promising those not belonging to the Reformed religion that, even in case new arrangements and regulations in religious matters should ever be made in the Empire, the heirs and successors of Friedrich will still be bound by those of the Treaty of Westphalia. The point at stake is the guarantee that non-Reformed citizens be free to follow their religion according to their conscience and practice *exercitium religionis* in their homes: in other words the right to private worship. The Peace Treaty of Westphalia accepted the distinction between the *exercitium religionis privatum* and *publicum* and in long negotiations the conditions under which either was to be practiced were worked out.<sup>15</sup> This distinction between private and public worship defines the difference between equality of rights and toleration. The citizens not belonging to the Reformed religion are herein guaranteed tolerance, that is freedom of conscience and the *devotio domestica*. Reading the Neuwied document in the context of the Westphalia treaty, those who are included in its protective provisions are only the members of the three religions, Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed. Yet Mennonites, Protestants not belonging to either of the two official Churches, had settled at Neuwied, and the

<sup>15</sup> Müller, *Instrumenta*, Article V, paragraph 31.

sixth house was built by the Mennonite Michel Sentzenich as early as 1659.<sup>16</sup>

Before the meaning of the first point is explored further, the important features of the other eight concessions should be discussed. The second concession exempts the residents from all *corvée* services, and the third concession removes all serfdom. The traditional freedom of the medieval town inhabitant was thus asserted, a concession that gains importance if one remembers the recent hard struggle between the count and the villagers. The fourth concession establishes yearly and weekly markets, at the same time eliminating all monopolies and assuring a free trade policy extended to citizens and foreigners. Older rights established the freedom to hunt and fish in the area and, in particular, in the Rhine River. The fifth concession establishes guidelines for town government: the election of worthy and peaceable citizens to form a magistrate entrusted with the lower jurisdiction and conduct of town affairs.<sup>17</sup> It is stated explicitly that those qualified, but “differently convinced (*Gesinnet*), and not inclined towards the Reformed religion, of whatever nation they are, should not be excluded from eligibility for the office of a magistrate.” The sixth and seventh provisions deal with matters of taxation and income. Most of the receipts, like the income derived from the sale of wine and beer, are to be equally divided between the count and the town. Taxes and income shall not be raised or lowered unless the town has been previously informed and is willing to agree. Concession eight sets the conditions encouraging settlement and building at Neuwied: those who want to build are promised that the necessary space will be assigned free of any charges. Oversight of the building code and city planning is put into the hands of the magistrates. He, of whatever status or nation, who will build or buy a house is to be exempted from payments for ten years. At that time a yearly contribution, fairly agreed upon between the count and the citizenry, will be made.

<sup>16</sup> Meinhardt, *300 Jahre Neuwied*, p. 70.

<sup>17</sup> The higher jurisdiction the count claimed for himself. It is believed that at this time “customary laws” guided town affairs while in the second part of the eighteenth century the *Nassau-Katzenelenbogische Gerichts- und Landes-Ordnung* of 1616 was officially adopted. Its influence might predate such official adoption. (Kurt Becker, ed., *Heimatchronik des Kreises Neuwied*, Cologne, 1966, p. 95).

At the same time the count promises that the citizens are not to be burdened with any local or imperial taxation. The right of the citizens to their houses is also affirmed for present owner and future heirs. This concession includes a statement declaring that officers of the court and members of the aristocracy who are building or occupying houses are exempted from the contributions (*Bürgerliche Lasten*) laid upon the citizens.

These concessions reflect both the continuation of traditional medieval rights and new policies of a territorial ruler of the seventeenth century. One can detect the not always reconcilable forces of the mercantile policy with the desire to offer the advantages of free trade to attract commercially strong elements, and one cannot overlook the privileges extended to a rising bureaucracy in a world of an increasingly controlled order.

One of the most important qualities of constitutional pronouncements is an inherent degree of flexibility. The Neuwied *Privilegium* measures up to this demand well.

Twenty years later Friedrich responded to a petition by eight Mennonite families to come to Neuwied and live according to their religion. The Mennonites were part of the Anabaptist movement. They had established their own identity as followers of Menno Simon, a Dutch theologian convert from Catholicism, who adhered to a strict pacifism. In spite of this commitment to non-violence, Mennonites suffered persecution and martyrdom like other Anabaptists. In the late 1650's renewed persecution in Switzerland, and in the duchy of Julich in the Palatinate, brought Mennonites on the move.<sup>18</sup> Friedrich responded positively to the Mennonite request and attested their rights to exercise their religion in a document that he called a *Concession-Freibrief*. In this he referred directly to the clause in the *Privilegium* that allowed the non-Reformed the *exercitium religionis privatum*. Non-Reformed was then to be understood according to the Treaty of Westphalia as covering only Lutherans and Catholics. The document of 1680, spelling out the rights and privileges extended to Mennonites residing presently and in the future at Neuwied, introduces a new reading by the count himself of the

<sup>18</sup> John Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe (Mennonite History, vol. I)*, Scottsdale, Pa., 1942, p. 109.

“older *Privilegium*.”<sup>19</sup> The count, in referring to the 1662 promise, also relates that he then had sought and received approval from the imperial court at Speyer. Friedrich is well aware that he had laid himself open to accusations of violating imperial laws by extending toleration to Mennonites, Anabaptists, who were explicitly excluded from the protective clauses of the Westphalia Peace (paragraph VII, Article II). Friedrich does not expect the imperial court to rule in favor of his new interpretation, but is ready to pursue his own policy of toleration towards his Mennonite inhabitants. To back up his position he cites the fact that other princes, among these the Elector of Brandenburg and the Palatinate, and imperial cities, allowed Mennonites to live according to their free “*Conscientz*” in their territories.<sup>20</sup> He promised to those not protected by the Westphalian treaty, that whatever alteration in its religious arrangement might be made, he and his heirs would stand by their commitments. Likewise, he assured the Mennonites of Neuwied that, if imperial policy changes, or if princes more favorable towards Mennonites should change their attitude, the house of Neuwied will keep the promise he is making.<sup>21</sup> Surely promises made in the names of one’s successors are tenuous, but one can well believe that Friedrich made them in good faith and that at least through his lifetime they would be honored.

In the study of German town history, Heinz Stoob has emphasized as “particularly new” in the Neuwied *Privilegium* the policy of religious toleration and the freedom of commerce clause.<sup>22</sup> To arrive at a precise evaluation of the tolerance question—that is our primary concern—it is necessary to take a look at other declarations, earlier or at about the same time as

<sup>19</sup> The original document of December 16, 1680 is in the Fürstlich Wiedisches Archiv, Urkunde IV, 8-7, Reg. Nr. 1492. Printed by Dirk Cattepoel, “Die Neuwieder Mennonitengemeinde” in *Beiträge Zur Geschichte rheinischer Mennoniten*, Weierhof, Pfalz, 1939, 152/153. For the study of all religious groups at Neuwied the *Relation oder Beytätig- und Erläuterung der Rechte und Privilegien der verschiedenen Glaubensverwandten zu Neuwied* by Canzley-Direktor Fischer 1778, in manuscript, is indispensable. A photocopy is in the Harvard Divinity School Library. I am grateful to Mr. Albert Meinhardt for providing this copy.

<sup>20</sup> Cattepoel, “Die Neuwieder,” p. 153.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Stoob, *Forschungen*, p. 273.

ours, that spell out conditions under which members of various religious affiliations are allowed to settle. Therefore the choice will naturally fall upon towns founded for settlement or at least with the expectation of attracting *Exulanten*, those forced to abandon their homes for the sake of pursuing their religious commitment.<sup>23</sup> The “Privileges of 1607”<sup>24</sup> that the Elector of the Palatinate, Friedrich IV, extended to his newly founded Mannheim, and the “Hanauer *Kapitulation* of 1597,”<sup>25</sup> which the young Count Philipp-Ludwig II of Hanau-Münzenberg promulgated for his creation, Neu-Hanau, were hailed for their policy of religious toleration. Such praise has to be understood within the spirit of the historical situation. Reformed rulers responded to the needs of people persecuted for adhering to the very religion they themselves belonged to. By doing so they established centers of trade and commerce with an experienced and highly skilled population. This was done at a time when within the Empire the Augsburg Peace of Religion recognized only Catholics and Lutherans and left the Calvinists or Reformed Protestants, as they were usually called, unprotected. An example of how precarious the situation was for the Reformed is the story of two Reformed refugee communities, the Flemish and Wallon at Frankfurt-am-Main who in 1535 and 1554 respectively were allowed to exercise their religion, and were deprived of these privileges in 1596 when the Lutheran Frankfurt city council interdicted all Reformed worship. It was this reversion in the policy of the Frankfurt city council that led to the final exodus of the Reformed from Frankfurt and settlement at Neu-Hanau in 1601, five years after the *Kapitulation* was signed.<sup>26</sup> The negotiations between the Reformed of Frankfurt, “the foreigners” as they were called, and Count Philipp make it clear that “the foreigners” were ready to admit to the newly planned town only

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Facsimile of *Freyheiten und Begnadigungen welche... Friedrich Pfalzgraff bey Rhein... Den denjenigen welche sich in Ihrer Churf. Gnaden neuen Stadt... Manheim häusslich niderzulassen gemeynt... bewilliget. Heydelberg... 1607.* Reproduced in Max Oeser, *Geschichte der Stadt Mannheim*, Mannheim, 1908, after p. XIV.

<sup>25</sup> Heinrich Bolt, *Gründung und Anfänge der Neustadt Hanau 1596-1620. Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Hessen und Waldeck.* Vol. 30, pt. 1, Marburg, 1970, pp. 432 and 441.

<sup>26</sup> Bolt, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

adherents of their own religion. The documents show Philipp insisting on his freedom to admit persons of other than the Reformed religion. The “foreigners” accepting Philipp’s condition are making clear what their understanding of this provision is: namely the right in exceptional cases for excelling artists, masters, or the like “belonging to the count’s service, and who do not adhere to the Reformed faith, to be allowed to settle.”<sup>27</sup> It is in this sense also that the Mannheim privileges have to be looked at. Article XIII, the last of the privileges, assures protection and support to the adherents of the Reformed faith, the religion of the elector. The elector further promises to pay the expenses of gifted young men to be educated as ministers or teachers at Heidelberg. In 1652 when Heinrich Clignet, appointed as city director of Mannheim by the council of Count Karl Ludwig of the Palatinate, drew up revisions and expansions of the 1608 document, he introduced an unusual degree of commercial and industrial freedom, but the religious provision remained untouched.<sup>28</sup> The fact that the document provided for Calvinists only did not prevent the elector from issuing a letter on October 8, 1655 to a group of Hutterites giving permission to build “one or more houses” and extending “all privileges of the townsmen, including admittance to their meetings.”<sup>29</sup> This privilege was extended in spite of the condemnation of Anabaptists in the Palatinian land ordinances of 1582. Clignet, who approved, pointed out the differences between the orderly, peaceful Herrnhutter and other anarchic Anabaptists. It is also recorded by 1663 “Polish brethren and Socinians were allowed to occupy a housing quadrangle although they soon left Mannheim (1666)”<sup>30</sup>

Exceptions, as records show, were made on many occasions in many towns but exceptions meant just that, and not official adoption of policy. Even in the town of Krefeld, which was to become one of the most prosperous settlements of Mennonites, Prince Maurits von Oranien advised, in a letter of July 25, 1622, refraining from any action against the sect and thereby only

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>28</sup> Friedrich Walter, *Geschichte Mannheims*, Mannheim, 1907, p. 173.

<sup>29</sup> Josef Beck (ed.), *Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer in Fontes Rerum Austriacarum*, II. Abt. 43, Vienna, 1883, p. 492.

<sup>30</sup> Friedrich Walter, *Mannheim*, pp. 292-293.

indirectly allowed them to remain in Krefeld.<sup>31</sup> It was not until 1721, one hundred years later, when Krefeld had come under Prussian rule, that Friedrich Wilhelm I attested the rights and privileges of the Krefelder Mennonites in a royal rescript.<sup>32</sup> During 1585-1586, in the wake of the conquest of Belgium and Antwerp, Calvinist refugees flooded toward the shores of the North Sea. Altona, outside of Hamburg, owes its transition from “a group of houses to a community”<sup>33</sup> to the response of Count Ernst III of Schauenburg-Pinneberg to a request by Wallon refugees to establish a church. Paul Piper comments on the arrangements between the applicants and the count: “There is no trace of toleration in the document. If the count later, while negotiating with Hamburg, made the pronouncement ‘we are not empowered to rule over the conscience of our subjects but only over their bodies,’ this is nothing more than a nice phrase uttered by the Lutheran count.”<sup>34</sup> If economic, rather than religious, motives are responsible for the count’s admittance of Calvinists, this was probably also the case when he gave permission to Mennonites from Fresenburg to move to Altona.<sup>35</sup> Among these was the family of Francois Noë of Antwerp, a much appreciated merchant who provided Count Ernst especially with velvet for garments of the members of the courts. In 1611 he built houses in the district that became known as “*Die Freiheit*.”<sup>36</sup>

Hopes and ambitions not unlike those of the founder of Altona led Christian IV, King of Denmark and Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, to establish Glückstadt on the Elbe in 1617. The particular aim was that his new town and fortress would grow to be a threat and rival to prosperous Hamburg; a town

<sup>31</sup> “Urkunden und Zeugnisse zur rechtlichen Stellung der Mennoniten in Krefeld” in *Beiträge zur Geschichte rheinischer Mennoniten* (Schriftenreihe des Mennonitischen Geschichtsvereins 2), Weierhof, Pfalz, 1939, pp. 50-51.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Ehrenberg “Die Anfänge Altonas” in R. Ehrenberg *Altona unter Schauenburgischer Herrschaft*, part I, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Piper, “Die Reformierten und die Mennoniten Altonas” in Ehrenberg *Altona*, part VI, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> B.C. Roosen, *Geschichte der Mennoniten-Gemeinde Hamburg und Altona*, Part I, Hamburg, 1886, p. 26.

<sup>36</sup> R. Ehrenberg, “Gewerbefreiheit und Zunftzwang” in R. Ehrenberg *Altona*, Part IV, p. 25.

completely conceived on the drawing board, taming wild nature, regulating the all-inundating waters, and equally legislating over men.<sup>37</sup> This model of a creation of the modern ruler's state offers privileges far more generous than those we have discussed. Naturally with an eye toward the future prospects, immigrants from the Netherlands, the privileges are not drawn primarily along religious lines, but group the townsmen according to nations: Netherlanders, all those coming from that area, Portuguese, Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, and Germans.<sup>38</sup> This categorization, commonly used in trade and educational institutions, was not unlike that of its rival, Hamburg.<sup>39</sup> From the very beginning the category Netherlandish nation at Glückstadt included Reformed, Arminians or Remonstrants, and Mennonites. Thus Dutch Orthodox Calvinists were expected to live under one roof with the Remonstrants they had expelled from their native land at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618.<sup>40</sup> In fact the policy of religious toleration was spelled out in more than one document, yet the first known charter of February 1624 allowed for future flexibility, not unlike the later proclamation at Neuwied.

The very first paragraph deals with religious toleration: "To begin with, the Remonstrants, Mennonites and Contra Remonstrants shall be assured as possible behind closed doors..."<sup>41</sup> freely and as undisturbed as possible behind closed doors..."<sup>41</sup> The privilege of February was quickly supplemented by the privilege of July 23 of the same year. Addressing himself directly to Remonstrants, who had made known their interest in settling in Glückstadt, the king reiterates their right to exercise religion in private and adds permission to establish a school at their own expense. In an important sentence he refers to their right to "dress in their own customary way and to carry on their social

<sup>37</sup> J. Krumm, "Eine Königstadt" in *Heimatbuch des Kreises Steinburg in drei Bänden*, Glückstadt, 1926, II, p. 200.

<sup>38</sup> J. Krumm, "Die Privilegien der Königstadt" *ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>39</sup> Hermann Kellenbenz, *Sephardim an der Unteren Elbe*. (Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Beihefte 40), Wiesbaden, 1958, p. 30.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Dollinger, *Geschichte der Mennoniten in Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg und Lübeck*. (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte Schleswig-Holsteins vol. 17) (Neumünster i.H.), 1930, p. 124.

<sup>41</sup> D. Detleffen, "Die städtische Entwicklung Glückstadts unter König Christian IV," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Schleswig Holsteinische Geschichte*, 36 (1906), p. 196.

life at weddings, baptisms, and funerals in their own tradition.”<sup>42</sup> Also there is evidence that as early as 1623 Mennonites could use their way of attesting truth by lifting their hands, and did not have to swear an oath which, like the Quakers later, they regarded as a violation of their religious conviction.<sup>43</sup> The frequent issuance of privileges reflects the needs for relief and commercial encouragement in these years of ravaging warfare, to which the land was subjected until the Treaty of Lübeck between the emperor and the Danish king on May 22, 1629. A policy of economic reconstruction was immediately initiated and new privileges issued. Those of December 9, 1629 extended to the Portuguese nation were followed by those to the Netherlanders on October 17, 1631. The Mennonites were reassured of rights vital to their existence: “Mennonites shall live according to their religion and ‘*Conscientz*,’ they shall not be subjected to swearing oaths, bearing arms, or baptizing their children; they shall affirm truth with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ instead of an oath, and, in case of war, shall substitute a yearly payment for serving with arms.”<sup>44</sup>

If one tries to assess the Neuwied *Privilegium* of 1662 and the Concession of 1680 to the Mennonites in the light of the toleration policies cited, one may conclude that Count Friedrich was not an innovator but that his policy measures up well against the earlier ones.

In a century that was to witness the revocation of the Edict of Nantes one cannot expect such policies to progress on an even or upward path. While the Treaty of Westphalia stabilized relations between Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed, the phrase “*nulla alia in sacro imperio Romano recipiatur vel toleretur*”<sup>45</sup> made intolerance toward sects and dissenters the law of the land. The pronouncements on religious toleration made by Count Friedrich come closest to those Christian IV issued for his town of Glückstadt some forty years earlier. The policy of Christian IV was that of an aggressive, forward-looking city planner and a sovereign lawmaker. Friedrich was not in such a position and, as has been pointed out, was well aware that his Concession to the

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>45</sup> *Instrumentum Pacis Osnabrugense 1648*, Articulus VII, p. 2.

Mennonites was in conflict with imperial law. We can certainly concede to Friedrich the initiation of a policy of religious toleration in a period adverse to such official legislation. His aim was to encourage the growth of his town with the limited means at his command. There, every inhabitant and every family counted, particularly if they could be citizens of fine moral qualities and industrious. The Mennonites had deservedly gained that reputation in a period adverse to such official legislation. His aim August 9, 1699, lists eight Mennonite families of a total of 152 households.<sup>46</sup> Members, relatives, and employees of the court were not included in the count. The average household of men, women, children and servants numbered five, although the Reformed households were larger. There was evidently no influx of Mennonites in the twenty years after this account and the Concession of 1680. The major changes in population, and with these also a proportional increase of Mennonites, occurred after 1740. The first statistics of this period date as late as 1770, when 23 Mennonite households, with 125 members, are counted from a total of 490 households with 2905 inhabitants.<sup>47</sup> At that date Inspirierte and Moravian Brethren, as well as Mennonites, had been officially admitted to Neuwied.

### III

In January 1739 five families belonging to the religious group the Inspirierten, who had been expelled from the duchy of Zweibrücken, asked for permission to settle at Neuwied.<sup>48</sup> The cause for this sudden persecution of people who had lived inconspicuously can only be conjectured. The Lutheran clergy apparently sought to take advantage of the regency of Duchess Caroline of Nassau-Zweibrücken (1704-1774) by asserting its power, and proceeded to infringe on the rights of the local Reformed Church.<sup>49</sup> How easy it must have been for the Lutheran

<sup>46</sup> FWA, Schrank 26, Gefach 10, Fasc 11.

<sup>47</sup> FWA, Schrank 68, Gefach 8, Fasc. 9.

<sup>48</sup> Meinhardt, *300 Jahre Neuwied*, pp. 114-140.

<sup>49</sup> Ludwig Molitor, *Vollständige Geschichte der Residenzstadt Zweibrücken* Zweibrücken, 1885, pp. 423-24.

clergy to prompt the court to act against religious dissenters unprotected by any imperial law.

The young Count Alexander of Neuwied was thus faced with a decision on matters of religious toleration in the second year of his reign. He was ready to continue the policies of urban expansion and religious toleration initiated by his grandfather. This was also the mood of the city council and the consistory who, upon examining written expressions of the major religious convictions of the *Inspirierten*, recommended permission for the families to settle at Neuwied.<sup>50</sup> While the intellectual climate had changed in the years after the Treaty of Westphalia and the “Neuwied Concession to the Mennonites” were issued, it would be a mistake to assume that by the time Alexander took office the barriers between the churches had been broken, or that religion had become a matter of individual conscience. The provisions in the document of Zweibrücken, that has just been mentioned, is a good example of dispelling such an illusion.

A general concession, like the one issued to the Mennonites, was never extended to the *Inspirierten*, as a religious group, to settle and pursue their chosen form of worship at Neuwied. They were received, as other dissenters were later on, as individuals.

In the Neuwied documents relating to the petitions of the *Inspirierten* the group was called *Sparatisten*. This term was widely used at that time; it characterized a much larger category of dissenters of whom the *Inspirierten* were only a small part. However, they could claim their own tradition and leadership. From the point of view of the authorities, the most important single characteristic applied to them, as to all other Separatists—their conscious separation from the official Protestant Church.

The particular brand of Separatism presented by the *Inspirierten* traces its beginning to the prophetic sessions which took place among French exiles in England and on the Continent in the wake of the Camisard Wars.<sup>51</sup> Their actions were a continuation of the original outbreak of prophetic ecstasies among the

<sup>50</sup> FWA, Schrank 23, Gefach 6, Fasc 3, pp. 102-3.

<sup>51</sup> The best accounts of the history of the *Inspirierten* are Max Goebel, *Geschichte des christlichen Lebens*, Vol. III, Coblenz, 1860, and Gottlieb Scheuner, *Inspirations-Historie*, Erster Theil, Amana, Iowa, 1884.

Huguenots which followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), particularly in the Dauphiné. The pattern in which the prophetic exclamation or message emerged was commonly the following: "The prophet beat his head with his hands for some time, then fell down on his back: his stomach and throat swelled up and he remained speechless for some minutes, after which he broke out into utterances"<sup>52</sup> From the very beginning the gift of prophecy proved to be contagious. Thus one can follow a direct line of those who possessed the gift from the two *émigrés* Allut and Marion to the brothers Pott, in Halle, and to the Separatists living in the Wetterau. It was there that Eberhard Ludwig Gruber (1665-1728) and Johann Friedrich Rock (1678-1749) were drawn into the movement, took leading roles, and worked out a discipline for a worship that would otherwise have exhausted itself in sporadic ecstatic outbursts. The form of "Inspiration" thus became an important and influential strain in German, and later in American, religious life. Gruber, the chief architect of the discipline, began to organize communities in Schwarzenau and Homrighausen in 1714. The first "love feast," a communal meal that found its prototype in the practices of the Apostolic Church, was held in December 1714 at Schwarzenau and was attended by seventeen visitors from Ysenburg. Rock and Gruber went on extensive visits to Saxony, Württemberg, Bohemia, and Switzerland helping new groups to form and overseeing their activities. Mutual visitations between the Inspirierten established rapport and relieved the pressures from which isolated small local units suffered. The traveling brethren, messengers like the prophets of the Cevennes, were accompanied by recorders and their utterances were preserved and printed in the *Jahrbücher der Inspirierten* that began to appear in 1717 and were continued in the new center of the Inspirierten at Amana, Iowa, until 1838. What information we have about the move of the Inspirierten from Zweibrücken to Neuwied is gleaned from the *Jahrbücher* of the years 1735 to 1739.<sup>53</sup>

On November 2, 1739 a "Resolution" was issued granting the

<sup>52</sup> R.A. Knox, *Enthusiasm*, Oxford, 1950, p. 359.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Scheuner pp. 184-211 *passim*.

requests of the Inspirierten Keller, Peter Pfaff, and others, to settle at Neuwied, to engage in trade and commerce, and to live according to their religious beliefs.<sup>54</sup> In scrutinizing the eleven paragraphs of the “Resolution” one will find hardly any statements that vary from those in documents previously discussed. Yet the emphasis on certain issues is the direct result of a recent struggle between Count Friedrich Wilhelm (1706-1736), father of Alexander, and the burges of Neuwied.<sup>55</sup> The phrasing of some paragraphs shows the hand of the skillful diplomat Alexander, ready to pursue an enlightened policy of religious toleration and equally aware of the grievances exemptions raise among the citizenry. Right at the outset the “Resolution” makes it clear that newcomers are considered full citizens “to share burdens and joys equally with all other citizens.” They will attest to these obligations as citizens in the presence of a city official. They will not take a formal oath, as this is contrary to their belief, but will instead express their assent by the “Word of Eternal Truth” and with a handshake. The very next paragraphs deal with exemptions from their duties as citizens. The Inspirierten, like the Mennonites, felt that bearing arms was irreconcilable with the teachings of Christ. The “Resolution” honored their conviction by exempting them from service in the civic militia (*Bürgerwehr*), but required them to arrange for a substitute to serve. The issue was a highly sensitive one. Service in the militia was felt by all citizens to be a burden, and exemption was bound to be resented. Linked to service in the militia was participation in parades on festive occasions, of which there were many. When the Inspirierten refused to participate in the citizens’ parade of March 26, 1751, the magistrate confiscated some of their household goods as indemnity. The position of the magistrate was that while the Inspirierten refused to bear arms they could, as the Mennonites did, march at the end of the train. The Inspirierten were not willing to assent and on March 8, 1752, defended their position, referring to the “Resolution.” The squabbles over participations and payment for substitutes continued. In 1753 the magistrate tried to force Mennonites and Separatists “*Pfälzer*

<sup>54</sup> FWA, Schrank 65, Gefach 11, Fasc 13, pp. 93-96.

<sup>55</sup> Meinhardt, *300 Jahre Neuwied*, p. 96.

und Zweibrücker Bürger” to appear with their sons at the Pentecost parade. They appealed to Count Alexander who supported them against the magistrate, insisting only on the originally prescribed substitute payment.<sup>56</sup>

The central authority in support of dissenters against the magistrate, the legitimate representative body, can, of course, be viewed under different aspects. On a larger scale the conflict in small Neuwied finds its parallel in the defense of Pietists by Frederick William I of Brandenburg-Prussia against the elected estates of East Prussia.<sup>57</sup> If one wants to accentuate the issues one could speak of a conflict between the central government prince and territorial power, in support of religious toleration and the representative bodies of subjects resisting infringements of their rights. Paradoxically the religious progressive cause is championed by the forces that are reducing constitutional rights.

The “Resolution” explicitly makes the Inspirierten subject to the regulations of the guilds, that in turn hold their privileges directly from the sovereign. The Inspirierten are allowed to absent themselves from “the guild meals which often degenerated into excessive drinking parties.” Thus matters of civic and economic importance are spelled out before the “Resolution” moves on to the question of religious tolerance. The Inspirierten are granted “toleration” which means full freedom of conscience, exercise of devotions in private, and the “conducting of all funerals and marriages in a quiet manner.” Those intending marriage are asked to apply to the ducal chamber and to have the declaration announced officially. The Inspirierten are expected to settle minor matters of dispute or disagreement of a personal nature among themselves while the power of full civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction (*Jurisdictio tam in civilibus quam ecclesiasticis*) remained with the sovereign.

While the “Resolution” takes into account the importance of spelling out matters that touch on the relation of the religious dissenters to their fellow citizens, guilds and magistrate, it eliminates all interference by the clergy of the two official Protestant Churches.

<sup>56</sup> Fritz Voss, *Bürgerwehr in Neuwied von 1648 bis 1856*, Leipzig, 1936, pp. 38-40.

<sup>57</sup> Carl Hinrichs, *Preussentum und Pietismus*, Göttingen, 1971, pp. 216-300.

The ideals of Alexander are those of a prince in the Age of Enlightenment within the limited radius of his field of actions. His endeavors to reform the school system according to rationalistic humanistic principles and to create an academy that would combat prejudice and foster an ecumenic spirit, and his patronage of the freemason order are the concrete expression of his ideals. The community of the Inspirierten remained small and never exceeded twenty families with a total of 98 members, according to the last count of 1783. When, in 1842, the Inspirierten founded a community in Ebenezer, near Buffalo, in Erie County in the State of New York, it became a magnet to the Inspirierten in German towns and villages. By 1846 the exodus of the Inspirierten of Neuwied to the New World had begun.<sup>58</sup>

#### IV

The third religious group listed in the Neuwied population statistics under "sects" was the "Evangelical community of brethren" or Herrnhuter. This group, which started out in 1750 as a small contingent of approximately 40 persons, grew quickly to a prosperous community of 357 members by 1780.<sup>59</sup> The "*Evangelische Brüder*" or *Mährische Bruder* or *Herrnhuter*, as they are referred to in the Neuwied records, were exiles from the Huterite settlement Herrnhag in the Ysenburg-Büdingen principality. The *Emigrations edikt* of December 2, 1750, that ordered the Herrnhuter to leave the principality within three years, reversed a policy of religious toleration that had lasted for five decades and had made this area in the Wetterau a renowned haven for religious dissenters. The Herrnhuter were actually not considered dissenters or separatists and their classification among "sects" is arbitrary. The chief council of the Ysenburg-Büdingen principality, Christoph Friedrich Brauer, in order to justify the exile edict that broke a contract between the government and the Herrnhuter, actually made the accusation that the

<sup>58</sup> Bertha M.H. Shambaugh, *Amana, the Community of True Inspiration*, Iowa City, 1908, p. 59.

<sup>59</sup> FWA, Schrank 23, Gefach 6, Fasc 3, pp. 102-103.

Brethren community had deteriorated into a sect.<sup>60</sup> The classification of the Brethren as “sect” in the Neuwied documents appears to be more for reasons of bureaucratic convenience than to intend slander.

The Herrnhuters traced their history to two originally constituent units. Count Nikolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and his wife, Erdmuthe Dorothea, established a household modeled after the pietistic principles of Philipp Spener and August Hermann Francke at their Berthelsdorf castle in the Upper Lausitz. This household was to be open to those striving for a Christian life of simplicity and Christian clarity in the midst of baroque splendor and worldliness. Soon after they had established themselves at Berthelsdorf, the count was approached by Bohemian-Moravian Brethren, descendants of the Hussites, living in the Catholic-dominated town of Sehlen, asking permission to settle in his domain. It was a small group strong in their faith, harrassed by the local Catholic and orthodox Lutheran clergy in their Moravian Habsburg homeland, who longed for a place where they could freely pursue their religious beliefs according to their own traditions. A common enterprise that took various forms, basically that of a commune, emerged when the Moravian Brethren and the pietistic Zinzendorf household joined forces. *Herrnhuter* became the popular name for its members, taken from Herrnhut, the seat of the count.

Zinzendorf and the Brethren worked out a liturgy and church order of their own, distinct from orthodox Lutheran and Reformed practices, yet they adhered to the Augsburg Confession. They were “*Augsburgische Konfessions—verwandte*” and therefore could claim toleration provisions of the Westphalian treaty. The count had carefully seen to it that his religious practices did not conflict with the Lutheran Church and for that purpose he obtained written affirmation from the theological faculty of the University of Tübingen. He even went so far as to be ordained a Lutheran minister by the Consistory of Stralsund in April 1734.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Dagmar Reimers, “Sektenwesen und Herrnhuter-bewegung in der Grafschaft Ysenburg” in *Kreis Büdingen*, Büdingen, 1956, pp. 273-274.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Erich Beyreuther, *Zinzendorf und die sich alhier beisammen finden*, Marburg a.d. Lahn, 1959.

The year 1750 marked the end of an important period in the history of the Herrnhuter; the beginning dated to 1743. They characterized the period as the sifting period (*Sichtungszeit*), referring to the passage in Luke (22, 31). How much the Herrnhuter had been coming of age is signified by the appearance of the essay "*Gedanken über die Herrnhuter*" by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in the very same year 1750. After inner turmoil and persecution, particularly from the Saxon authorities, the Herrnhuter experienced a great religious revival in these years that manifested itself in vigorous communal life and worldwide sprawling missionary activities. A healthy mode of a shared life had emerged in various settlements, providing enough of a unified social and liturgical organization while allowing for differences in the religious and ethnic background of its members. Thus, for example, the "*Ysenburg Emigrations edikt*" was borne with greatest fortitude and, although it offered a three year period of grace, the Herrnhuter community made the unexpected decision to leave and seek new quarters immediately. In such action they had the solid support of the head of the Herrnhuters, "the ordinary" Count Nikolaus Zinzendorf. He had earlier succeeded in obtaining a "*Generalkonzession*" (1742) for the Brethren to settle in Prussia, and official recognition of the Brethren as a religious community from the English Parliament in 1749. On February 21, 1750, ninety unmarried members left for Pennsylvania and in the following month unmarried members and families left for Saxony, Prussia, Holland, England and, as already said, the French Swiss Reformed group for Neuwied.<sup>62</sup>

Uncertainties and lack of funds made the first years difficult ones for the "French colony," as the Neuwieders called the Herrnhuters. Pressure was brought on those who rented property to buy their homes or vacate. A captain's widow, the new owner of the garden plot where Herrnhuters buried the dead according to their own rites, threatened to deny them the key to the garden unless they bought the garden. The future of the Brethren at Neuwied was made secure by the Concession of 1756 and the raising of funds needed to purchase living quarters and the

<sup>62</sup> Simon, "Die Herrenhuter im Isenburgischen" *Archiv für Hessische Geschichte*, vol. 9, Darmstadt, 1861, p. 64.

burial plot. Count Alexander and his brother, Prince Karl, took an active part in helping the Brethren establish accommodation that fitted their needs. The town was laid out in checkerboard squares, a pattern ideally suited to the Herrnhuter building tradition. By 1758 a community center (*Gemeinhaus*) and a house for single men and, in 1759, a house for single women were ready for occupancy.<sup>63</sup> The center offered the much desired space for worship, the common feast (*Liebesmahl*), and announcements. The Herrnhuter religious gathering often united all three elements: regular worship, meals, and announcements of important news, including reading of letters and messages from brethren and sisters engaged in missionary activities in Europe and overseas.

The *Catalogus der Evangel. Brüder Gemeind allhier am 1. Januar 1764* records a wide range of professional skills for its 233 members. Next to all the basic craftsmen such as blacksmiths, bakers, weavers, potters, and tailors, were listed the clockmakers, upholsterers, cabinet makers, and goldsmiths.<sup>64</sup>

A modern tile factory had its beginnings in the faience art of the pottery of Johann Michael Schenk.<sup>65</sup> The cabinet work of Abraham and his son David Roentgen, who were among the refugees from Büdingen, was sought and admired in all of Europe. The inventive and whimsical writing desk of this workshop even served Goethe in a metaphor in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*.<sup>66</sup> The Roentgens joined efforts with the Mennonite watchmakers Christian and Peter Kinzing to build beautiful encased clocks.<sup>67</sup> A marginal note of Count Alexander tells how well aware he was of the connection between this policy of religious toleration and economic necessity. When the question arose as to whether a confession of faith (*Glaubens-Bekentniss*) by the notorious heretic Johann Christian Edelmann should be printed, the count expressed his opinion: "If the weed grows not here but away in the field, the stench blows just the same to us, yet

<sup>63</sup> Dieter Krieg, "Das Behagelsche oder Herrnhuter Eckhaus an der Engerser Strasse," *Heimatkalender des Landkreises Neuwied*, 1965, pp. 82-84.

<sup>64</sup> FWA, Schrank 68, Gefach 8, fasc 8.

<sup>65</sup> Meinhardt, *300 Jahre Neuwied*, p. 460.

<sup>66</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Gedenkausgabe*, Zürich, 1949, Vol. VIII, p. 399.

<sup>67</sup> Meinhardt, *300 Jahre Neuwied*, p. 512.

our printers perish. In so far as Edelman is wrong, it will be possible to refute him,... yet other measures like expulsion and persecution are like unkind name-calling.’<sup>68</sup>

The policy of religious toleration was well rewarded by the skill and industriousness of the Mennonites, Separatists, and Herrnhuters for the benefit of the entire community of Neuwied.

<sup>68</sup> FWA, Schrank 66, Gefach 2, Fasc 7. For a detailed account based on the Edelman Acta see my article “Edelman in Neuwied,” *Glaube, Geist, Geschichte Festschrift für Ernst Benz*, Leiden, 1967, pp. 207-216.