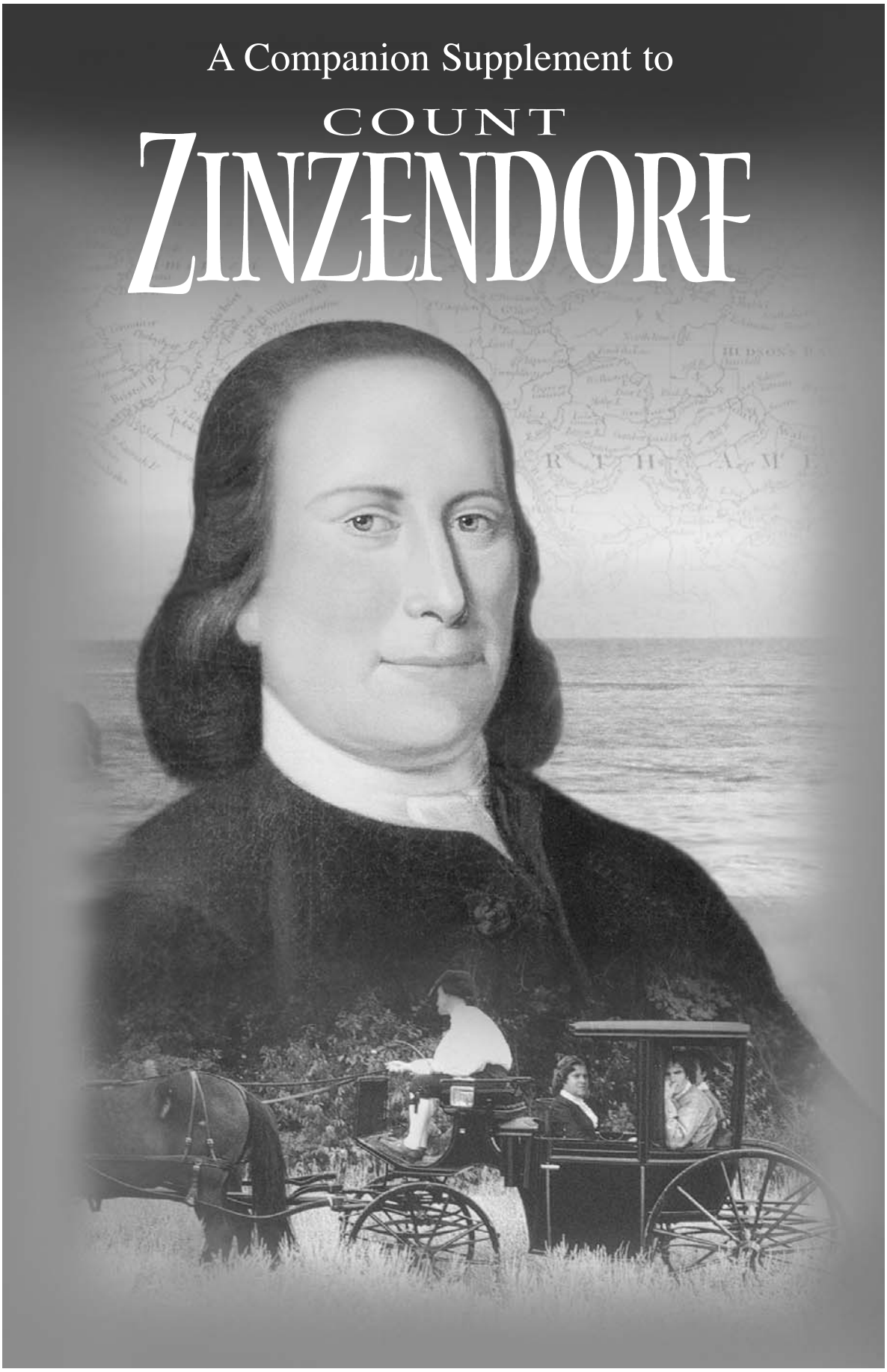
A Companion Supplement to

COUNT ZINZENDORF



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Introduction

The Moravians may be considered singularly important pioneers in the field of missions and in the "merging" of theology with social life in the practical experience of living out Christianity. The articles in this brief supplement will provide you with helpful background to Moravian Christianity, including its historical context ("The World in 1700" and "Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf"), its theology ("Zinzendorf's Theology," "Zinzendorf and the Holy Spirit," "Zinzendorf: Theology in Song," and "The Church's Prayer to the Holy Ghost"), and its social implications ("Zinzendorf and Slavery," "Moravian Women during the 18th Century", and "Bethlehem's Œconomy"). Their passion for Biblical truth and holy living will astound you and challenge you to live out what you believe in a way that will impact your community for Christ.

We thank Rev. John Jackman and the Comenius Foundation for providing the material here. We had to shorten some articles due to space limitations. However, the entire articles and much, much more, including photographs, can be found at their website. We urge you to visit them at **www.zinzendorf.com.**

The World in 1700

The beginning of the eighteenth century was a time of unusual peace—the calm between storms. The Thirty Years' War, best known today as the backdrop of Cardinal Richelieu and Dumas' story of the Three Musketeers, had ended a little over fifty years earlier. Probably the most destructive war of European history prior to World War 1, the religious and political conflict had ended with Europe being rigidly divided into Protestant and Catholic regions.

But there were many other divisions that fragmented even a peaceful Europe. The Protestant Reformation, which had given rise to the bloody battles of the previous two centuries, was now 200 years old—and was in many ways ripe for reform itself. Lutheranism in Germany had become quite cerebral, even cold. The heat of the fiery reformer was long past, and well-intentioned theologians had reduced Luther's thought into intellectual points of theology. The role of the layperson was entirely passive. Far from being united, the various flavors of Protestantism often seemed as much at odds with one another as they were with Rome. There was no concept of ecumenical cooperation; political boundaries were most often religious boundaries as well. The divisions were deep and long-standing.

As this new century dawned, Johann Sebastian Bach was a youthful organist just beginning to achieve recognition, and George Frederick Handel was a new young face on the operatic scene of Hamburg. Benjamin Franklin and George Washington weren't born yet. The skyline of London looked very different, for the familiar House of Commons with its signature clock tower, the home of Big Ben, had not been built. St Paul's Cathedral, the vision of architect Christopher Wren, was under construction. In the colonies, Philadelphia was still a muddy little town, though New York (recently recovered by the British from the Dutch) had recently grown to be a center of trade. Thoughts of revolution were still two generations away.

The social order in 1700 had more in common with the Middle Ages than with our time. Feudal lords reigned over serfs, and the privilege of the nobility would stagger the modern mind. This was the time of Louis XIV in France, and while Versailles may have outshone other palaces, the nobility of Prussia, Austria, and Saxony were no shirkers when it came to lives of luxury and splendor. But this feudal society was nearing its end. A growing middle class of wealthy merchants already was changing radically the balance of power in Europe, since in many cases they were ending up with greater wealth than the nobility. The Age of Reason had made an enormous impact on religion throughout Europe, eroding acceptance of dogma and the power of the clergy.

In Germany, a religious movement called Pietism had arisen in the cold ashes of Lutheranism, a movement that sought to restore emotion and personal piety to faith. Begun by Philip Jacob Spener, who may have been Zinzendorf's godfather, Pietism emphasized personal conversion and the fruits of faith in daily life. Participants met regularly for Bible study and prayer, and worked for renewal within the existing denominations. Count Zinzendorf's family, especially his grandmother, were enthusiastic supporters of the pietistic movement.

On May 16, 1700, Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf was born into this world of divided kingdoms, opulent nobility, and rigid denominationalism. The stage was set for this controversial young nobleman to challenge the world with a new vision, a vision that focused on Christ--and Christ alone.

Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf

by Rev. John Jackman

Nicholas Ludwig, Count Zinzendorf, was born in Dresden in 1700. He was very much a part of the Pietist movement in Germany, which emphasized personal piety and an emotional component to the religious life. This was in contrast to the state Lutheran Church of the day, which had grown to symbolize a largely intellectual faith centered on belief in specific doctrines. He believed in "heart religion," a personal salvation built on the individual's spiritual relationship with Christ.

Zinzendorf was born into one of the most noble families of Europe. His father died when he was an infant, and he was raised at Gros Hennersdorf, the castle of his influential Pietistic grandmother. Stories abound of his deep faith during childhood. As a young man he struggled with his desire to study for the ministry and the expectation that he would fulfill his hereditary role as a Count. As a teenager at Halle Academy, he and several other young nobles formed a secret society, The Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed. The stated purpose of this order was that the members would use their position and influence to spread the Gospel. As an adult, Zinzendorf later reactivated this adolescent society, and many influential leaders of Europe ended up joining the group. A few included the King of Denmark, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Archbishop of Paris.

During his Grand Tour (a rite of passage for young aristocrats), Nicolas visited an art museum in Dusseldorf, where he saw a Domenico Feti painting titled *Ecce Homo*, "Behold the Man." It portrayed the crucified Christ with the legend, "This have I done for you. Now what will you do for me?" The young count was profoundly moved and appears to have had an almost mystical experience while looking at the painting, feeling as if Christ himself was speaking those words to his heart. He vowed that day to dedicate his life to service to Christ.

Zinzendorf married Erdmuth Dorothea von Reuss, a cousin, and assumed his duties as a young noble in the court of King August the Strong. In 1722, he was approached by a group of Moravians to request permission to live on his lands. He granted their request, and a small band crossed the border from Moravia to settle in a town they called Herrnhut, or "the Lord's Watch." Zinzendorf was intrigued by the story of the Moravians and began to read about the early Unity at the library in Dresden. His tenants went through a period of serious division, and it was then, in 1727, that Zinzendorf left public life to spend all his time at his Berthelsdorf estate working with the troubled Moravians. Largely due to his leadership in daily Bible studies, the group came to formulate a unique document known as the "Brotherly Agreement," which set forth basic tenets of Christian behavior. Residents of Herrnhut were required to sign a pledge to abide by these Biblical principals. There followed an intense and powerful experience of renewal, often described as the "Moravian Pentecost." During a communion service at Berthelsdorf, the entire congregation felt a powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, as felt their previous differences swept away. This experience began the Moravian renewal, and led to the beginning of the Protestant World Mission movement.

In 1731, while attending the coronation of Christian VI in Copenhagen, the young Count met a

converted slave from the West Indies, Anthony Ulrich. Anthony's tale of his people's plight moved Zinzendorf, who brought him back to Herrnhut. As a result, two young men, Leonard Dober and David Nitchmann, were sent to St. Thomas to live among the slaves and preach the Gospel. This was the first organized Protestant mission work, and it grew rapidly to Africa, America, Russia, and other parts of the world. By the end of Zinzendorf's life, there were active missions from Greenland to South Africa—literally from one end of the earth to the other. Though the Baptist missionary William Carey is often referred to as the "Father of Modern Missions," he himself would credit Zinzendorf with that role, for he often referred to the model of the earlier Moravians in his journal.

Zinzendorf himself visited St. Thomas and later visited America. There he sought to unify the German Protestants of Pennsylvania, even proposing a sort of "council of churches," in which all would preserve their unique denominational practices but would work in cooperation rather than competition. He founded the town of Bethlehem, where his daughter Benigna organized the school which would become Moravian College. His overwhelming interest in the colonies involved evangelising the native Americans, and he travelled into the wilderness with Indian agent Conrad Weiser to meet with the chieftains of several tribes and clans. As far as we have been able to identify, he is the only European noble to have gone out to meet the native American leaders in this manner.

Zinzendorf's theology was extraordinarily Christ-centered and innovative. It focussed intensely on the personal experience of a relationship with Christ and an emotional experience of salvation rather than simply an intellectual assent to certain principles. Dr David Schattschneider, Dean of Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem, PA, says that it is probably the fact that Zinzendorf did not attend seminary that allowed his thinking to be so creative. Zinzendorf cast the Trinity and the believers in terms of a family, referring often to the Holy Spirit as "mother." He accorded women a much more substantial role in church life than was normal for the eighteenth century and suffered great criticism as a result. He allowed women to preach, to hold office, and to be ordained. Anna Nitschmann, the leader of the Single Sisters and later Zinzendorf's second wife, seems to have functioned as a bishop among the women.

But all Zinzendorf's thinking also focused on missionary outreach and renewal. He envisioned the Moravians not as a separate denomination but as a dynamic renewal society which would serve to revitalize existing denominations and help create new work in mission areas. There are numerous churches in Pennsylvania where the Moravians would start a church and school for the settlers and native Americans and then turn it over to the Lutheran Church, the Reformed Church, or whatever denomination they perceived to be the strongest in that area.

Zinzendorf came to know John and Charles Wesley, who had been converted through their contact with the Moravians. The Wesleys later had a split with Zinzendorf, and founded the Methodist Church; both retained warm affection for the Moravians throughout their lives.

Zinzendorf died in 1760 at Herrnhut.

Zinzendorf's Theology: A Gift to Enable Life

by Dr. Arthur J. Freeman

The Moravian theological tradition is over 500 years old, tracing back to 1457, and represents some decisive shifts: the initial attempt to simply follow Jesus as stated in the Sermon on the Mount; the later recognition that the thought of the church had to be more related to the world; the development in which Moravian theology affirmed (1) the Essential of relationship with God, (2) Ministerials (the church, preaching, sacraments, etc.), which served this Essential of relationship with God, (3) and Incidentals (the different ways people do things); the Moravian Church's encounter with the Protestant Reformation; the time when the Church lost its rights and went underground for 100 years; the rediscovery of the Moravian Church on the estate of Zinzendorf; the contribution of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf; the changes after him and the modern period when the Moravian Church had to deal with new issues and became truly international. One interesting discovery of the last quarter century in North America is that Moravians really do have a theology, that their faith is not just simply living with Jesus, though that still remains at its heart.

Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf was a Count of the Holy Roman Empire. He was born in Saxony, educated at Halle and the University of Wittenberg as a lawyer, and he studied theology on the side. His education and his position within society brought him (a Lutheran) into contact with different Protestant traditions, Roman Catholics and also Jews. He lived at a time which, for some, promised renewal of the church and yet raised many questions which seemed to undermine religious belief. This was the time of the Enlightenment, the birth of historical critical research and modern science, which raised serious questions about traditional religious beliefs and affirmed human values, insights and possibilities. What was often left was a natural religion founded on reason, of which the old religions were only cultural expressions. Zinzendorf read widely in the literature of the age and was appreciative of the issues raised and various efforts to address them. He formulated his own critical and creative responses, which for us, three centuries later, seem quite relevant.

Zinzendorf's religious life was very much affected not just by living in an "age of doubt" but also by his own experience. His father died three months after he was born. His grandfather died when he was four. His mother soon remarried and managed his life from a distance. He was raised by his maternal grandmother, a well-educated woman who was acquainted with many of the European currents of religious reform and had a profound impact on his life.

At age eight, he was affected by arguments for atheism and spent one long night in "meditation and deep speculation" about this, concluding that

> *. . . because my heart is sincerely devoted to the Savior and many times I had wondered whether it were possible that there could be another God than he—I would rather be damned with the Savior than be blessed with another God—so had speculation and rational deductions, which returned*

> *to me again and again, no power with me other than to make me anxious and destroy my sleep. But in my heart they had not the least effect. What I believed, that I wanted; what I thought, that was odious to me.*

Here was a discovery "that has stayed with me even to the present." Reason, the intellect, so useful in human matters for explaining and understanding, could not guide him in the resolution of religious questions. He resolved in spiritual matters to remain with "heart-grasped truth" and understood religious life as a living out of the companionship of the Savior.

His personal journey of faith and the questioning of religious truths by reason and historical study, so much a part of the age in which he lived, caused him to take a particular approach to religion.

Religion is not about God *or* Christ *or* the Spirit. It is God *and* Christ *and* the Spirit. It consists of a living relationship with them. This can be described in different ways and expressed in different practices in different Christian churches, but the reality behind all descriptions is relationship with God. That is the central element, the Essential, which one needs to have in religion. This relational emphasis makes religion available to all who cannot form concepts but can share relationship, including infants —even in the mother's womb. To express this relationship, Zinzendorf chose various terms. Jesus' relationship to the government of the church was expressed as "Chief Elder." In personal relationships he was "Savior" and "Lord" or "Father of the household." The Spirit was the "Mother" of the community, and God was "Father." From 1738 until Zinzendorf's death, the Mother role of the Spirit was much developed. When one accepts Christ, one is accepted by the "Family" of God. Thus religion is so simple, though we often make it complicated.

Religion is known by the heart, rather than the head. The head represented the growing role of human judgment, reason and historical criticism, in examining religious truth. He argues that the head cannot figure it all out. The role and experience of the heart has nothing to do with emotionality or feeling. To know by the heart was regarded as objective perception, just as the five senses experience objective reality. "Heart" is a term for intuition or extrasensory perception. God has provided us with this other way of knowing what we cannot grasp by our intellect. God made a decisive disclosure in history which would define what God is really like, necessary because there are so many possible understandings of religion from the human perspective. This was done in Jesus, and that is why Jesus always needs to remain central. In one of his most famous poems, Zinzendorf has God say to the poet who searches for God,

> 9 Why, you foolish child,
> will you fetch me from the depths?
> Where do you think I can be found?
> Do you seek me at heaven's poles?
> Do you seek me in the creature?
> My nature, which no eye can see,
> has built itself a body
> and still you miss my sign.

10 O! Come here and see
the concealed Abyss,
the hidden Majesty.
In Jesus, the humble child, see
whether humanity exists in grace;
see whether He your praise deserves,
for whom love grows in the heart;
who believes, from all care becomes free. . . .

This disclosure makes it clear that God is one who joins us in life and shares with us the limitations and difficulties of human life, even to birth and suffering as a human. It is a rejection of the style of the God who dwells in heaven, on a throne, is always in control, and whose primary characteristic is pure power. And it makes clear that God comes to us as person and offers relationship. What is revealed is God, not about God. What is revealed is the God who dwells with us in the mystery and limitations of human existence.

In the New Testament Jesus is understood as God's agent in creation (John 1:1-18, Col. 1:15-20 and Heb. 1:1-3). His coming into the world is to complete what he started with us in the creation of the world and the creation of each of us. This means that every non-Christian religion also knows Jesus because they all know a Creator—though they do not have the clear definition of this Creator that can be found in the historical life of the Creator—in Jesus. Thus there is a bond of common experience with all religions, though definitions and understandings are not the same.

In addition, since Jesus is our Creator he knows each person born into the world and his work of salvation is to complete the process of our creation so that we fully become who we can become. Our Creator has always loved us and needs no persuasion to be our companion in life. As he "companions" us, he knows what we need to know when we need to know it, and he previously lived this life we live and, so, has great wisdom to share. Being "companioned" by him is also the basis for ethics.

Church is *Gemeine* (a community or fellowship), not primarily an institution or organization. The German term *Gemeine* (in modern German *Gemeinde*) was the term which Zinzendorf most frequently employed for the Church. Hermann Plitt, author of three volumes on Zinzendorf's theology, traces the development of this fellowship understanding of church from the Old Testament to the Savior's disciple-family, the early church, and then from the Church Fathers to the present. He argues that the nature of church is "spiritual, eternal, based on the community of life of its members with God and each other, in Jesus Christ, through faith and love, but its form is necessarily subjected to the changeability of human relationships, local and temporal conditions." This was quite distinct from the term *Religion*, which Zinzendorf uses to describe a religious tradition or institution, such as Lutheran. *Gemeine* was used for the local congregation, the denomination, and the universal Christian Church, wherever persons lived in relationship with and from Christ and expressed the reality from which they lived. This term described a community which is a living organism, a system of spiritual reality, universal as well as local:

> *. . . I always make a great difference between a Gemeine and a Religion in genere [in kind]; and with respect to a Gemeine, I am of the opinion that she stands in need of no new system because she is herself a daily system of God, a system which the Angels themselves study. . . .*

The church on earth and the church in heaven are both this *Gemeine* or "daily system of God." The *Moravian Hymnal of 1735* has on its title page a plate showing the earthly congregation on the floor level of the church and the heavenly congregation in the balcony. The two are never far apart. In each worship service they join one another. This is symbolized in the whiteness of the sanctuary and the use of clear glass to admit the light.

Each Christian *Religion,* or denomination, has within it many persons who share this fellowship with Christ. Each Christian *Religion* also has its own "type" or "way" of teaching, which contains many treasures. One should stay in the Christian *Religion* in which he or she belongs, but what ultimately matters is the common bond they share in Christ. For 50 years, until the last decade of the 18th century, the Moravian Church maintained the identity of three "ways" within it: Lutheran, Reformed, and Ancient Moravian.

Each book of Scripture is written within the context of its author and thus historically conditioned, something argued by the historical study of Scripture in his time. This is not just because each author is affected by his history and culture, but also because God chooses to speak to us where we are. To each writer God has given what was necessary for his context, which is not the same as what God gave in another context to another person or community. God does not expect us to know everything—what is not necessary for us in our context. When one reads Scripture, one then discovers the richness of God's varied interaction with persons and cultures.

Two things are then necessary. The first is to recognize that Scripture is conditioned by history and context, and thus we have to learn to read it this way. But God has provided for the clarity of the Basic Truth necessary for salvation. Other materials, called Matters of Knowledge, need expertise to understand. And there are some things, such as what happens in the Lord's Supper or what is to happen at the end of time, which will remain Mysteries—real but never to be understood fully. Christians need help to understand Scripture to become established in Scripture. Thus he made two attempts to translate the New Testament, one with the books arranged in the order of their historical origin, and he started an abridged translation of the Old Testament, with "less necessary and confusing parts" eliminated.

Second, we have to know what or who we are looking for in Scripture. Certainly we can all look for Basic Truth and try to understand Matters of Knowledge, but Scripture is less about ideas than a Person. The Person of Christ is the real "system" of Scripture. It is about him and he is in it, reflected in it as in a mirror. If we can only meet him there, we discover what (really Whom) we need most.

Zinzendorf also encouraged the devotional use of Scripture. In 1731 he began the use of the Daily Texts, which persons were to live with for each day, thus enabling them to use Scripture without worrying about how to understand a passage in its context. In the last years of his life, he constructed a harmony of the stories of Jesus' last days as a way to live into this important part of the story of Jesus.

Published in *Moravian History Magazine* No. 18, ed. by J. and E. Cooper, Glengormley, Co.: Antrim, N. Ireland.

Zinzendorf and the Holy Spirit

by Dr. Craig D. Atwood, Salem College

One of the least known and most intriguing parts of Zinzendorf's theology is his use of the word "Mother" to describe the Holy Spirit. This was not just a passing fancy for Zinzendorf. In fact, for over twenty years, this was the primary way he referred to the Holy Spirit, and towards the end of his life, his attachment to this type of devotion increased. In the 1750s, the Moravians sang several litanies about the Mother and even had a special annual festival celebrating the "enthronement" of the Spirit as the Mother of the church.

Zinzendorf's approach to the Motherhood of the Holy Spirit may be relevant for contemporary discussion on the language we use when we speak of God. For Zinzendorf, the main issue was not whether a metaphor was sexist; it was whether the metaphor clearly, concretely, and persuasively communicated the nature of God. For him, it was better for the believer to call the Spirit "Mother" than anything else because that word communicated something essential about the way in which the Holy Spirit deals with the children of God. In his own life, he found that he had difficulty experiencing the reality of the Holy Spirit until he came upon this metaphor.

> *I could not speak about [the Holy Spirit], since I did not know how I should define it. I simply believed that she is the third person of the Godhead, but I could not say how this was properly so. Instead I thought of her abstractly. . . . The Holy Spirit had known me well, but I did not know her before the year 1738. That is why I carefully avoided entering in the matter until the Mother Office of the Holy Spirit had been so clearly opened up for me.*

According to Zinzendorf, the name which best communicates the reality of the Spirit's relationship to Christians is simply "Mother," because those who know the Spirit know her as the Mother. Those who experience the Trinity in their hearts know that "a family must be complete. We must have a Father, Mother, and Husband."

> *God [Christ] is even our dear husband, his Father is our dear Father, and the Holy Spirit is our dear Mother, with that we are finished, with that the family-idea, the oldest, the simplest, the most respectable, the most endearing idea among all human ideas, the true biblical idea, is established with us in the application of the holy Trinity, for no one is nearer to one than Father, Mother, and Husband.*

This is language that even a child can comprehend. It is the best language to communicate spiritual reality for all people because it does not depend on abstract reasoning or speculation on unfathomable realities.

Zinzendorf argued for the scriptural authority of the Mother Office by linking together the Old and New Testament verses Isaiah 66:13 and John 14:26: When the dear Savior at the end of his life wanted to comfort his disciples (at that time the language was not as rich as ours is), by that time the Savior, who was a very great bible student, had doubtlessly read the verse in the Bible,

> *"I will comfort you as a mother comforts one." Then the dear Savior thought, "If I should say to my disciples that I am going away, then I must give them some comfort. I must say to them that they will receive someone who will comfort them over my departure. It will not be strange to them, for they have already read it in the Bible. . . .There it reads, they shall have a Mother: "I will leave you my Spirit."*

Zinzendorf acknowledges that theologians have generally rejected this linking of verses and the subsequent naming of the Holy Spirit "Mother," but he responds:

> *Now no theologian is irritated if the word comfort is taken out of the passage and applied to the Holy Spirit, for they call her the Comforter. But if we take out the word Mother and signify it to the Holy Spirit, then people are opposed to it. I can find no cause for such bickering and arbitrariness, and therefore I pay no attention to it. For if the activity in a passage is proper to the Holy Spirit, then the title also goes to the Holy Spirit.*

Zinzendorf insists that the word "Mother" does not introduce a distinction of genders into the deity, such as Ann Lee or Mary Baker Eddy proposed, but deals only with the activity of God in the world. The Mother is not a goddess. Rather, the Holy Spirit acts in the role of mother to the church.

Zinzendorf explicated his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming that she is a mother in three distinct ways. First, it was the Spirit, not Mary, who was the true mother of Jesus, since she "prepared him in the womb, hovered over him, and finally brought him into the light. [The Spirit] gave [Jesus] certainly into the arms of his mother, but with invisible hands carried him more than his mother did." Second, the Spirit is the Mother of all living things because she has a special role in the on-going creation of the world. "It is known that the Holy Spirit brings everything to life, and when the man was made from a clump of earth . . . the Holy Spirit was very close through the breathing of the breath of God into the man." Thus, the Holy Spirit is the mother of all living souls in a general way.

The Holy Spirit is also the Mother in a third and most important sense. She is the Mother of the church and all those who have been reborn. "The Holy Spirit is the only Mother of those souls who have been once born out of the side hole of Jesus, as the true womb of all blessed souls." Zinzendorf bases this understanding of the Spirit's giving birth to converted souls in large part on Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. Jesus told Nicode-mus that he must be born again, not from his moth-

er's womb but from God. Nicodemus knew that we are born from a mother, not a father, but he did not know who this mother was. Zinzendorf has Jesus reply,"There is another Mother, not the one who physically gave you birth; that one doesn't matter: you must have another Mother who will give you birth." Ultimately, then, the Holy Spirit is the Mother of the Christian in the sense that she is the active agent in conversion. Human actors are only agents of the Holy Spirit and, in some cases, are not even necessary for conversion.

The first duty of the Spirit is to preach Christ, but her motherly work does not end there. The Mother also cares for her spiritual children just as a human mother cares for her physical children. She protects, guides, admonishes, and comforts the child of God throughout the changing years of earthly life. "The Mother does not rest until a child has lasting grace, until it finally sinks into the hands of the one Husband, the Friend of all souls, the Creator of all things, who is now the Bridegroom." The care of the Holy Spirit mainly takes the form of preserving Christians from sin. Believers enter the school of the Holy Spirit, where they are taught what they should and should not do. Just as a human mother teaches her child proper behavior by saying, "My child, you must do it this way, [and] you must not do that," so, too, does the Holy Spirit.

The Mother who is above all mothers [says], "I will comfort you; I will remind you; I will motivate you; I will define you; I will wean you from all rudeness and uncivil things. I will make a well-bred child out of you, better than any mother does in all the world."

The language of motherhood expresses the intimate connection the *Brüdergemeine* felt with God through the Spirit. Each member of the *Brüdergemeine* is a child who

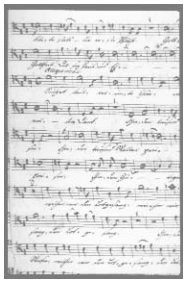
> *sits on the Mother's lap, is received into the school, and is led through all classes; then it is under the special dispensation, under the motherly regimen of the Holy Spirit, who comforts, punishes, and kisses the heart, as a mother comforts, punishes, and kisses her own child.*

The heavenly Mother works individually since she knows the thoughts and weaknesses of her children and guides them in the path that is best for them. She directs their development in understanding and ability until their maturity and completion in death because "she has created the world with the Savior and now is [re-]making every child until it is a new creation, until it becomes one in the spirit with him, and she nurses and watches until it is grown."

For Zinzendorf, the Christian community is modeled on the Holy Trinity, which is the original *Gemeine* and the original *Kirche*. This model was tarnished by Adam and Eve but has been restored by Jesus Christ and is marked by intimacy with one another and with God. All Christians are in the family of God. "Therefore nothing is better [than] to live in the family of our Husband, his Father, and our dear Mother." Children who grow up in this *Gemeine* of God should no more be able to doubt the reality of their membership than children who grow up in an earthly household can doubt that they were born into the family.

Zinzendorf: Theology in Song

by C. Daniel Crews, Archivist, Southern Province &
Nola Reed Knouse, Director, Moravian Music Foundation



When Moravians answer the question, "What do Moravians believe?" we turn naturally to the hymnal first. Our hymns are the most frequent and characteristic expression of our beliefs, and that was true in the Ancient Unity as well as in the Renewed Moravian Church. Added to our hymns are the anthems, mostly composed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which comprise what we usually mean by "Moravian music." In recent years we have begun to compose more anthems again. Whether in hymns or anthems, though, our doctrine tends to be sung more than spoken. This is an idea that would set well with Zinzendorf himself. As Craig Atwood noted in his Ph.D. dissertation, "Zinzendorf insisted that the truest language for heart religion is song. . . . For Zinzendorf and the *Brüdergemeine,* . . . the truths of the Christian religion are best communicated in poetry and song, not in systematic theology and polemics" (*Blood, Sex, and Death: Life and Liturgy in Zinzendorf's Bethlehem*, Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1995, 136).

We should recall that the Moravian Church was reborn in a worship service (remember August 13th?), and that its most characteristic worship service became the *Singstunde*. This is a service consisting almost completely of hymns, in which stanzas from various hymns are woven together to develop a particular theme of the day or event. No sermon was needed, for the *Singstunde* itself was a "sermon in song." Over the years, the *Singstunde* and the related *Liturgical Hymns* developed into the liturgies we use today, but lately we in America are beginning to appreciate the pure *Singstunde* form again, a gift which the Continental Province never forgot. Note, too, that a lovefeast service is actually a *Singstunde* with a simple meal included, and that our Moravian form of Holy Communion is really a *Singstunde* including the Sacrament. Zinzendorf produced a huge number of hymn stanzas for the many *Singstunden* in which he and the congregations participated, often composing these stanzas "off the top of his head." Many of these were not preserved, but several thousand of his hymn stanzas have survived. In many of these, Zinzendorf produced works which form a worthy part of the continuing worship of the congregations, and after all, worship is at the core of the congregations' life.

We often find here Zinzendorf at his best, for he has a way of coming up with a text that employs and touches both the head and the heart. That is, he deals with theological concepts which call for the employment of reason, as his Lutheran background would lead one to expect, while at the same time joining this with that very Moravian "heart religion" which simply rejoices in the near presence of the Savior who gave Himself for us and the changed living that this brings: a best of both worlds. It is in the production of hymns and religious texts for worship, and the music to accompany them, that the influence of Zinzendorf continues most vitally in the Moravian Church today. From the eighteenth century to the present, Moravians have produced an amazing repertoire of hymns and sacred vocal works which give vivid expression to the faith we believe. And so, the next time someone says to you, "Moravians don't really have much theology," just say to them, "Go read a Moravian hymn." And Jesus and Zinzendorf will smile down from above, no doubt humming a favorite tune.

The Church's Prayer to the Holy Ghost (1759)

Translated by Dr Craig Atwood

(This hymn provides a wonderful example of what is represented in the two previous articles on the Holy Spirit as Mother and the presence of theology in song.)

1 Thou, who from the Father hast
'Fore all Time proceeded,
Spirit, by whom the Virgin Blest
The Son here conceived!

2 Since the Lamb of God, so red,
Is his People's Brother,
And Christ's God their Father's made,
Thou'rt the Church's Mother.

3 Of thy Name, O God, and Breath
Grant us still the Nearness!
That the Word of Jesus
Shine to Souls with Clearness.

4 Whom from Death-Sleep of the Fall
Our dear Lord doth quicken,
Fetch into thy Church-Ark all;
Help their Abba speaking.

5 As in greatest Things thy Will
Meets with Execution:
So in small shall it fulfil
His Church-Constitution.

6 Of the Righteousness of God
Thro' the Blood-Effusion,
Of that daily Bread and Food
Thou mak'st Distribution.

7 MOTHER! all the Church's Life
Is the Father's Kindness,
Our Lord's Patience with his Wife,
And thy rich Forgiveness.

8 We would fain not tempted be,
With none thus distressed;
Yet if one's chastis'd by Thee,
It to him be blessed.

9 And till once the wicked Fiend
Is at God's Feet lying, (Ps. cx.1, Heb. ii.8)
Sleeps within thy Cradle screen'd
The Church from his Trying.

10 Amen, Ruach Elohim!
Come in th' Name of Jesus,
Thy Children's whole Sanhedrin
Rule with Instinct gracious.

Zinzendorf and Slavery

Despite his revolutionary support for mission work among slaves and downtrodden indigenous cultures, Count Zinzendorf was not an active opponent of slavery. This fact is disturbing to many today, who are made even more uncomfortable when they find that Moravian communities in America owned slaves.

But this response betrays historical ignorance more than anything else: reactionary discussions on the topic typically mix together events and attitudes that were a century apart—rather like asking what Henry Ford's favorite website was. It is important to understand Zinzendorf and the Moravian movement in their historical context rather than imposing the context of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Like Paul centuries earlier, Zinzendorf simply did not question the social order of his day. There were, as there have always been, a few lone voices that opposed slavery, but by and large it was simply not an issue of his time. The abolition movement that eventually led to the American Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation really did not exist until 1830, a hundred years after the Moravian Renewal. Even the idea of democratic government, so common today, was a foreign idea to anyone in the early eighteenth century. After all, no one had lived under anything but monarchy or theocracy since the ancient Greeks. Zinzendorf and the Moravians accepted the social order of the day, even if they challenged its conventions in many ways. To Zinzendorf and the Moravians, there was really only one overriding concern: to bring the Gospel to those who had not heard it. All other issues, from personal safety to social reform, fell by the wayside.

It is important to understand how radical the Moravians were in their time, particularly in their treatment of slaves and native peoples. It is only in that context that one can adequately judge their attitude toward slavery. Early on, Zinzendorf developed a passion for reaching those who were downtrodden and ignored—slaves and indigenous peoples that were often regarded by white Europeans as being less than human. For the unconventional Count, every one of these was a person that mattered, a soul for whom the Savior had died. Reaching them became a central concern of the Moravian movement, and their mission work would pave the way for the Protestant mission movement that would follow them.

When Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann went to St. Thomas in 1732, they left Germany fully believing that they might have to sell themselves into slavery to accomplish their mission. As it ended up, it was not necessary for them to take that drastic step. But they and those that followed them took many personal risks to reach the slaves, often incurring the wrath and hostility of the white slave owners. Many of them died of malaria and other tropical diseases.

One particular story is telling. In 1739, Zinzendorf himself traveled to St. Thomas, fully expecting that he too would die in the effort, as so many had before him. When he arrived on St. Thomas, he found the missionaries imprisoned. One of them had married a mulatto woman, angering the respectable white landowners. Zinzendorf exercised his rank freely with the Governor to have the missionaries freed. The story is told on the island that when the men were freed, Zinzendorf ceremoniously

kissed the hand of the missionary's wife, thus treating her as an equal in front of the furious accusers.

When slaves joined the Moravian fellowship, they were treated as equal members with all others—whites, commoners, nobles. They participated in all parts of church life, held influential offices, led worship. Early on, a slave named Maria was elected Chief Eldress of St. Thomas, wielding spiritual authority over the white women as well as the black. The community did buy slaves as workers; they were treated well even if they did not convert. Often the community would purchase converted slaves away from cruel masters. There was, after all, a concept that all the Brethren were servants of Christ, bound to serve the community selflessly. The idea of a slave being owned by the religious community and living to serve the church did not seem odd to them, no matter how inappropriate it might seem to us today.

Maria was elected Chief Eldress of St. Thomas, wielding spiritual authority over the white women as well as the black.

In the communities of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Salem, North Carolina, the situation was similar. Everyone in both communities worked for the common good. The General Economy in Bethlehem was a prime example of communal living, where all worked for the common mission and shared their income. The community owned some slaves, who, if they converted, were treated as equals in the church. These lived alongside free black converts with little difference in lifestyle between free and slave, or black and white for that matter. Bethlehem was probably the only place in the 18th century where one might find a black slave, a freed black, an Indian convert, and a European noble sleeping next to one another in a common chamber.

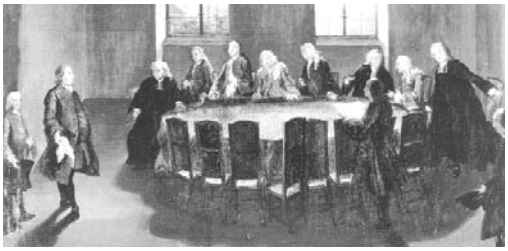
Ultimately, the Moravians on St. Thomas were able to accomplish their goal only because they did not openly oppose the practice of slavery. They would have been immediately evicted from the island if they had espoused such a position and thus would not have been able to reach the slaves with the good news that they carried. However, in a secret manner they appear to have aided the few lone voices raised against slavery. Some of the descriptions of the horrors of slavery published in Europe appear to have been correspondence from Moravian missionaries on the islands, quoted anonymously but used to profound effect. Some of these broadsides helped lay the groundwork for the later abolition movement.

While Zinzendorf did not oppose the practice of slavery, he did work for the humane treatment of slaves. He often reminded nobles of their obligation to God to treat their serfs and slaves responsibly. In his view, a desperate judgment was due those in positions of power that abused or mistreated those below them.

We cannot judge the attitudes of Zinzendorf and the Moravians by the standards of our day. More than a century before Lincoln, two centuries before Ghandi and even longer before Martin Luther King, Jr., the concepts we find so common today were unheard of during Zinzendorf's life. But we can see from their actions a radical departure from the practices of their day. The Moravians' behavior stood in stark opposition to the conventions and concepts of their day, staking out a flag that Christ had died for all, that spiritual gifts fell upon all classes and races without relationship to social standing. To Zinzendorf and the Moravians, this is what mattered.

Moravian Women during the Eighteenth Century

by Beverly Prior Smaby



Women were members of councils at every level of Moravian society around the world, and in these governing bodies they participated actively in discussions and decisions.

A remarkable painting by Johann Valentine Haidt tells us a great deal about the roles of Moravian women during Zinzendorf's time. It depicts a session of the Moravian synod held at Herrnhut in 1750. In the center of the painting, men and women members of synod are gathered around a table, all major leaders in the Moravian Church, including the women. Countess Erdmuthe Dorothea von Zinzendorf, Zinzendorf's first wife, is shown at the table, for instance. After 1732 she shouldered the administration of Zinzendorf's financial affairs, which at that time were closely tied to the finances for the Moravian Church. Anna Nitschmann is shown on the left of the Countess. In 1730 she became the Chief Eldress for all women in the Church, and in 1746 she was named Mother of the entire Moravian Church. Anna Johanna Pietsch, to the left of Anna Nietschmann, became the General Eldress for all Single Sisters in 1747. Since eighteenth- century European women did not generally hold positions of religious leadership, women leaders come as a surprise, but they were just one part of a well-developed system of female leadership among Moravians. Women were members of councils at every level of Moravian society around the world, and in these governing bodies they participated actively in discussions and decisions. Women were also active spiritual leaders: they served as acolytes; they were ordained as deaconesses, eldresses, and for a brief moment, even as presbyters (ministers). As deaconesses and eldresses, they led worship and preached in services for their own choirs; a few Moravian woman ordained deaconesses and female presbyters, a function usually reserved for bishops, although women never officially assumed that office.

It was Zinzendorf who made possible the culture in which women became so unusually prominent, but it is important to place his role in perspective. His views about society were in many ways typical of the eighteenth century. For Zinzendorf, human beings were not equal to each other except before the Savior, and the Moravian world he created made extensive use of hierarchy. The painting by Haidt makes this clear. Zinzendorf and the three people on either side of him sat in chairs with higher, wider backs than others at the table. Zinzendorf's was widest of all. And even though women were included at the table, it is clear that men maintained their dominance over women. Of the twenty-four people at the center table, only six were women, and Zinzendorf sat at the head of the table, his wife at his left—a symbol of his leading role in the Church and her position, important but subordinate to his. However, Zinzendorf went far enough in encouraging untraditional roles for women to cause substantial discomfort inside the Moravian Church and bitter criticism outside of it.

Leadership roles for women did not result from a concern for gender equality. Rather, they were a byproduct of the separation of the sexes in Moravian settlements. In Zinzendorf's view, males and females of various ages had different religious needs. Beginning in the 1730s, Moravians formed "choirs" which divided their members into groups for Little Boys, Little Girls, Older Boys, Older Girls,

Single Brethren, Single Sisters, Married Brethren, Married Sisters, Widowers, and Widows. Worship services for each of the choirs emphasized aspects of the Savior's life which best spoke to that choir. Children, for instance, learned about Jesus as a child. Single Brethren focused on Jesus as a single man. The Sisters' and Older Girls' Choirs emphasized Jesus as spiritual husband and Virgin Mary as the medium through which Christ became human. Experience showed that choir members were very effective at encouraging spiritual growth in each other, as Anna Nitschmann did in her 1730 covenant with Single Sisters in Herrnhut. It followed that leadership should also come from within each choir, even if their members were women.

Another reason for female leadership was the intimacy required between ministers and believers for spiritual growth. To prevent any improper relationships from developing, Zinzendorf arranged that men should serve as spiritual leaders for men's choirs and women for women's. In mission settlements like Bethlehem, members of each choir lived and worked together in separate quarters, an organization that required some choir leaders to carry secular responsibility as well. These men and women served not only as spiritual and secular leaders within their own choirs, but they also represented their choirs on local governing councils. The fact that children were raised in communal choir houses in these settlements meant that even Married Sisters had time to fill leadership roles.

Although it was Zinzendorf who created the environment that supported female leadership, women in the Church embraced it enthusiastically. Women respected and loved their leaders, and the leaders themselves frequently showed how much they valued their opportunity to carry major responsibilities. Leaders of Single Sisters, for instance, were often reluctant to marry and give up their roles, and prominent Widows mourned not only the passing of their husbands but also the loss of leadership positions they had held with their husbands. Without Zinzendorf's support, women could not have held these positions, but neither could Zinzendorf have successfully implemented leadership by women without their enthusiastic participation.

Beyond the offices they held, women served Moravian communities as models of how to be good Christians. Zinzendorf thought women were less likely than men to be “dry,” or spiritually barren, and more likely to feel joy and love in their relation to the Savior. In addition, the subordination required of women in society made it easier for them to be properly submissive to the Savior. By observing women, men could learn how to be submissive believers, too.

Not all of Zinzendorf's opinions about women were positive. He was clearly ambivalent about the nature of women. Taking examples from the Old Testament and from his own experience, he found that women were likely to have the original sin of deceptiveness. Men, he thought, also had an original sin, namely lust, but men's was, in his view, less harmful than women's. Lust was so obviously sinful that it would encourage men to seek the help of the Savior, whereas women's deceptiveness might deceive even themselves into thinking they were good.

Zinzendorf also thought that women were less likely than men to have the ability to govern well. However, this implied that some women could govern effectively, a radical thought for most Europeans in the eighteenth century. Zinzendorf was surrounded by women who amply demonstrated their administrative talent: Henriette Catharine von Gersdorf (his grandmother), Erdmuthe Dorothea

von Zinzendorf (his first wife), and Anna Nitschmann (who worked closely with him as a church leader and became his second wife), to name just a few.

Anna Nitschmann, church leader and the Count's second wife

Even though Zinzendorf's advocacy of women's leadership roles was based solely on religious necessity, it was apparently threatening to others. Outside the Moravian Church, critics published angry polemics against him. Inside the Church, his policies also must have been perceived as problematic. While Zinzendorf lived, there was little written evidence of criticism by Moravians, but with surprising speed after his death in 1760, the new Moravian leaders dismantled the leadership roles of women and the religious practice that helped support it. In the four General Synods held between 1764 and 1782, many changes were made to bring Moravian policies and doctrine in line with that of other Protestants. In the process, women's roles were redefined and greatly limited. Members of the 1764 synod prohibited women from holding any "general" offices with authority over the entire Moravian Church, as Anna Nitschmann had done. In the new directorship established by this synod, women were to be no more than "helpers and advisors." This same synod decided that women's choirs needed male oversight in secular matters. For that purpose, the office of Curator was established. After the synod of 1775, only Bishops could ordain deaconesses, and women were even prohibited from assisting in ordinations. Any special religious emphasis for women was also suppressed. In 1783 church leaders scolded the Single Sisters for promoting the Incarnation in their services, saying that the essential point was the "Savior's blood and death" and that the Incarnation belonged to the sanctification of everyone, not just the Single Sisters.

The fact that efforts to curtail female leadership and women's religious practice began so soon after Zinzendorf's death shows how much he had done to encourage both while he lived. Even his ambivalence towards women supported their leading roles. Because he agreed with the basic eighteenth-century view that men must remain superior to women, his reasons why some Moravian women had to govern carried more weight. This same ambivalence meant that his successors could buttress their limitations of women's roles with some of Zinzendorf's own statements, but if Zinzendorf could have visited Moravian settlements thirty years after his death, no doubt he would have regretted the loss of female leadership. After all, not only had he created it, but he consistently defended it during his lifetime.

Bethlehem's Economy: 1741-1762

by Katherine Carté

When the Moravians came to the "Forks of the Delaware" in Eastern Pennsylvania, they quickly set about building a town that would become the center for Moravian missionaries and itinerant preachers in North America. A five-hundred-acre tract located at the confluence of the Lehigh River and the Monocacy Creek offered the perfect location for their endeavor—fertile land near white settlements and the Indian lands to the west. The northern banks of the Lehigh sloped up gently, reminding the Moravians of the hill overlooking Herrnhut, in far-off Saxony. On the opposite side, a mountain separated the Lehigh Valley from Philadelphia, fifty-five miles to the south. The Monocacy Creek's swiftly moving water provided them with the natural resources necessary for building in the wilderness. In 1741, during his yearlong sojourn to America, Count Zinzendorf celebrated Christmas in the new town and formally bestowed on it the name of Bethlehem.

Although he never settled in America, Zinzendorf's ideas were important for the town's development. He believed the Moravians should support their preaching and missionary work through their own resources rather than relying on payment from the communities and congregations they served. This would allow the Moravians to be seen as independent servants of the Savior, not slaves to the people they tried to help and teach. Financing such extensive projects was no easy task, however, for life on the frontier typically offered little room for luxuries or surplus production. To be profitable and to support its missionaries, the Moravians had to be organized efficiently. Bethlehem and the adjacent communities of Nazareth and the "upper places" were organized into a single, communal unit known as the Œconomy—the translation of the Greek word for "household." No one received wages for the work he or she performed. Instead, each person received hearty meals in the choir dining rooms, simple clothing, and shelter in the choir houses. Bethlehem housed the Moravians' craft houses, such as the blacksmith shop and the tannery. Nazareth, where the land was better suited for farming, was the breadbasket for the settlers. Situated ten miles apart, these communities worked in harmony for the common purpose of supporting the Moravian evangelical and educational mission.

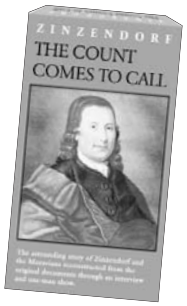
The Œconomy endured for two decades. During this time, Bethlehem was the home of hundreds of Moravians and dozens of industries. A gristmill, a cobbler's shop, a weaving house, and a dye house dotted the landscape. Carpenters worked with potters, smiths, and soapmakers to provide for the needs of the Œconomy's residents and business services to non-Moravians who passed through Bethlehem or came there to shop. A steady stream of preachers, missionaries, and letters connected Bethlehem to their Indian, English and German neighbors as well as other Moravian settlements around the world. Within Bethlehem and Nazareth, the Moravians lived dormitory-style, in choir groups according to age, sex, and marital status. In most cases, even married people lived separately from each other, their children in the nursery or in children's choirs. Bethlehem's leaders doled out jobs according to choirs as well—Single Sisters spun and washed, Single Brethren worked the fields, and Married Brethren were often employed in the craft houses. This system freed both men and women from family and domestic responsibilities so they could travel as preachers and religious teachers while simultaneously staffing as many industries as possible to finance the Unity's projects.

Even during Bethlehem's early days, some individuals were uncomfortable living in choirs rather than in traditional family households. In the late 1750s, the communal structure came under increasing pressure from both outside and inside Pennsylvania. The Unity's rapid and ambitious expansion during the preceding decades had brought with it massive debts which were felt in all Moravian communities. In addition, the Seven Years' War caused financial hardship in the Pennsylvania backcountry and in Saxony. Finally, Zinzendorf's death in 1760 prompted a re-evaluation of the church's economic organization. Bethlehem's leaders had never intended the communal economic structure to be a permanent aspect of life for the Moravians in North America. In 1761, Bethlehem's leaders set about the complicated process of shifting from one single communal household to a more traditional town made up of separate families. Not all communal ties were abandoned, however. The church continued to own all of the land in Bethlehem and Nazareth, and only Moravians were permitted to lease plots and build homes. The church also maintained control over several key industries, employing salaried craftsmen who worked for the benefit of the international church. The Single Brethren's and Single Sisters' choir houses continued to house unmarried or widowed adults.

Although Bethlehem's communal period was a thing of the past by the time of the American Revolution, the Moravians' distinctive, religiously oriented lifestyle lasted well into the nineteenth century. Architecturally, the Œconomy period left a strong imprint on Bethlehem. The choir houses still stand on the hillside over the Monocacy creek today, offering visual proof of the town's communal history. A unique period in Bethlehem's history, the communal economy was never an end unto itself but rather a means by which to support missionary and educational projects. Those projects lasted well beyond the end of the communal period, and in them can be seen the same religious spirit that inspired the Œconomy.

Other Resources on Zinzendorf & the Moravians' History

The Count Comes to Call



In this one-man drama, John Jackman recounts the life of one of the most fascinating and effective leaders in all Christian history as Count Niklaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf himself. Also, Zinzendorf scholar Dr. Craig Atwood interviews the Count about his beliefs and the controversies surrounding his life. 70 minutes

VHS - #4446

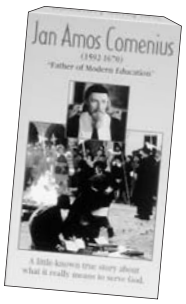
Also, an issue of *Christian History* magazine on Zinzendorf, #99284.

First Fruits

This is the true story of the extraordinary devotion of young people and their role at a critical point in the history of world missions. In the 1730s a community of Moravian refugees finds a home on the estate of Count Zinzendorf in Germany. See how the first two young men who went as missionaries to the slaves on St. Thomas were willing to become slaves themselves, if they had to, in order to proclaim the Gospel. 70 minutes

DVD - #4821D
VHS - #4009
(In Spanish, #8087)

Jan Amos Comenius



Driven from his homeland because of his faith, this 17th-century Christian hero is a testimony of the persistence of Christian courage. Comenius, commonly hailed as the "Father of Modern Education," was stripped of everything but hope…and a vision for the kingdom of God. This major dramatic feature was filmed in Comenius' native land, Czechoslovakia. A Columbus Film Festival award winner. 73 minutes

VHS - #4011

Also, an issue of *Christian History* magazine on Comenius, #99278.

John Hus

One hundred years before Martin Luther, John Hus' relentless pursuit of God's truth planted the seeds for the Reformation. A beloved pastor, he was, nevertheless, condemned as a heretic for his uncompromising belief in the final authority of the Bible. Despite relentless pressure, he refused to recant and was burned at the stake in 1415. He died singing. This dramatic award-winning film will challenge you to consider what you really believe and why. 55 minutes

DVD - #4783D
VHS - #4051
Abridged VHS (30 minutes), #4133)
(In Spanish, #8108; in French, #99546; in Portuguese, #99645)

Also, an issue of *Christian History* magazine on Hus, #99307.

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