



Prayer Before Studying Theology:

Almighty and eternal God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the church is governed and sanctified: receive our prayer which we offer before you for the many different members of your holy church; that every one of them in his vocation and ministry may truly and devoutly serve you.

Almighty Father, look graciously upon this your family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

--Book of Common Prayer, Good Friday

Nicholas Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and the Moravians

Two weeks ago, we examined the church-centered Pietism that established small groups (*ecclesiola in ecclesia*) that could be sources of renewal for the broader church.

Last week we looked at the subsequent development of more radical forms of Pietism that separated themselves from the state church and promoted a more individualistic piety that could take on a corporate aspect only through the principle of *voluntary association*.

Zinzendorf and the Moravians in some ways stand half between halfway between churchly Pietism and radical separatistic Pietism, but also have some peculiar features that distinguish them from both of these prior movements.

The fundamental elements of Zinzendorf's theology were drawn from the churchly strain of Lutheran Pietism (Spener and Francke), laying a strong emphasis on conversion and regeneration (new birth), although like many later German Pietists he did not place the same emphasis on the *Bußkampf* (struggle for repentance and sorrow over sin) as Francke had.

Other elements of Zinzendorf's theology were drawn from the Lutheran tradition but not peculiar to Pietism, i.e. his distinction between God's hiddenness and his self-revelation in creation and redemption in the person of the Son (Christ as a *Spezial-Gott* in whom the fullness of divinity is visibly, tangibly revealed).

Some elements of his theology were drawn from patterns of late medieval German devotion which were appreciated by churchly Pietists but not emphasized by them to the same extent or developed in such extreme ways. One might think here particularly of

- his very dramatic depiction of Christ's wounds and blood (esp. in works written between 1743 and 1750) and

- his emphasis, in describing sanctification and the Christian life, upon the image of God, the imitation of Christ and progress in moral likeness to Christ.

Yet other elements were themes that were emphasized in radical Pietism but taken by Zinzendorf in a completely opposite direction, e.g.

- his emphasis upon the exalted, spiritual character of marriage (unlike the radicals, Zinzendorf saw Christian marriage between devoted believers as an exalted state that imaged an aspect of the divine life--Father, Spirit as mother, and Son);
- his emphasis upon the failings and insufficiencies of any one Christian communion (unlike the radicals, who left the state church and retreated to perfection-seeking conventicles, Zinzendorf wanted to respond to this problem by seeking an ecumenical union between the different Christian communions so that each could contribute its particular strengths to the whole while being able to draw upon the strengths of other groups in areas where it found itself weak and lacking);
- the relative indifference of external forms (unlike the Quietists who retreated to an inner quest for individual perfection, Zinzendorf and the Moravians advocated a contextual evangelism whereby Christians would adapt to existing cultural forms to reach persons within a different cultural milieu).

Zinzendorf's Life

Childhood and Early Religious Experience

Nikolaus-Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf came from a family that was quite devoted to the Lutheran tradition (having emigrated from Austria to Saxony to avoid persecution by the Catholic Hapsburg rulers). His father, who had risen to a high administrative position in the Saxon government and was sympathetic to Spener's Pietism, died of tuberculosis only six weeks after his son's birth in Dresden in 1700. When his mother remarried a Prussian marshal, the child was left to be raised in Gross-Hennersdorf in Upper Lusatia by his maternal grandmother, Henriette Catharina von Gersdorf (1648-1726), who was

- influenced by the writings of Arndt,
- a friend of Spener (who became Zinzendorf's godfather) and Francke (her brother-in-law Baron von Canstein also was a patron of the orphanage at Halle and did much to promote the printing and distribution of Bibles);
- advocated a churchly form of Lutheran Pietism which was very inclusive and ecumenical in character: "She knew no difference between the Lutheran, Reformed and Catholic religion but whatever had heart and touched her was her neighbor."

Another formative influence was his aunt, Henrietta von Gersdorf (1686-1761) from whom he learned of "intimacy with the Savior."

A precocious child, Zinzendorf developed a strongly Christ-centered faith at an early age, which at times had an ecstatic character:

"In my eighth year I spent a whole night awake, and I thought of an old hymn that my grandmother used to sing to me before I went to bed. I entered into a state of meditation and then of speculation that was so deep that I almost lost consciousness. All the subtlest arguments of the atheists fixed themselves in my mind of their own accord, and they took hold of me and penetrated to my very depths...But because my heart was turned to the Savior and I was devoted to him with a delicate righteousness and I often thought that

were it possible that there should be a God other than him, I would prefer to be damned with my Savior than be happy with another God, the speculations and arguments that assailed me without pause had no other effect than to cause me anguish and take away my sleep, without having the slightest effect on my heart."

Education

At the age of ten, he entered the royal collegium (*Paedagogim regium*) at Halle, which had been established by August Hermann Francke. Francke and some of the students took Zinzendorf's naïve, idealistic self-confidence for arrogance and were sometimes quite severe with him, but other teachers (such as Paul Anton, who had helped Francke found the *collegia biblica* at Leipzig and later taught practical theology at Halle) encouraged him. In 1715, when he was fifteen years old, Zinzendorf founded with several school friends a group which they called The Order of the Grain of the Mustard Seed, in which they pledged themselves to devote themselves to Jesus.

After six years of study, his family refused his request to enter the Lutheran ministry and compelled him to enroll at Wittenberg in 1716 to study law in preparation for a political career. He completed the course of study in law but spent far more time reading Luther's works. He also tried without success to reconcile the pietists and the Lutheran Orthodox.

Like all young noblemen, he subsequently embarked on further course of travel and academic studies in other European countries (1719-1720), which took him to the Netherlands and Paris. In Paris, he befriended the Catholic archbishop, who even tolerated the hymnal that Zinzendorf had prepared for the use of pious Catholics in 1727.

Travels, Early Ecumenism and Repudiation of the Rationalism of the Early Enlightenment (Religious Experience as a Source of Verification and the Means to Certainty)

In Paris, Zinzendorf became keenly interested in the massive encyclopedia, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (A Historical and Critical Dictionary), which had been published by the atheistic French Enlightenment philosopher Pierre Bayle in 1697. Ironically, the reading of this work played an important role in Zinzendorf's religious development, convincing him that reflection based upon natural reason alone would inevitably be atheistic because no positive relationship or reconciliation could be established between reason (rational thought) and religion. Faith and reason are intrinsically opposed; faith can be united only with love, not with natural reason: "Whoever has God in the head becomes an atheist...I would be an atheist without Jesus."

Questions:

- 1) Why is Zinzendorf convinced that reason (rational thought) and religious experience are ultimately irreconcilable? See pp. 291-292 §§1,2,4,6-12; p. 294 §§42-44; p. 306, end of the first complete paragraph at the top of the page; p. 314, second complete paragraph; p. 314, bottom of page-p. 315, top of page; p. 316, first two complete paragraphs).

Some Further Features of Zinzendorf's Argument from Other Sources

- "The essence of religion should be quite different than holding an opinion" (beyond mere assent to the truths of the faith)
- Indeed, we all initially have a preconceptual awareness of being dependent on something superior to oneself (This *sensus numinis* lays the basis for Schleiermacher's later concept of religious intuition).
- Even when we go beyond this initial state, we find that **the truths of religion are revealed and must be able to be grasped by inner sensory experience alone, without any concepts or reasonings** (see p. 291), otherwise simple and uneducated people could not be saved. **One must have a personal, experiential**

grasp of the realities to which doctrine refers and this is logically prior to and more foundational than the conceptualization of the doctrine itself (see pp. 291-292).

- The experience/reception of Christ's redemptive work takes place not in reason but in the heart. What is needed then is "heart-religion" (*Herzensreligion*): those "who have the Savior in their heads but not in their hearts" cannot pass for true Christians.
- Religious experience is understood in terms of inward vision of Christ in his suffering: The savior has to appear before a human soul, she has to come to know him in his bloody wounds, his martyred person must stand for her before the inner eye, her imagination must be filled with him." See esp. 316-319. 322 (middle).
- The preaching of the Gospel aims to paint a picture of the crucified Christ, which is displayed so that any open and receptive hearts might receive him. (Compare p. 297 [middle]; 319-320. 323 [top]).
- When one receives Christ in the heart, this personal connection with the Savior is accompanied by an immediate and incontrovertible intuitive certainty: Why do you believe? Because "my heart tells me so." (See pp. 292 #12; 294, #39; 310 [top]; 314 [bottom]-315 [top]; cf. knowledge through love on pp. 308 [middle]; 304 [bottom]; 308 [middle] and the account of consolation on p. 301 [middle])
- The biblical text cannot be regarded (through the doctrine of inspiration) as being in itself sufficient or free from errors in its incidental historical information: "The enemies of religion have invented the sentence that everything in the Bible is inspired." The Bible is a dead letter whose meaning cannot be discovered until the person who has been regenerated and is under the influence of the Spirit reads the text in light of Christ's suffering and his wounds.

Contrast Luther on the power of the Word, by which God intervenes and overcomes our weakness.

- 2) Do you agree with his approach and his conclusions? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 3) What is at issue here? In other words, how would the answers given to this question practically affect one's faith and life?

Zinzendorf's Public Career and Marriage

In 1721 Zinzendorf was called to join the Saxon court as a legal adviser. He devoted much of his attention to the persecution of Protestants in Silesia (which had become part of Hapsburg territory and hence under Catholic rulers unsympathetic to Protestantism). He pleaded for religious toleration and even journeyed to Prague to present his case before the Catholic emperor.

One of Zinzendorf's other interests was an attempt to unite and strengthen the various Pietist groups meeting in Dresden and he even anonymously published a weekly journal, *Sokrates in Dresden (Dresdner Sokrates)*, which urged the rejection of rationalism and an engagement with heartfelt religion. It was also during this period that Zinzendorf sought to contract a marriage with a noblewoman seriously committed to churchly Pietism. Initially, he proposed to his cousin but when he discovered that his friend the Count of Reuss also sought the cousin's hand, he stepped aside. He later (1722) married the Count's sister, Erdmuthe Dorothea von Reuss-Ebersdorff (1700-1756), a relationship which he later described as a "champion marriage" (*Streiterehe*) for Christ and reinforced his view that marriage was an exalted state which imaged the divine life and was a concrete help in one's pursuit of the spiritual life.

Zinzendorf's Relation to the Moravian Brethren

Zinzendorf would probably never have come to widespread attention if not for his association with **the Moravian Brethren**, about whom something should be said.

Historical Background to the Moravian Brethren: Late Medieval Reform and the Czech Reformation:

The Brethren were descendants of followers in Bohemia of Jan Hus (1369-1415), the Czech reformer who had opposed papal authority and been executed. Even after Hus' death, his followers continued to press for certain reforms, especially the right of the laity to receive communion in both kinds (i.e. both the bread and the wine, since in the later Middle Ages, only the priests drank the cup), hence their name of Utraquists (Latin *sub utraque specie*="under both kinds"). This led to a series of armed rebellions and a period of civil disorder, which led Martin V (pope from 1417-1431) to organize a crusade against the Utraquists.

At about this same time (from 1420 onward), a more radical movement within the Utraquists began to organize around Jan Zizka (c. 1360-1424) in the area around the town of Tabor and

- rejected a number of features of medieval Catholicism:
 - transubstantiation,
 - adoration of the saints,
 - intercession for the dead, and
 - other ecclesiastical customs not commanded in the Bible
- wanted the state to regulate its affairs with reference to the Bible and
- advanced some chiliastic and communistic ideas.

To hold the moderates and the radicals together, the Articles of Prague were adopted in 1420, which asserted

- 1) Freedom of preaching;
- 2) Communion under both kinds;
- 3) Clergy should live in apostolic poverty;
- 4) Severe punishment for mortal sin (i.e. sin that is irreconcilable with faith and deprives the soul of sanctifying grace and supernatural life, making one an enemy of God and deserving of Hell)

The combined forces of the moderate and radical Utraquists dealt the Roman Catholic forces a crushing defeat in 1431.

- In 1433, the Utraquists, weary of war, accepted the *Compactata* of Prague, which permitted communion under both kinds but few other reforms.
- The radicals led by Zizka rejected the compact and revolted and were virtually annihilated in 1434 by the combined RC and moderate Utraquist forces in battle near Lipan.
- The drive for reform was subsequently lost.
 - After 1528, the vast majority of Utraquists (neo-Utraquists) became sympathetic to Lutheran theology and adopted a confession of faith in 1535 that was mostly similar to the Lutheran position (exceptions: Christ's session at the right hand of the Father [cf. Calvin] and communion of the unworthy).

- Some of the more conservative, less reformist Utraquists (Old Utraquists) rejected this move and rejoined the Roman Catholic church.

The Rise of the Moravian Brethren (*Unitas Fratrum*):

The *Unitas Fratrum* (Unity of the Brethren) was a renewal movement founded in the Utraquist church in 1457, which carried forward some of the ideals of the radicals who had been virtually annihilated in 1434.

Specifically, they were distressed that priests in the Utraquist Church would give the sacraments (and hence, in the dissenters' minds, an assurance of salvation) even to those who showed no signs of repentance. This contradicted the teaching of the respected Czech radical theologian, Peter Chelcicky (1390-1460), who believed that priests should be careful to distinguish between believers (who engaged in lifelong repentance and tried to live in accord with Jesus teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, including non-retaliation) and all nominal Christians and non-Christians, extending assurance of forgiveness and the sacraments to believers alone.

These disaffected persons left Prague and the corruptions of urban life (secular office, military service and commerce) to live in a village under a stricter rule of life, finally breaking off from the Utraquist church in 1467 to establish their own ministry (whose priests lived in apostolic poverty). In time they relaxed the severity of their discipline and were attracted to Reformed theology (initially Zwinglianism under Luke of Prague [1458-1528], then Calvinism under Jan Blahoslav [1523-1571]).

Protestantism in Bohemia and Moravia was virtually wiped out when the Protestant forces were defeated at the battle of White Hill in 1620 and the Czech lands were annexed by the Catholic Austrian Hapsburgs, who strongly supported the Catholic Counter-Reformation. The Brethren fled to other lands and the movement largely disintegrated.

Zinzendorf and the Moravian Brethren: One group of refugees had fled to Poland (where they accepted membership in the Lutheran church) and, finding themselves unable to return to their homeland, ended up in Saxony. Their leader, the carpenter Christian David (1691-1751) experienced a Pietist conversion and was introduced to Zinzendorf by a mutual friend who knew of Zinzendorf's work to assist Protestants persecuted in Catholic lands.

At that time, Zinzendorf had inherited from his grandmother an estate at Berthelsdorf, near the Czech border. In 1722 Zinzendorf allowed the Moravian Brethren to settle on his estate and between 1722 and 1727 over three hundred families, mostly farmers and craftsmen, did so. They established a settlement called Herrnhut ("Under the Lord's Watch"). The initial years were somewhat rocky due to the diverse backgrounds of the settlers and the different theological tendencies they had been exposed to in exile.

Initially, Zinzendorf ignored the Brethren, being preoccupied with his own projects in Dresden and elsewhere. Zinzendorf resigned his other commitments in the spring of 1727 so that he could work to resolve tensions and conflicts at Herrnhut, recognizing the community's capacity to promote spiritual renewal.

Zinzendorf used his authority as a nobleman (and their landlord!) to persuade them to adopt a constitution for a "Brotherly Association" (*Brüderlicher Verein*), with forty-two rules and a provision for leadership by elders. (For the two sets of *Statutes* issued by Zinzendorf to resolve conflict and regulate the community's life, see Erb, pp. 325-330.)

The goal was to imitate the first Christian communities, focusing upon

- winning souls for Christ,

- creating edifying small groups, and
- respecting as brethren all children of God (i.e. regenerate persons) in other Christian groups.

On Aug. 13, 1727 a communion service of reconciliation was celebrated, which marked the beginning of a renewed and unified *Unitas Fratrum*. A prayer cycle was set up, in which prayer and intercession was offered by members of the community during every hour of the day, seven days a week. In 1731, he also published a devotional diary, *Watchwords (Losungen)*, which included Scripture readings for each day of the year, which was intended for use in the community but was produced in such a way that it could also be disseminated to others outside the community as well.

In 1734 Zinzendorf was examined and recognized as a pastor in the Lutheran church and had the Herrnhut community recognized as a Lutheran community under his pastoral leadership.

Promoting Unity Among Different Churches

Zinzendorf believed that there was only one universal Church in which various ways of education (τρόποι παιδείας) were used to save people for eternal life (see pp. 311-312; 325-326). Thus, the Lutheran, Reformed and Catholic churches each have a particular way of educating people for salvation that is embodied in their respective confessions; each makes an important (though limited and imperfect) contribution to the broader whole (see Erb, p. 312, first complete paragraph plus beginning of next paragraph).

The Moravian Brethren, being based upon the Augsburg Confession, belonged pre-eminently to Lutheranism but were also something more--a trans-confessional community that embodied the ideal of *philadelphia* (brotherly love—a term that had been emphasized by radical pietists in their description of true/ideal Christian community). As such, their community was a witness that no single church could claim the Savior for itself alone; instead Christ, as the head of the church, expresses the essence of the church in different ways through different ecclesiastical bodies yet desires all to be united together in love and the experience of his redeeming love (see Erb, p. 314, first complete paragraph).

This was expressed in Zinzendorf's distinction between three levels of religious communion:

- 1) *Kirche* (Church), i.e. the invisible Church which is composed of all true believers throughout the ages (i.e. the heavenly church triumphant and the earthly church militant), which is concealed from human sight in this age.
- 2) *Religionen* (Denominations)—Although the Church is one, its members are scattered through different denominations or confessional groups (each of which, as the visible church, also contains persons who are not regenerate). Each of these confessional groups is organized as a particular community so that it may teach and practice the faith according to a prescribed form. Each of these groups preserves some aspect of divine truth that is not preserved by the other communities. Therefore although none of these groups is without error or imperfections, they are all nonetheless necessary to preach the Gospel throughout the world and, taken together, they preserve the fullness of God's truth, complementing each other in such a way that in areas in which one group is weak, it can learn and benefit from another's strength.
- 3) *Gemeine* (Community) =the local trans-confessional fellowship in which true believers belonging to different groups/denominations are united in common prayer and common

mission. Throughout history there are times when such local fellowships of true believers belonging to different groups have come together as a visible expression of the invisible Church. This, Zinzendorf argued, is what the Moravian movement was—not a confessional group containing both the regenerate and the unregenerate (like the Lutheran church or the Reformed church=*Gemeinde*) but rather a **visible, trans-confessional fellowship or network of true believers from different groups who were united in faith and mission.**

Zinzendorf also felt that the Moravian Brethren might lack credibility in the eyes of Roman Catholics and certain Lutherans (and thus have difficulty promoting union and cooperation between churches) unless they could establish their connection to the broader church by having leaders ordained in accordance with the apostolic succession. In 1735-1736, he therefore had a Moravian leader, David Nitschmann, consecrated as a bishop by a Lutheran bishop, Daniel Ernst Jablonski (1660-1741, one of the last surviving bishops of the old *Unitas Fratrum*, who hoped to unite the different Protestant communions). In 1737, Zinzendorf was himself consecrated a Moravian bishop by Nitschmann and Jablonski. Both the Lutheran Orthodox and the Pietists were skeptical about this idea of apostolic succession (which they saw as both superstitious and a Roman Catholic bid to control and delegitimize other Christian communions). His opponents lobbied against Zinzendorf at the Saxon and Danish courts and managed to have him dismissed from his position as an adviser at the Saxon court and banished from Saxony from 1736-1747, leading him to travel to other parts of Germany, London, the West Indies (1739) and Pennsylvania (1741-1743), speaking and organizing new communities (including Moravian missions to the Native American communities in Pennsylvania).

Questions:

- 1) How is Zinzendorf's ecumenical project to be evaluated? (See p. 311; last complete paragraph; p. 325 § 2; p. 326, top of page § 3)
- 2) What is valuable in his proposal?
- 3) What is unhelpful or even disturbing about the way this proposal is formulated?

Zinzendorf's Piety: Its Controversial Aspects

Zinzendorf's personal piety (which exercised a significant influence on the community) was somewhat peculiar and this soon made Zinzendorf a highly controversial figure, with enemies not only among the Lutheran Orthodox, but even among the churchly Pietists. Zinzendorf was strongly influenced by late medieval devotional piety and tended to express this in forms that were shaped by Pietistic emotionalism and Baroque sentimentality. (The Baroque movement [1600-1750] in art and architecture was characterized by florid, exaggerated ornamentation that aimed to make a dramatic, emotionally impacting effect upon the observer.)

One example of this would be Zinzendorf's *Blut- und Wundehlehre* (teaching about Christ's blood and wounds), particularly between 1743 and 1750 (the so-called "sifting time"; for details concerning this period in the movement's history, see Paul Peucker, "Blut auf unsre grünen Bändchen.": Die Sichtungzeit in der Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine," *Unitas Fratrum* 49/50 [2002], 41-94), when Zinzendorf emphasized the passive contemplation of Christ's death as sufficient to atone for the sins of all humanity, including one's own.

- Following 1 Cor. 2:2, the true Christian must, like Paul, be resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

- There is no way to know the Father or experience the activity of God—even in the OT!-- except through the Son (“Whoever does not have the Son, has no God”) and the only way to do this is to contemplate and receive the benefits of his suffering on the Cross, quite apart from any works or actions of our own (cf. Luther’s theology of the Cross and divine hiddenness).

Much was made of the passive, emotionally affecting contemplation of the various details of the Crucifixion and Christ's suffering. Zinzendorf was fond of a hymn that urges, "Let us view our gracious election in your [Jesus'] nails." Zinzendorf also recounts the dramatic experience of standing in front of a painting of the crucified Jesus at Düsseldorf (Domenico Feti's *Ecce homo*) and being emotionally moved by the inscription. "This I did for you. What have you done for me?" (feeling ashamed at his lack of loyalty to the Savior, who asks us for a total, undivided commitment to him). Here the *Bußkampf* is not the pious seeker's active work (as in Francke); instead the seeker can merely be an observer as Christ struggles heroically with suffering to save a passive, helpless world.

Zinzendorf also went beyond traditional Lutheranism in the description he gave of “the sinner’s holiness,” which seems to have laid the basis for the perfectionism of the later Methodist movement. Sin is for Zinzendorf that fundamental unbelief by which one self-righteously rejects Christ as Savior and desires to be one’s own lord; all particular failings or sins follow from this. When the Savior enters the heart, not only does his atonement effect the forgiveness of sins and free one from enslavement to the power of sin, but Christ also imputes his holiness to the believer, so that the believer shares in Christ’s holiness and is given the “privilege” to sin no more. There is thus a paradox: the believer is perfectly holy, but this holiness is not one’s own or based on anything one is or has done; it is Christ’s alone and we come to participate in it precisely through our recognition that we are “poor sinners”: “All our perfection is in Christ...in ourselves we are never perfect”; “our holiness consists in being sinners” wholly dependent upon Christ’s mercy and perfectly holy in him.

Somewhat more disturbing are the analogies Zinzendorf and his followers drew between earthly marriage and union with Christ. Just as husband and wife are erotically intimate with each other, so also the believer's intimacy with Jesus can be described quite frankly, graphically and directly in erotic terms in preaching and devotional literature (cf. Erb, p. 323, last sentence before "Prayer"). Needless to say, this profoundly shocked many Orthodox and Pietistic Lutherans who were by no means prudish.

One other example was the excessively sentimentality of some of the language used in public worship and devotion. Zinzendorf frequently used phrases like "sweet Jesus" which the Lutheran Orthodox found undignified. Between 1742 and 1749, while Zinzendorf was away and the community was led by his son (Christian Renatus="born again Christian"), there developed a special devotion to the wound in Jesus's side (John 19:34), which the Herrnhutters called "the little side hole" (*Seitenhölchen*) (cf. Erb, p. 309, bottom). Good Friday was celebrated as the birthday of the little side hole (in and through which God is most accessible to believers in their need) and members were urged to contemplate this while nesting like "little birds in the air of the cross" (*Kruzluftvögelein*). Jesus was to be addressed by believers as the "little lamb", the Father as "Papa" and the Holy Spirit as "Mama" (cf. Jn. 14:26; Is. 66:13). These frankly bizarre tendencies increased to the point that "Sunday worship became a theater consisting of instrumental music, erotic preaching and the exhibition of various pictures carried through the assembly to stimulate an intimate relationship with Jesus" (Gritsch, *A History of Lutheranism*, p. 153).

After Zinzendorf's return to Herrnhut in 1749, these practices were stopped by order of the Saxon court (1750). Zinzendorf repudiated much of this extreme devotion and incautious language and referred to the preceding period in Herrnhut's history as the "time of sifting" (cf. Lk. 22:31: "Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat").

From 1750-1755, Zinzendorf made London his principal residence, exercising direction from there over communities in a variety of countries. Zinzendorf's lavish lifestyle and mounting debts, the death of his son Christian Rhenatus in 1752, increasing public opposition to the movement in 1753, and the failure of his ecumenical hymnal the *Londoner Gesangbuch* (1753-1754) to secure wider use caused the virtual collapse of the Moravian movement in England and dealt a severe blow to the movement's work in other countries.

Zinzendorf returned to Germany in 1755, spending most of his time at Herrnhut. After the death of his wife in 1756, he married Anna Nitschmann, the eldress of the unmarried Moravian women (1757). In 1760 he died and was buried at Herrnhut.

Questions:

- 1) How ought one to evaluate Zinzendorf's emphasis upon the contemplation of Christ's sufferings and his emphasis upon Christ's blood and wounds? (See p. 297, bottom half of page and the prayer on the bottom of p. 323; cf. p. 317 and bottom third of p. 319 on seeing Christ)
- 2) How are passivity and activity related in this event? How do you evaluate Zinzendorf's position on this?
- 3) How is such contemplation seen as a mark of entering into the Kingdom and a total commitment to Christ, so that one no longer desires to sin? (See p. 310, middle of first complete paragraph; p. 316, end of last complete paragraph; p. 317, first complete paragraph; p. 318, last complete paragraph; p. 321, second half of first complete paragraph; p. 322, middle of page; p. 323, first complete paragraph)
- 4) Compare Ernst Woltersdorff's hymn "Come my heart, no longer languish" in Lund, *Documents from the History of Lutheranism 1517-1570*, p. 310. What differences do you discern between this hymn by an orthodox Halle Pietist and Zinzendorf's devotional treatment of the same themes?
- 5) What role do the appeals of Christ to the cold, spiritually dry soul play in Zinzendorf's theology? (See p. 319, bottom-p. 320, top)

Moravian Missions:

Less controversial was the Moravian movement's emphasis upon missions, which extended to the West Indies (1732), Greenland (1733), Surinam (1735), South Africa (1737), Pennsylvania (1740), Labrador (1752) and Jamaica (1754). (Next week we will say something about the Moravians' visits to Georgia and their formative influence upon John Wesley.) Drawing upon an interesting article by S. Scott Rohrer ("Evangelism and Acculturation in the Backcountry: The Case of Wachovia, North Carolina, 1753-1830," *Journal of the Early Republic* 21:2 [Summer 2001], pp. 199ff.), we will see both why the Moravians were successful and why they subsequently lost their identity as a distinct, vital religious movement.

Moravian missions were not a comprehensive church-planting movement of the denominational type. Instead, they sought to make a beginning among those whom the Holy Spirit had prepared as the "first fruits" of their people (compare Rev. 14:10), presenting Christ as the incarnate, suffering savior and thereby preparing the way for the second coming of Christ, who is (and will soon be visibly revealed as) the lord over the whole world.

Wherever possible, the Moravians preferred to found a settlement, with both married and single people, concentrated in a single locality where they were a significant presence. The idea was that faith in Jesus and the Kingdom of God is something that must be lived out in the daily life of a community in a visible manner (the city on a hill/light on a lampstand). In addition to the Sunday congregational worship, the community was subdivided into small groups (conventicles or “choirs”) that brought together people of a similar age and place in life (e.g. single sisters, married brothers, or widows) for worship, prayer and edifying conversation. Each “choir” had a number of offices of lay leadership associated with it for the purpose of pastoral care (elder, teacher, admonisher, caretaker of the sick, and almoner); since the “choirs” were typically sex-segregated, this meant that there was strong institutional support for types of women’s lay leadership that involved significant authority and extensive responsibilities for teaching and pastoral care.

The Moravians also set up their communities in a way that promoted extensive contact with outsiders and were willing to adapt their worship services and forms of religious membership in ways that made them readily accessible to outsiders. For Moravians, **all external forms were of relative value and therefore could be altered as necessary to help people come to heartfelt faith in Jesus** (see p. 326 #5; compare also Tersteegen’s quietism!). They were therefore willing to hold services in English when English neighbors became interested in attending their services and within seventy years had abandoned nearly all of their distinctive practices to make their services more accessible to English-speaking non-Moravians. They also adapted their membership practices so that interested people from other religious backgrounds could become Society (halfway) members and participate in Moravian services, without having to give up their membership in their original religious community (Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican). Furthermore, because the Moravians extended fellowship to anyone in whom they recognized a heartfelt faith in Jesus, friendship and marriages tended to cross all lines of language, culture and church membership. Thus for example, in examining friendships and marriages, one notes that the two persons involved came to know each other through the stage-of-life based conventicles (common spiritual interest) yet often came from different linguistic backgrounds (German and English), national origins, and held different types of membership (many marriages were between Society members, who wanted to marry someone committed to the ideals of the Moravian movement and this in turn made the Moravian community part of the couple's primary commitment). (Note also the way that the principle of voluntary association and respect for freedom of conscience are affirmed in p. 327 #12.)

All of this was quite opposed to the way that religion normally worked in European religious emigration to colonial America and other nations. For example, the Anabaptists and German Lutherans believed that religious and moral purity were retained by separation from the broader culture and treated the sustenance and maintenance of the community as part of the redemptive process. They also believed in a strong correlation between traditional language, traditional ecclesiastical practices and traditional (home-country) cultural orientation. This made it almost impossible for outsiders to participate in or receive any religious benefit from the community. To join a church of this type, one would have to accept the traditional language, ecclesiastical practices and cultural orientation of its members—in this way, the German Lutheran or Anabaptist immigrant churches often worked to keep non-members and other ways of life out and keep members in within a recognizable form of the traditional religious/cultural/ecclesiastical framework.

If there was a downside to the Moravian approach, it was that **once they endorsed adaptation to the culture, they gradually became indistinguishable from the culture, losing their distinctive identity and peculiar witness.** The traditional forms of worship and social organization that had served as bearers of meaning were increasingly treated as external forms that could be discarded when necessary for the mission of the church, but this also meant that the mission of the church (which had depended upon meanings created and transmitted by the traditional symbolic practices) was altered, became diffuse and was itself finally lost.

Questions:

- 1) How ought one to view the traditional rites and observances of the Church? Do you agree with Zinzendorf's position on p. 326 § 5 ?
- 2) Is the principle of maximizing free association (see p. 327 § 12 and remarks above) valuable and if so, why? Is it also potentially problematic? If so, why?

Concluding Questions:

- 1) What positive contributions has Zinzendorf made to the modern church?
- 2) Which features of Zinzendorf's thought might be regarded as time-bound and/or unedifying?