

Gemeine: Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf's Understanding of the Church

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I express my appreciation to the Young Center for the Study of Anabaptist and Pietist Groups and to the Durnbaugh Lecture for the opportunity to share the perspectives of Nicholas Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf, founding father and formative theologian of the 18th century Moravian Church.

Our Predecessor: The Pennsylvania Conference or Synod of 1742

In December of 1741, two centuries before the modern ecumenical age, a letter was sent by Henry Antes, JP, of the German Reformed Church, at the urging of the Associated Brethren of Skippak and of the newly arrived Count von Zinzendorf, inviting the various religious groups in Pennsylvania to a Conference to be held New Year's Day:

Inasmuch as frightful evil is wrought in the Church of Christ, among the souls that have been called to the Lamb (to follow Christ) mainly through mistrust and suspicion towards each other -- and that often without reason -- whereby every purpose of good is continually thwarted -- although we have been commanded to love; it has been under consideration for two years or more, whether it would not be possible to appoint a general assembly, not to wrangle about opinions, but to treat with each other in love on the most important articles of faith, in order to ascertain how closely we can approach each other fundamentally, and, as for the rest, bear with one another in love on opinions which do not subvert the ground of salvation; and whether in this way, all judging and criticising might not be diminished and done away with among the aforesaid souls, by which they expose themselves before the world and give occasion to say: those who preach peace and conversion are

themselves at variance. Therefore this matter, so important, has now been under advisement again with many brethren and God-seeking souls, and been weighed before the Lord; and it has been decided to meet on the coming New Year's Day at Germantown.¹

The ancestors of many of us came to this conference: Lutherans, Reformed, Moravians, Quakers, Mennonites, Baptists (including the Ephrata cloister and those who became Church of the Brethren), Schwenkfelders, Separatists, Hermits, Inspired, and others. At the end of the seven Resolutions presented from the first meeting of this Conference of Religions there is a prayer:

Be then highly entreated, o dear Lamb of God, gracious to watch over this thy Pensilvania, which once thou hast mark'd out from the world; do not leave it to any false Spirit but keep it theyself, o Lord of all the Hearts, as a Reward of thy Smart and Pain to the Praise of thy heavenly Father. Commend us to the tender care of thy Holy Spirit, include us all in thy blessed Testament. Stop the enemy's of thy cross, bless all thy little Flocks, rejoice all them that wait for the comfort of Israel by the appearing of thy Holy Church, forgive us most kindly of all our Sins, Mistakes & Trespasses and make us thy Triumph in America.²

We gather for purposes similar to theirs. We will be talking about the nature of the church.

Relevance and the Nature of the Church

Our topic this evening is "*Gemeine*: Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf's Understanding of the Church." To ask about the nature of the church is always relevant as we seek to be faithful to the insights and vocation which brought us into being and as we seek the special character of our relevance at this time in history. There is a being or essence which is inherent in our origins and history, but our being is also a "being for" which makes consideration of context a special responsibility. Our context holds new interests in spirituality, though often not in institutional religion. Spirituality is gaining a new significant role in complementary or integrated medicine.³ Most of us live in pluralistic societies where definition of identity and vocation of our religious institutions must consider others and is certainly challenged by others. And the struggles of humans for meaningful life, of nations for peace, and of the society for responsible economics and ecology call upon us for meaningful words and praxis.

Zinzendorf and His Experience of Church

Zinzendorf made his contribution at a very pivotal time in the history of the Moravian Church. The Ancient Moravian Church, 1457-1620, had its beginnings in the Hussite movements of the 15th century. It originated as a withdrawn and rural community gathered to live with full intention the Sermon on the Mount, influenced by pacifist principles. By 1494 the church was divided into those who wished to retain life as a more radical community and those who took a more realistic view of the possibility of human perfection and wished a greater participation in the life of the society. Moving into its world it developed

¹ Letter of Henry Antes was sent from Frederick Township in Philadelphia County, December 15 (26 new style date) 1741, quoted in J. Mortimer Levering, *A History of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1741-1892*, Bethlehem: Times Publishing Co., 1903, pp. 97-98.

² *Authentische Relation*, Introduction and editing by Peter Vogt, Hildesheim, Zürich and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1998, in *Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, Materialien und Dokumente, op. cit.*, Vol. XXX, p. 14. The Introduction and the minutes of the meetings are in both English and German.

³ Arthur Freeman, "Spirituality, Well-Being and Ministry," *Journal of Pastoral Care*, Decatur, Georgia: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, vol. 52, Spring 1998, No. 1, pp. 7ff.

schools, printing presses, gradually included trade persons and the nobility, until it was a major influence within its world. As the Protestant Reformation developed it came to terms at first with Luther and then with Calvin's reformation. The Thirty Years War saw the defeat of the Protestants and the death of many nobles who were leaders in the Moravian Church. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which permitted only the Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed Churches according to the choice of the prince, denied the Moravian Church the right to exist and drove it underground, except for a few congregations which continued in Poland and such persons as Bishop John Comenius who went into exile and whose grandson consecrated the first bishops of the Renewed Moravian Church in 1735-7.

Through Zinzendorf the Ancient Moravian Church was renewed, though initially he had little knowledge of it and never expected it on his doorstep. As a Lutheran Pietist, during his service of the Saxon king in Dresden, he was already exploring the possibilities of new styles of Christian community when in 1722 he was confronted with emigration from Moravia to his estate near the village of Berthelsdorf. The mixture of Lutherans, Reformed, Schwenkfelders, separatists, and Moravian refugees, especially as the Moravians rediscovered and sought to foster their ancient heritage, produced conflict. However Zinzendorf forged community through pastoral activity, establishing boundaries of commitment, and the occurrence of a uniting spiritual experience on Aug. 13, 1727 (often identified as the Moravian Pentecost). This settlement became Herrnhut, meaning "under the Lord's care" or "on watch for the Lord." Within a few years this small community was engaged in defining itself and in mission at the same time, becoming the unexpected laboratory for Zinzendorf's understanding of religion. 1722 to the present is then the period of the Renewed Moravian Church and Zinzendorf was its developer, leader, and primary theologian for 38 years until his death.

Who was he? Zinzendorf was born on May 26, 1700, in Dresden, Saxony, heir to a long and noble line.⁴ His father's family traces back to the duchy of Austria where in the eleventh century it was one of the twelve noble houses supporting the Austrian dynasty. In 1662 Emperor Leopold conferred upon its head the office of count of the Holy Roman Empire. When the Reformation came, part of the family embraced it. Because of the Counter Reformation Zinzendorf's grandfather moved to Oberbürg in Franconia. His two sons entered the service of the elector of Saxony. The younger, who served as privy councilor at Dresden, was the father of Zinzendorf.

Zinzendorf's religious life was very much affected by the breadth of his experience of the religious streams of his day. His father died in the year of his birth and after his mother remarried he was raised by his cultured maternal grandmother in whose home Lutheran, Pietistic, and Philadelphian⁵ streams of religious tradition merged. His education at Halle strengthened his Pietistic perspectives and the University of Wittenberg, where he studied law, gave him a renewed appreciation of Luther. His "Wander Year" which took him to Holland, Switzerland and France also put him in touch with a variety of cultural thought and institutions. It was during this "Year" that he developed his lasting friendship with the

⁴ Attention is called to two works in English on his life:

A.J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, Westminster Press, 1962.

John R. Weinlick, *Count Zinzendorf*, Abingdon, 1955, reprint Bethlehem and Winston-Salem: Moravian Church in America, 1989.

The only systematic presentation of his theology in English is Arthur Freeman, *An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart: The Theology of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf*, Bethlehem, PA: Board of Publications, Moravian Church in America, 1998.

⁵ For a good description of Philadelphianism and its views see Sigurd Nielsen, *Der Toleranzgedanke bei Zinzendorf*, Three Parts, Hamburg: Ludwig Appel Verlag, nd (1952-60), pp. 16-52.

Jansenist Cardinal Noailles of Paris from which ensued a 10 year correspondence,⁶ and he became better acquainted with the Reformed tradition while in Holland. The family of his wife Erdmuth Dorothea von Reuss housed at their castle a Philadelphian ecumenical community. His position in the nobility gave him access to other nobles not of his own tradition. Gerhard Meyer comments, "Zinzendorf was the last great mind who strove for the lost unity of Europe."⁷ This unity was not to be found in the Enlightenment's attempts for unity of method and thought, nor in natural religion, nor in the resolving of differences, but in the person of the Savior who is also Creator and therefore the unitive factor of all religious experience, whose identity is characterized by his suffering and wounds, and whose reality is perceived by the intuitive perceptions of the heart, thus always transcending the various traditions whose particularities often divide.

This was also a time when doubt was not only a result of Enlightenment methodology, but it was fueled by the tragedies of the previous century. For Zinzendorf this was compounded by the death of his father the year of his birth, which in a few years was followed by the loss of the presence of his mother through remarriage. Within his personal struggle with doubt and his loneliness the Savior came whom he came to know through the heart, the inner organ of spiritual perception, rather than the intellect:

When I was eight years old, I lay a whole night without sleep and through an old song which my grandmother sang before she went to sleep (O Eternity, Thou Word of Thunder), I entered into meditation and deep speculation. This went so far that at the last I lost my powers of hearing and sight. The clever ideas of the atheists began in my mind, and I was so affected by this and deeply involved in it that everything which I have heard and read since then seemed to me very shallow and insignificant and made little impression on me. But 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, -- so -- I would rather be damned with the Savior than be blessed with another God -- so had speculation and rational deductions, which returned 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. I then arrived at the firm conclusion to use reason in human matters so far as it suffices and to let it explain and delineate these matters so far as it can be driven; but in spiritual matters to remain so simply with heart-grasped truth and the cross and blood theology of the Lamb of God that I lay it as the ground of all other truths and what I could not deduce from it I wanted to reject at once. And that has stayed with me even to the present.⁸

Kirche, Religion and Gemeine: The Terms for Church

Zinzendorf used *Kirche* ("church") primarily for the invisible church and not for congregations or denominational bodies, though some Moravians in our time have used it for denominations, such as *Brüderkirche* ("Brethren's Church") for the Moravian Church. His term for what we would call denominations or confessional traditions was *Religion* and *Religionen* (plural). Though this term was in

⁶ A Salomon, *La Catholicité du Monde Chrétien d'après la correspondance inédite du comte Louis de Zinzendorf avec le cardinal de Noailles et les évêques appelants, 1719-1728*, (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 108 Boulevard Saint-Germain, 1929).

⁷ Gerhard Meyer, *Zinzendorf und der Katholizismus: Eine geistesgeschichtliche Studie zum Problem der religiösen Toleranz*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970), vol. X of Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, *Ergänzungsbände zu den Hauptschriften*, p. XLV.

⁸ *Büdingische Sammlung einiger in die Kirchen-Historie einschlagender sonderlich neuerer Schriften*, I, Vorrede, Büdingen: John Chr. Stohr, 1742.

use in the German language equivalent to the English term religion, he used it particularly in the sense of denomination. When he wrote or spoke he frequently used words from a number of languages. This was not just the custom of the educated. He was also interested in language and the ways in which words from one language functioned better than those from another. For him the term *Religion* was used for a historically and culturally conditioned tradition and institution. Each *Religion* had its treasures and values from which we could learn. Some people could not believe without having Christianity in the particular form of their *Religion*. Thus one should respect each *Religion* and leave people within it who belong within, not trying to proselytize. Each *Religion* represented the way in which God worked historically and contextually, thus it was partially the result of human historical and cultural perspectives, but also especially the result of God's intention.

Zinzendorf affirmed the unique value of each Religion through the *Tropus*⁹ concept. The *Tropi Paidiae* were "ways of teaching" which characterized each historical tradition. Within the Renewed Moravian Church until the last decade of the 18th century there were separate membership lists for Lutheran, Reformed and Moravian *Tropi*. The *Tropus* concept was partially fostered by Zinzendorf's ecumenical perspective from the 1742 attempt to form a Church of God in the Spirit in Pennsylvania, and partially urged upon him by the persistence of the settlers from Moravia who insisted upon reviving their ancient Church. Thus the identity of the Ancient Moravian Church was preserved as a *Tropus* as well as that of Lutherans and Reformed.¹⁰ Two Creeds were decided upon. The Augsburg Confession was regarded as having ultimate authority, and in reality an ecumenical creed, and the Articles of the Synod of Berne were chosen as a Reformed Creed. The three *Tropi* then constituted the *Unitas Fratrum* (Unity of the Brethren) or *Brüdergemeine* (Church of the Brethren)¹¹ which then adopted the ministerial orders of the Ancient Moravian Church. But the understanding was never lost that:

...the external form of churches, even if it is the best, is never the *Geistes-Gemeine* (*Gemeine* of the Spirit) nor does it create this, but it serves it as its bearer and must confer on this a *jus reformandi* [a principle to bring about reformation] in Spirit and power which is always divine. As long as it does that and lets its external affairs always be spiritually directed, both essence and form, inner and

⁹ *Tropos* is the transliteration of the Greek and *Tropus* is the Latin. Both are used. The plural of *tropos* is *tropoi* and of *tropus* is *tropi*. *Paideia* (or *paidia*) is a transliteration of the Greek word for training or discipline and *Paedia* is the Latin. Thus a *tropus paediae* is a way of discipline, and Zinzendorf uses this to describe the approach of each religious tradition.

¹⁰ Hermann Plitt, *Die Gemeinde Gottes in ihrem Geist und ihren Formen*, Gotha: Verlag von Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1859, pp. 181-182. Plitt quotes the following from Zinzendorf without indicating a source:

They have accused us of wanting to begin a new sect. But we can easily contradict that if we are asked in appropriate fashion. The renewal of the Ancient *Brüder-Kirche* (*Unitas Fratrum* or *Ancient Moravian Church*), to which we owe our external church order through the gracious leading of the Savior, happened only out of respect for the Ancient *Brüder-Kirche* founded 300 years ago, the ancient sister of the Protestant church. People who do not understand the matter believe they are doing God a service if they can merge and hide the remaining descendants of the Ancient *Brüder-Kirche* in another church. In our time they want to put them among the Lutherans as in earlier times in Poland they were placed among the Reformed. But by doing this they overlook that in the many and varied Christian church differences there lies the deep intent of God, so that in place of his spiritual kingdom (whose inner unity is not disturbed by differences in incidentals) there not emerge again a common political church-realm which is dependent on the mind and type of thought of each ruler and then calls that "right belief" which in each period knows how to gain the upper hand.

¹¹ It is interesting that *Brüdergemeine* and *Unitas Fratrum* have essentially the same meaning. Thus the Latin name of the Ancient Moravian Church was really taken over as the name for the whole Renewed Moravian Church. *Unitas* was used for "church" in the Ancient Moravian Church somewhat as *Gemeine* was in the Renewed Moravian Church.

outer, remain unseparated in reference to persons as well as institutions, even if some particulars are wanting.¹²

Gemeine

The term *Gemeine* was the term which Zinzendorf most frequently employed for the Church.¹³ This was quite distinct from *Religion*. *Gemeine* was used for the Church which lived with and from Christ and expressed the reality from which it lived. This term described a community which is a living organism, universal as well as local.

And because 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: so on the other hand in the *Religionen* from whence the *Gemeine* (here not congregation but universal church) is made up, from which it issues, where it has its old knowledge and in which it would also like to remain in order to set forth certain points freely, one must point out people who have spiritual eyes and ears, with whom [Σ | ⇐ } || ⌊ < [repentance] is going on.¹⁴

Gemein is a German word which means "common" or "in common." In old German *Gemeine* also meant a community, congregation or church. Luther in his translation of the New Testament uses it for "church." While in the 19th century *Gemeinde* had taken the place of *Gemeine* for congregation and *Gemeinde* would be correct in modern German, in the 18th century both were used. However, the Moravian Church has continued to use *Gemeine* which appeared in its literature in the 18th century and which became part of its official name in Germany (*Brüdergemeine*) as an equivalent for the name of the Ancient Moravian Church, *Unitas Fratrum*. *Unitas* here is an equivalent for community or church.

Whereas the term *Gemeinde* came to designate a local congregation, *Gemeine* amongst the Moravians in the eighteenth century had a broader meaning. *Gemeine* refers not only to the local congregation, but also to the Church as a whole, and wherever the local congregation is meant the orientation of the local to the whole invisible Church is always seen. Thus local *Gemeinen* are joined in a living unity expressive of the universal church.¹⁵ The *Gemeine* in its universal sense is then made up of all *Gemeinen*, both within and without the established *Religionen*, all individuals in relationship with Christ, and also the heavenly *Gemeine*. The Moravian Church was to be a sign of the *Gemeine* in Europe as was the ecumenical Church of God in the Spirit in Pennsylvania. Zinzendorf's comments from his *Pennsylvania Testament*, delivered in January of 1743 before his return to Europe, portray his dream for this Pennsylvania experiment:

¹² Plitt, *Die Gemeine Gottes*, p. 185. This is the description of Plitt, not Zinzendorf's words.

¹³ Hermann Plitt, *Die Gemeine Gottes*, op. cit.. This is an intriguing presentation by the author of the three volume *Zinzendorfs Theologie*. In it he begins with a doctrinal treatment of *Gemeine* and *Kirche* and then moves to a historical consideration in three sections: The Preformation of Christian *Gemeine* in the Old Testament and the Savior's Disciple-family; the Original Formation of the Christian *Gemeine* or the Apostolic *Gemeine*; and then the Continuation of the Christian *Gemeine* from the Patristic Age to the Moravian Church or *Brüdergemeine*. He argues that the nature of the *Gemeine* 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." p. 2.

¹⁴ *Ein und zwanzig Discurse über die Augspurgische Confession, gehalten vom 15. Dec. 1747. bis zum 3. Mart. 1748 denen Seminariis Theologicis Fratrum ...*, n.p, n.d., (12/17/47) pp. 86-87.

¹⁵ Wilhelm Bettermann, "Warum Wir Gemeine und nicht Gemeinde Sagen," *Jahrbuch der Brüdergemeine*, Gnadau, Unitätsbuchhandlung, 1935/36. pp. 16-17.

You know that we have commenced here with the Church of God in the Spirit. This is a great advantage which America has over Europe. It is certainly a great thing, that we could commence thus. And if we in future also watch over it, that the Church of God in the Spirit may remain our abiding-place, then we are on the right track. In Europe, on the other hand, the Moravian Church is that house in which the Saviour dwells with His people, and in which He directs His affairs and disposes of His servants with absolute power. But here the Church of God in the Spirit is the factotum, and not the Moravian Church.¹⁶

"The only true *Gemeine*, the only foundational *Gemeine*, the only genuine original *Kirche* is the Holy Trinity."¹⁷ Any *Gemeinen* formed on earth were made after this pattern. The first earthly model of this *Gottes-Kirche* (Church of God) was the creation of humanity. Because this failed, God acted again and said:

The *Kirche*, which had been formed in my heart from eternity, must still be: and that went so far that the Creator became human in his own person and passed through the stages of human life; and there he hung on the cross ...: so he hung there in all stillness, and established the model of the *Kirche*, which had been betrayed, which did not wish to come into being, which had not wanted to be created for 4,000 years, doing this nakedly and simply at the cross, and declared his (sic) John and his mother to be the first cross Brother and Sister.¹⁸

Thus Christ, his mother, and John became the earthly model of the heavenly *Gemeine* and the *Gemeine* within God. It is important to note that this earthly model was brought into being at the cross, for the cross was the primary descriptor of the true God. A God without wounds is not God. The side-wound of Christ was viewed as in the hymn "Rock of ages cleft for me." It was the place out of which Christians and church were born. And it was the source of the Holy Spirit, thus tying together the Savior and the Atonement with the Spirit. In this sermon he speaks of the arms and the wounds of Christ as being the only place for all Christians.

Another biblical paradigm was used by Zinzendorf to indicate that the possibility of *Gemeine* did not depend upon understanding or the ability to consciously respond. It could be reduced to the relationship of the embryonic Jesus and John the Baptist, a relationship without conceptualization or description:

I reduce it to two persons. John and Jesus, both in their mother's womb, and their mothers, in any case together constituted a Christian religion; there began the feeling, the experience and the inner movement which today in Christianity is regarded as dream and imagination.¹⁹

¹⁶ Levin Theodore Reichel, *The Early History of the Church of the United Brethren (Unitas Fratrum) Commonly called Moravians in North America A.D. 1734-1748*, Nazareth, PA: The Moravian Historical Society, 1888, pp. 138-139. The comments about the Moravian Church being the house of Christ which he directs is not to be understood as Moravians thinking they were more Christian than others, but refers to their actually having given to Christ the rule and direction of the church so that he might take it where he wishes. In 1741 Christ was declared Chief Elder of the Church and the Church pledged to obey his direction. Zinzendorf saw the Church of God in the Spirit being the same thing in North America.

¹⁷ *Der öffentliche Gemein-Reden im Jahr 1747. Erster Theil. Mit einem Anhang einiger zu Ende des Jahres 1746 gehaltenen Homilien*, Zu finden in den Brüder-Gemeinen, 1748, p. 78.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁹ *Einige seit 1751 von dem Ordinario Fratrum zu London gehaltene Predigten in dreyen Haupt-Abtheilungen edirter*, Erster Band, London und Barby, zu finden bey dem Seminario Theologico, 1756, Erster Band, Abth. II, (1.17.53), p. 154.

The understanding of the Church as a counterpart of a heavenly reality anchored the *Gemeine* in this transcendent realm.²⁰ It was in the world, but it took its life from God's world and it, in a sense, anticipated the end-time when the heavenly reality would become the total reality.²¹ The end time was perceived as being near, though Zinzendorf regarded eschatology as one of the biblical Mysteries and refused to speculate about it. Even more important than the future is the coming of the Savior into the world and his coming to the heart (which at times Zinzendorf spoke of as a second coming). The experiences of the present time are indeed the first fruits of the end time which will be a new Economy of God. One finds this dual perspective in Jewish and early Christian Apocalyptic which were both mystical (spoke of a transcendent reality in which the believing community participated) and eschatological (concerned with the end time when God would establish this reality within world and history). To our loss often the mystical tendencies in Apocalyptic are neglected in favor of eschatological interests.

As Zinzendorf described it: Jesus has "given us a certain sketch of the primal temple, of the primal *Gemeine* ..." ²² The extent to which this governed Zinzendorf's thinking on the Church is realized by few Moravians in North America. The Liturgy of the worship service was viewed as the participation by the congregation in the heavenly worship,²³ the division of the church according to age and station ("Choirs" of the married, single, etc.) was considered expressive of the nature of the heavenly *Gemeine*, and the organization of the seating of the Choirs in the *Saal* for worship and burial in Choirs in the cemetery (God's Acre) also had this purpose behind it. The Churches were not dark and mysterious gothic buildings, but bright, with a great deal of window space and extensive use of white

²⁰ Hartmut Beck has written on Moravian settlements on three continents, stressing the intentional organization of the settlements with Herrnhag as a pattern. The *Saal* was the place "where the members of the congregation, wherever and however they might otherwise live, gather in worship as the congregation 'below' (which is here on earth), which knows itself bound to the congregation 'above' of those members of the congregation who have fallen asleep, completed their course, and so departed." Hartmut Beck, "Für Zeit und Ewigkeit: Herrnhuter Siedlungen auf drei Kontinenten im 18. Jahrhundert und deren transkulturelle Orientierung," in Manfred Büttner, ed., *Geisteshaltung und Stadtgestaltung, Referate, gehalten auf dem Geographentag in Potsdam, 1995*, Sonderdruck 1997, Peter Lang., pp. 161-195; p. 171. Beck emphasizes that the Moravians took to where they went a common community design while respecting and adapting to local cultures. The article includes photos and diagrams of various communities.

²¹ Peter Vogt calls attention to Zinzendorf's desire to establish *Gemeinen* as representing a new "Ökonomie Gottes" [Economy of God]. Zinzendorf comments:

The holy people have to be brought together from all four winds at the due time. Of that there now are appearing dawns and examples which are the *Gemeine*.

Teil 1-4 Theologische und dahin einschlagende Bedenken, welche Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf, Zeitheriger Bischoff Der Bömisch- und Märisch-Evangelischen Brüder, Seit 20 Jahren entworfen. Mit des Autoris Zuschrift An alle Hohe Obrigkeiten Und einer Vorrede Polycarpi Müllers, Ehemahligen Professoris zu Leipzig und Directoris des Gymnasii zu Zittau, nunmehrigen Episcopi Fratrum, Büdingen: Johann Christoph Stöhr, 1742, pp. 166-167.. Quoted in Peter Vogt, "Zinzendorf and the 'Pennsylvania Synods' of 1742: The First Ecumenical Conferences on the North American Continent," p. 95-96. It should also be noted that the conversion of persons in the mission fields was seen as the gathering of the First Fruits (see Rev. 14:4), as represented in John Valentine Haidt's painting of the first converts of Moravian missions. Haidt was a Moravian minister and one of the first colonial American painters to treat religious subjects. He produced several renditions of the First Fruits.

²² *Der öffentliche Gemein-Reden im Jahr 1747. Erster Theil*, op. cit., p. 84.

²³ The Moravian Hymnal of 1735 has an interesting plate on its title page which shows the relationship of earthly to heavenly worship. It portrays a time of *Anbeten* (prostration) before the Lamb. There is a sanctuary (or *Saal*) with at least two levels. On the ground level there is a congregation prostrating itself before the Lamb. Then there is another group in a balcony in the back of which the Lamb is located, along with the seven lampstands and four beasts. Those in the balcony are prostrated in front of chairs (thrones). Though there are only 20 visible (10 on each side), they must represent the 24 elders in heaven. *Christliches Gesang-Buch der Evangelischen Brüder-Gemeinen von 1735 zum drittenmal aufgelegt und durchaus revidirt*, zu finden in obbesagten Gemeinen, 1741. The imagery is borrowed from Revelation 1-5.

both on the interior of the place of worship and as the liturgical color.²⁴ The surplice which was adopted for use at the Lord's Supper was not a white liturgical gown, but after the manner of those robed in white in the book of Revelation and it reminded the congregation that they belonged to a heavenly reality.²⁵ I believe that this is why Christ remained so near to the experience of Zinzendorf and the Moravians even though he was understood to have ascended to the right hand of God, with the Spirit commissioned to act on his behalf in the world.²⁶ Although in heaven, he was not far away and one could still live from him and he would enter one's daily life (Zinzendorf's favorite phrase *Umgang mit dem Heiland*, which might be translated "living with the Savior"). The church, and each one whose soul was his bride, participated in the reality in which the Savior now dwelt.

The *primary* mark of the *Gemeine* would be the relationship with the Savior, and thus with God. When in September of 1741 Leonard Dober refused reelection to the position of Chief Elder, and it became impossible to elect someone else, it was determined that the Savior wanted this position and that he would provide leadership in decisions by discernment or the lot. Thus not only did relationship with the Savior constitute the *Gemeine*, but it was expected that he would use it as his instrument in the world.

Second would be its relationship with the Spirit who cared for the Church as a Mother. Though Zinzendorf speaks of his growing awareness of the Spirit as Mother beginning 1738, the full meaning of the Spirit came to him while he was on the ship Torbay on his second trip to America in 1741. In the term "Mother" one has an "economical" (from *ökonomisch*, i.e. related to the times) word which would be good for the heart as *Abba* is for the heavenly Father and *Mann* (Husband) for the Savior.²⁷ When Zinzendorf arrived in Philadelphia his first sermon in Germantown, December 1741, presented this as a well-developed understanding. He divided history into three spiritual "economies": in the first God was Father of his house, a time characterized by the fear of God. The second period was that of a kingdom or theocracy. The third period is

the blood-friendship with Jesus or the divine family on earth, since we have in heaven a Father, a Mother, and a Husband: here the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is our true Father and the Spirit of Jesus Christ is our true Mother; because the Son of the living God, his only begotten Son, is our true Brother and Husband.

The Father must have love for us and can not do otherwise; the Mother must guide us through the world, and can not do otherwise; the Son/Brother/Husband must love our souls as his own soul, our body as his own body, because we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, and he cannot do otherwise.²⁸

²⁴ See Peter Vogt, "The Shakers and the Moravians: A Comparison of the Structure and the Architecture of their Settlements," *The Shaker Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 3, Fall, 1993, Poland Spring, ME: The Shaker Quarterly, 1993, pp. 79ff.

²⁵ Cf. Wilhelm Bettermann, *Theologie und Sprache bei Zinzendorf*, Gotha: Klots, 1935, p. 122ff.

²⁶ Zinzendorf derived this from Hebrews 10:12-13 and his understanding of the role of Christ in the Trinity. He disagreed with I Cor. 15:28 where Christ is presented as now active in the subjection of the cosmic powers and, having subjected all to himself, in the end will subject himself to God. In Hebrews Christ sits at the right hand of God and waits for all to be subjected (by the Spirit?) to himself. As the one at the right hand of God he will always remain the Mediator of the Godhead.

²⁷ *Der Predigten die der Ordinarius ... zu London gehalten hat*, Zweyter Band, Abth. VI, op. cit., (5/24/52), pp. 39-40.

²⁸ *Eine Sammlung Öffentliche Reden, von dem Herrn der unsere Seligkeit ist, und über die Materie von seiner Marter. In dem Jahr 1742. Mehrentheils in dem Nordlichen Theil von America der das Englische Canada ausmachet vor allerley Christlichen Religions-Meetings gehalten, Von Dem damaligen Evangelischen Lutherischen Inspectore und Past. zu Philadelphia, Erster und Zweiter Theile*, Büdingen: Johann Christoph Stöhr, 1746, Zweyte Edition, Erster Theil (12/20 or 31/41), p. 38.

The Spirit had a decisive effect upon the nature and forms of the *Gemeine*. During the Synod of 1750²⁹ Zinzendorf spoke of the "*Gemein-Geist*", the Holy Spirit in regards to its influence on the *Gemeine*, "*das agens, motor, Spiritus activus*" ("the agent, mover, active Spirit"). This Spirit is the "*je ne sai quoi*" (absolute essential) or the "*Schibboleth*" (see Judges 12:6) of the *Gemeine*. The effect of the "*Gemein-Geist*" on the hearts of the members of the congregation is the "*Gemein-Sinn*" (common mind) and when this is put into action it is called the "*Gemein-Plan*" (common plan). The "*Gemein-Wille*" (common will) is the common willingness to contribute to the purpose for which the Savior has brought the members of the *Gemeine* together. The "*Gemein-Gefühl*" (common feeling or intuitive perception by the heart) is that "*inne werden*" (inner becoming) which the "*Gemein-Geist*" causes us to experience from time to time. Thus the life of the Congregation or Church is dependent upon the Spirit and the Spirit creates a *Sinn*, *Plan*, *Wille*, and *Gefühl* which is expressive, not of the individuality of the members of the *Gemeine*, but of their unity, of the divine reality which creates it, and of its mission as a community.

A *third* mark of the *Gemeine* was mission. Christ had given his church a mission. Each one of the Gospels concludes with some equivalent of a commissioning of his disciples. In John Jesus sends his disciples as his Father had sent him (e.g. John 17:18). Both the life and activity of the *Gemeine* carry out this mission. Its life expresses the very relationship which Christ calls the church to facilitate for others and which gives those exploring the Gospel an experiential referent. In I John 1:3 others were invited into the fellowship with the Father and the Son which constitutes the life and fellowship of the community.

Hence for Moravians a crucial step in mission was always the planting of a *Gemeine* where the life with Christ was lived out and could be experienced by others. The mission as *action* was going where Christ would have the *Gemeine* go, keeping in mind that mission and evangelism was God's business. One had to discern, follow, and participate in what God was doing. What then began as preaching excursions into areas surrounding Herrnhut, following the spiritual experience of 1727, in a few years brought Moravians to the West Indies and North America and then to many other parts of the world to "win souls for the Lamb." Within ten years Moravians had gone also to Greenland, Surinam, South Africa, the Gold Coast, Algeria, Arctic Russia, and Ceylon.³⁰

Standards for Discernment of the *Gemeine's* Spiritual Dynamics

The centering of the life of the *Gemeine* in spiritual realities would of course have its subjective dangers. The "Sifting Period" is the name given to a time, lasting from 1743 to 1750 (though it continued in North America somewhat longer), when the language of the wounds of Christ and the image of mystical marriage, along with a concern for inspiration, child-like simplicity, creativity and religious experience, were carried to excess to the neglect of other responsibilities. One might compare this to the excesses of some aspects of the charismatic movement. However, the development of excess should not deny the

²⁹ Spangenberg, *Apologetische Schluss-Schrift, worin über tausend Beschuldigungen gegen die Brüder-Gemeinen und ihren zeitherigen Ordinarium nach der Wahrheit beantwortet werden*, Leipzig und Görlitz: Marche, 1752, (Synodal Protocoll 1750), pp. 542ff.

³⁰ For Zinzendorf's theology of mission see David Allen Schattschneider, "'Souls for the Lamb': A Theology for the Christian Mission According to Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf and Bishop Augustus Gottlieb Spangenberg," Ph.D. Dissertation, 1975, the University of Chicago. For an excellent contemporary discussion of mission as the essence of the church see Wilbert R. Shenk, *Write the Vision: The Church Renewed*, in series Christian Mission and Modern Culture, Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995.

legitimacy of more balanced expression of the same insights.³¹ Though Moravians used to regard this period in a negative light, it is now being explored more appreciatively as a time of great creativity. Zinzendorf himself called an end to the less balanced aspects of this period in 1750, though he always continued to affirm the *Gemeine's* dependence on the realities which give it life.

The Moravian discernment of spiritual experience and expression recognized the value of creed, particularly using the Augsburg Confession until 1857 when the British and North American Provinces were no longer bound to this Confession as part of granting them more autonomy. Most General or international Synods in their minutes included a section on doctrine which was viewed as the responsibility of the General Synod rather than Provincial Synods. After World War II the European Province developed a doctrinal statement called *Ground of the Unity*, revised and accepted at the General Synod of 1957 and modified most recently at the Unity Synod (present name for the General Synod) of 1995 held in Tanzania.

Besides this there is the recognized authority of Scripture. In 1993 to 1995 a debate took place in the Church on the definition of Scripture's authority. The statement on Scripture in the *Ground of the Unity* had been "The Holy Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament are and abide the only source and rule of faith, doctrine, and life of the *Unitas Fratrum*." In order to better express the Moravian theological heritage, this was changed to "The Triune God as revealed in the Holy Scripture of the old and New Testaments is the only source of our life and salvation; and this Scripture is the sole standard of the doctrine and faith of the *Unitas Fratrum*."³² This revision also contains an explicit statement on the role of tradition. The relationship of this to church as *Gemeine* should be immediately apparent, for only God is the source of life and salvation.

Zinzendorf also recognized complexity in Scripture in that each writing was conditioned by God's desire to communicate relevantly within culture and time. Thus the authority of Scripture could not be approached as a simple matter. "Basic Truths" about salvation were clear in all of Scripture, but it took experts to understand "Matters of Knowledge", especially due to the historically conditioned nature of Scripture. Then there were the "Mysteries" whose reality is witnessed to in Scripture but which are not defined so that one's definition cannot be made binding on others: such as the Lord's Supper and Eschatology. Because of differences (he indicates that these are not mistakes) in Scripture due to the contextual nature of God's word, we cannot speak of a conceptual system in Scripture, only the system of the living Creator/Savior whom we encounter in it and who is responsible for its message. Because the Savior is also Creator (according to the New Testament treatment of creation in John 1:1-18, Col. 1:15-20, Heb. 1:1-4), the Savior has always been the one to mediate God to the world. Thus we encounter the same Person in all of Scripture who mediates to us the rest of the Godhead.

Creed, Scripture and tradition are accumulated wisdom and standards by which to keep from confusing the spiritual dynamics that create the *Gemeine's* life with our own subjectivities.

³¹ See Hans-Walter Erbe, "Herrnhag: Eine religiöse Kommunität in 18. Jahrhundert," *Unitas Fratrum*, Heft 23/24, Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1988, pp. 8ff; Hans-Walter Erbe, "Herrnhag - Tiefpunkt oder Höhepunkt der Brüdergeschichte," *Unitas Fratrum*, Heft 26, Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1989, pp. 37ff

³² *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum (Moravian Church) 1995*, available from Moravian Provincial Offices, published by order of the Unity Synod held at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 13th – 25th August, 1995.

The Story of One *Gemeine*: Herrnhut

In the chapter on the church of my book concerning the theology of Zinzendorf, I tell the Tale of Two Cities to illustrate his approach to *Gemeine*: Herrnhut and the Moravian developments in Pennsylvania, . Here we have only limited space for a discussion of Herrnhut. It is important to remind the reader that the experiments in Pennsylvania began as an ecumenical endeavor and the Moravians only turned full attention to the development of Bethlehem after the failure of the ecumenical Church of God in the Spirit.

What is important to note is that during Zinzendorf's life the history of Herrnhut was one of continuous experimentation to find the forms which would be responsive to the dynamics of *Gemeine*. How things changed after his death is described by Erbe in his book on Herrnhut, another settlement developed by Zinzendorf which is an even better example than Herrnhut of the way architecture and city planning expressed the spiritual realities of church.

The Moravians, who previously had spread abroad so much noise, so much excitement and unrest, the Church which had been like a volcano, now became - it is scarcely to be believed - the "Welt der Stillen im Lande" (the world of the quiet in the land), a piece of German Biedermeier, middle class and noble, closed in upon itself in its Settlement Congregations, these quiet and proper villages, simple and distinguished, separate from the greater world, at the same time intimate and world-wide, with its culture in life-style and the arts worthy of respect, in constantly new realizations of community (*Gemeine*) shaped by its focus upon itself.³³

Pietism in Halle, under the influence of August Hermann Francke, had already begun experimentation with the development of institutions for the benefit of orphans and the poor, besides schools, a seminary for teachers, a printing office and bookstore, a Bible House, and infirmary. Zinzendorf had originally intended to develop at Herrnhut something similar to Halle. However, circumstances dictated otherwise and soon communal forms were developed to suit the needs of the developing community at Berthelsdorf and Herrnhut and its mission.

Herrnhut was shaped by the settlement of refugees from Moravia and elsewhere. At first there was little structure and Zinzendorf entrusted the care of this developing community to Johann Andreas Rothe, the Lutheran pastor of Berthelsdorf. In 1725 Rothe initiated the first stage in the development of offices for a community of about 60 persons from Berthelsdorf and Herrnhut. Especially influential was a sermon he preached on Romans 12:7-8, urging the use of apostolic offices for the developing community. Christian David, one of the settlers from Moravia who fast assumed a leadership role, reported on this sermon that

he proved how very unfair it would be that everything would be allowed to depend on one or two poor preachers. For 1) no one would have all the gifts which are needed for a whole community (*Gemeinde*); 2) even if he would have all gifts, so the time and strength would be lacking to care for this according to the need of each member, but where members are committed to one another and one serves the other with that gift which each received from the Lord for the common good, then can the whole body be built up for its self-improvement.³⁴

³³ Hans-Walter Erbe, "Herrnhut - Tiefpunkt oder Höhepunkt der Brüdergeschichte," *Unitas Fratrum*, Heft 26, Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1989, pp. 45-46.

³⁴ Hanns-Joachim Wollstadt, *Geordnetes Dienen in der christlichen Gemeinde, dargestellt an den Lebensformen der Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine in ihren Anfängen*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966, *Arbeiten zur Pastoraltheologie*, Band 4, ed. by Martin Fischer and Robert Frick, p. 139 (Herrnhut Archives R 6 Aa 16, Apr 1727).

On February 2, 1725, a four hour meeting was held for the assignment of offices. There is a little writing in Zinzendorf's hand which lists seven women and seven men representing both Berthelsdorf and Herrnhut at the top and then lists their assignments as "Helpers in the Work of the Lord". The categories of assignment seem closely related to Romans 12:7-8 as it existed in Luther's translation:³⁵ The listing of the women begins the significant role of women in the Moravian Church during the life of Zinzendorf, not only in the women's groups but also in the whole community, even including ordination and the significant role of Anna Nitschmann (called Mother of the community) in ordinations.³⁶ The category "Helper" was to become the primary Moravian term for Pastor (*Gemeinhelfer* or Congregational Helper).

The second stage of development happened in relationship to the differences and resultant quarrels of the settlers which necessitated pastoral work by Zinzendorf (1726-27) and further organizational development. Zinzendorf prepared the *Manorial Injunctions and Prohibitions*, binding upon every resident of Zinzendorf's estate and signed by them on May 12, 1727. To these were added the *Brotherly Agreement* which was binding only on those who voluntarily wished to be a part of the religious community.³⁷ The residents of Herrnhut were free citizens under the protection of the Count who became Overseer and represented the community to the outside world. An elected body of Elders, patterned after customary Upper Lausitz village government, cared for the life of the community. There were initially twelve elders selected, from which four Chief Elders were selected by lot. The elders represented and preserved the identity of the several groups with different origins within the community, with two Elders and one Chief Elder for each group.³⁸ There is a document in the Herrnhut Archives in the hand of Zinzendorf which provides a list of offices under the title: "Worldly Direction of the Republic of God at Herrnhut"³⁹: the Elders and other such offices as craftmaster, almsgiver, overseer of streets, carer for the sick, etc. The development of the Bands, or small groups, in 1727 are considered to be a third stage in the development of offices, especially concerned with pastoral care.

These beginnings of the ordering of communal life underwent many changes. For example the office of Elder by 1730 became primarily a spiritual office and the administrative tasks were taken over by the General Council (*Gemeingericht*). That the forms of community life should be engaged in a process of constant change fitted Zinzendorf's understanding of the nature of institutional forms:

All institutions exist for the sake of their purpose. When the purpose is no longer attained or falls away, so one lets go of the thing itself, and so must it be in a *Gemeine* of God, otherwise there is no salt and it only goes on *ex opere operato*.⁴⁰

There was initially a clear intent by both Rothe and Zinzendorf to establish an apostolic community patterned after the early church. Zinzendorf said:

³⁵ Ibid., p. 130-131.

³⁶ See Issue 17 of *TMDK (Transatlantic Moravian Dialogue Correspondence)* with the theme "Women in Ordained Ministry", Bethlehem, PA: Center for Moravian Studies, Moravian Theological Seminary, March 1999. The issue is devoted to Moravian women in ministry, both in the 18th and 20th centuries, with articles from N. America, Germany, England and Surinam.

³⁷ The *Brotherly Agreement*, revised extensively throughout its history, continues as the *Moravian Covenant for Christian Living*

³⁸ Hanns-Joachim Wollstadt, *Geordnetes Dienen in der christlichen Gemeinde ...*, p. 143. The identification of groups according to origin was further developed to seven and then ten areas in the years 1728 to 1730, but then fell into disuse.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 140.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 125, note 10. From the Herrnhuter Diarium, Rückblick auf das Jahr 1734 beim 31.12.1734, von 15. Januar 1735.

What we have in our *Gemeine*, to which we hold, is apostolic, and is recognized by others, because it has for its foundation the simplest Scripture. That is our goal by which we measure ourselves.⁴¹

However, as various developments took place, it became clear that biblical patterns were not the only determinant, but the needs of the present situation were also important. At the Synod of Gotha in 1740 when Zinzendorf presented the reasons for the beginnings of the Choir system (divisions according to age and gender), he commented:

Regarding Choirs ... in the New Testament there is nothing about a similar division ... Therefore we want to present this not as a biblical, but a Moravian Brethren's institution ..., only that ours is more developed (German *ordentlicher*) than the old Brethren had theirs. And if it would even be neither biblical nor Moravian, yet the circumstances in which we stand demand it. It is now a new world.⁴²

In the summer of 1727 Zinzendorf began the use of "Bands" to deal with the spiritual and interpersonal life of the community. The bands were voluntary associations of a small group of persons. Each band was led by a band convenor or director [*Bandhalter*] who assumed primary responsibility for the pastoral care of persons in the band. By 1734 the number of bands in the Herrnhut congregation had grown to 100. The 1745 description by Zinzendorf and a description by Christian David (the second below) make clear the insights into the nature of pastoral care embodied in this development:

That we meet as bands with each other, that we confesses one to the other the state of the heart and diverse imperfections, is not done in order to consult with our brothers and sisters because we could not get along without the counsel of a brother or sister. Rather is it done that one may see the rightness of the heart. By that we learn to trust one another, by that no brother or sister thinks of the other that things are going well with them if they are really going poorly. Then no one can imagine that the brother or sister feels well when they are in pain. That's why you talk to each other, why you unburden your hearts, so that you can constantly rely on each other.⁴³

Initially there were among the brothers and sisters several who had a special trust in each other so that they began especially to form an association with the purpose 1) that they want to say to each other everything that they have on their heart and mind. 2) that they want to remind and encourage each other concerning everything they can see or think of each other and yet always to encourage one another to the good in everything. 3) that they want to come together once every week, in the evening, to hold conference or bands with which they might get to know one another well from within and without. 4) that they wish to give each other the freedom for heart, life and journey, to

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 43, from Theol. Bedenken, p. 75, im Extract eines Antwort-Schreibens an NN über verschiedene Punkte die Gemeine zu Hh. betreffend, 1734..

⁴² Ibid., p. 108. (R 2 A Nr. 3 A 1, Sessio VII v. 6/16/1740, p. 143ff. Uttendörfer in *Erziehungswesens*, p. 144, note 2 indicates "that Zinzendorf approximately since 1740 gave up the idea of measuring all by the Apostolic Age."

⁴³ *Zwey und dreißig einzele Homiliae oder Gemeinreden in denen Jahren 1744. 1745. 1746, Daß ich euch immer einerley sage, verdrüß mich nicht, und macht euch desto gewißer*, zu finden in den Brüder-Gemeinen, n.d., Sermon XX p. 17, quoted in Gottfried Schmidt, "Die Bänden oder Gesellschafter in alten Herrnhut", in *Zeitschrift für Brüderschichte* 3 (1909), p. 154, quoted in Peter Zimmerling, "Seelsorge in der Gemeinschaft: Zinzendorf als Seelsorger," *Theologische Beiträge*, Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brockhaus, 26th Year, April 1995, pp. 76ff. Translated into English as "Pastoral Care in the Community: Zinzendorf and Pastoral Care" in *Transatlantic Moravian Dialogue Correspondence*, issue 11, March 1997, English Edition, Bethlehem, PA, pp. 58-59.

test and express everything, and so love one another as their own life, to keep watch, pray, struggle and fight for one another, and to bear, spare one another, and help make life easier which is otherwise difficult, and therefore have the community which is *proper Evangelio* [appropriate to the Gospel].⁴⁴

By 1731 another form of community division called "small classes" came into being under the influence of the Pietistic attempt to analyze spiritual development and to assign persons to stages in this development, to be distinguished from the "great classes," a term used for the division of the community into groups according to age, status and sex before the application of the term "Choir" to these larger divisions. Unfortunately these small classes gradually took the place of the bands.

From the division according to spiritual development there is only a short way to the Warrior (German *Streiter*) ideal which meant much to Pietism and the 18th century Moravian communities. The Warrior was committed to complete obedience and surrender to Christ and to live for the ultimate mission in service of the Lord.⁴⁵ For example, Zinzendorf and his wife were committed to this Warrior ideal and their marriage was regarded as a *Streiterehe*, a "warrior marriage".

Zinzendorf came to see the division of persons into classes according to spiritual development as a mistake. He realized this as he turned to the centrality of grace in Luther by 1734 and came to reject the Pietistic teaching about the Conversion Struggle (*Bußkampf*) and stages of development. What one was came from God and not from one's development. Development was the response to God's gift.

The Choir system had its beginnings in earlier "great classes" of the *Gemeine* according to sex, age and station in life.⁴⁶ It did not at first supplant the bands and small classes, but rather slowly subsumed them. The name "Choir" (*Chor*) was not employed until 1735.⁴⁷ An important part of the Choir development was the building of the great Choir houses in which each group lived and carried on their life and crafts. The origin of the term Choir (*Chor*) is not to be solved.⁴⁸

The division of men and women and according to age and status provided for an interesting approach to spiritual life, for the Savior in his life paralleled the stages of human development and life experience. The life of Jesus and Mary then became a paradigm for the classes and Choirs. Each group should, in its circumstances and with its gifts, model a part of the nature of Jesus, particularly in relationship to that stage of his life which related to theirs.

The Single Brothers Choir was the first to develop in Herrnhut, followed by the Choir for Single Sisters. The Widows Choir also developed early because of the economic needs of this particular group, but the Choir for Widowers was not formed until 1746. In the 1740's the Choir for Married Persons also came into being, along with a Choir for Children where as a matter of necessity children had often to be cared

⁴⁴ Christian David, *Beschreibung und Zuverlässige Nachricht von Herrnhut ...*Leipzig, 1735, p. 33ff. Quoted in Wollstadt, *Geordnetes Dienen in der christlichen Gemeind*, p. 93-94.

⁴⁵ Wollstadt has an extended discussion of the *Streiteridee* on pp. 317ff., *Ibid.*.

⁴⁶ Wollstadt indicates that there were up to eleven great classes designated: *Armkinde* (infants or children carried on the arm), *kleinen Knaben* (little boys), *kleinen Mädchen* (little girls), *großen Knaben* (older boys), *großen Mädchen* (older girls), "jungen Purschen" (unmarried young men), "Jungfern" (virgins or young women), *verheirateten Männer* (married men), *verheirateten Weiber* (married women), *Witwer* (widowers) and *Witwen* (widows). *Ibid.* p. 106.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 104f, footnote 183.

for apart from parents who were engaged in the building up of the settlements or the various mission enterprises of the Church.

The membership of a person in the Choirs, when the system was fully developed, began even before birth. In some settlements there was an Embryo Choir. Zinzendorf said:

When the marriage has been consecrated to the Lord and the mother lives in continuous interaction with the Savior, one may expect that already in the mother's womb the children form a Choir, that is, a grouping of the community consecrated to the Lord's work.⁴⁹

By the age of about one and a half the child was then given to the care of the Nursery, and education and spiritual care under the supervision of the Choir began. From age 12-17 the children were in the Older Boys' and Older Girls' Choirs which prepared them to take their place in the community. Here the children were often apprenticed to specific trades. From the Single Brothers' or Single Sisters' Choirs they would move, upon marriage, into the Married People's Choir.

Having described Zinzendorf's understanding of Gemeine, let me now relate this to biblical insights.

Some Reflections on the Early Church

In the New Testament churches, as well as the later historic churches, there is always a movement from the experienced realities which call a community, tradition or institution into being towards institutionalization and organization, This perpetuates without calling for the more difficult attempt to relate again to the originative realities. The Gospel of Matthew is a case in point where authority is transmitted to Peter (implying also to his successors), as is the Corinthian problem, where there is an attempt to create a church out of loyalty to teachings and leaders rather than living from the reality of God (I Cor. 1). One finds this also in deutero Pauline materials, especially in the late first century additions to I Timothy, where the church's organizational developments and the purity of these developments (of bishops, deacons and widows) constitute the church and women are now forbidden a public role.

The early church claimed to develop from three realities. One was the Jewish traditions which, as Christianity lost its roots within Judaism, came to be used more for proof-texting and explaining the background of the Christ event (though some Gnostics tried to eliminate Jewish Scriptures). The second was the person of Jesus and the reality encountered in him. On the whole this was more than just his teachings or just the atonement, for it was felt important to tell his story from his Baptism to the Ascension/Resurrection. And the very differences of the Gospels points to a reality of Jesus who transcends their particular and unique forms. The resurrection also places him as person back in the center and above the traditions about what he did or said. The third was the Spirit. The Spirit, like the resurrected Christ, attests to God as a contemporary participant in the life of the church and is in a sense a continuation of the incarnation. Christ and God, whom the Spirit is of, both remain contemporary participants down here, in our world, and not just remotely from heaven. In dealing with the Spirit it is important to mention Paul's perceptions over against Acts. Luke in Acts portrays a naive understanding of

⁴⁹ *Jüngerhaus Diarium*, Sept. 19, 1755, MA Hh, quoted in Uttendörfer, *Zinzendorf und die Jugend*, op. cit., p. 85, in Gilliam Lindt Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities*, NY: Columbia U. Press, 1967 p. 80. The Embryo Choir provided prenatal care for the mothers, but also for the children. It was taken seriously that the Savior was in relationship with all his souls, even the unborn child. One of Zinzendorf's favorite stories about the nature of religion was the instance when the embryonic Jesus in his mother's womb came into the room where Elizabeth was with John in her womb, and John leapt for joy in his mother's womb.

the power of God which I believe he modified in his second version of the Gospel (the Gospel we now have). The Spirit in Acts is identified with pure power and is irresistible. The Pentecost experience is an experience of great power, with the rush of a mighty wind from heaven and tongues of fire. All through history we have been seeking to live up to the power of Pentecost. Few succeed. Most hope for a new Pentecost but regard their present experience of God as somehow failed. And yet Paul knows that he must allow the cross to remain God's foolishness and weakness (I Cor. 1), not hiding this reality by oratorical eloquence (I Cor. 2), and that he must speak of the tragic events of his life (II Cor. 11:22ff) along with his spiritual experiences (II Cor. 12:1-10). Even John knows that the Ascended and returned Jesus is still the bearer of his wounds (John 20). Jesus and the Spirit are not so hard to find when we realize that they are still bound to the realities of this life.

The difficulties of our institutionalization have to do with the institution's forgetting to take seriously its originative realities, or feeling that there is too much complexity in trying to relate to the originative realities. It is too difficult to find what we have claimed should be there. Because the originative realities were remembered as very powerful, they are difficult to replicate. It is easier to form the institution by its history and structure and often by the forms and needs of the present. Then there are those who seek to maintain the divine nature of the present structures and by this eliminate the need to examine and question the inherited forms and to obviate the need to ask the question of what the church might be like today if it responded to its originative reality. The assertion of divine authority for the church also claims for it a type of purity which loses the humanity of the church in the claim for power of God (note the description of church officers in I Timothy whose required purity would have eliminated the apostles). Matthew avoids the whole question of the Spirit by establishing an ongoing structure beginning in the teaching of Jesus, his possession of authority, and his transmission of this to Peter. Matthew also avoids the question of the relationship of the reality of Jesus to the church by having his commandments matter more than his presence, even though he says he will be with them to the end of the age.

Either the resurrected Jesus is there or he is not. Either the Spirit is there or she is not. Either God is real or God is not. Either we live in mystical communion or we do not. Either there is a mission to the world, or there is not. Either we live from the dynamics of the realities which constitute us, or we do not. Either we are more than institution or only institution. Either we are *Gemeine*, or we are not. But what an adventure we are missing when we are not. As Erbe said of the post-Zinzendorfian Moravian Church:

The Moravians, who previously had spread abroad so much noise, so much excitement and unrest, the Church which had been like a volcano, now became - it is scarcely to be believed - the "Welt der Stillen im Lande" (the world of the quiet in the land), a piece of German Biedermeier, middle class and noble, closed in upon itself in its Settlement Congregations, these quiet and proper villages, simple and distinguished, separate from the greater world, at the same time intimate and world-wide, with its culture in life-style and the arts worthy of respect, in constantly new realizations of community (*Gemeine*) shaped by its focus upon itself.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Hans-Walter Erbe, "Herrnhaag - Tiefpunkt oder Höhepunkt der Brüdergeschichte," *Unitas Fratrum*, Heft 26, Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1989, pp. 45-46.