

THE HINGE

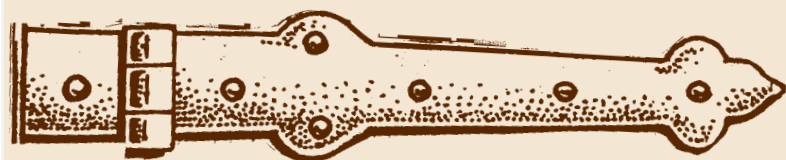
*A Journal of Christian Thought
for the Moravian Church*

Moses Lectures in Moravian Studies
Double Feature

2006 – **Moravian Music on a Mission**
Alice M. Caldwell

1999 – **The Roots of the Contemporary
Moravian Church in North America**
David A. Schattschneider

Winter 2007
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The Hinge is a forum for theological discussion in the Moravian Church. Views and opinions expressed in articles published in *The Hinge* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board or the official positions of the Moravian Church and its agencies. You are welcome to submit letters and articles for consideration for publication.

One of the early offices of the Moravian Church in Bethlehem, Pa. was that of the Hinge: “*The office of the Hinge requires that the brother who holds it look after everything and bring troublesome factors within the congregation into mutual accord without their first having to be taken up publicly in the congregation council.*”

— September 1742, *The Bethlehem Diary*, vol. 1, tr. by Kenneth Hamilton, p. 80.

The Hinge journal is intended also to be a mainspring in the life of the contemporary Moravian Church, causing us to move, think, and grow. Above all, it is to open doors in our church.

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Notes from the Editor

The Vivian Walter Moses Lecture series in Moravian studies is one of the most important contributions that the Center for Moravian Studies makes to the life of the Moravian Church. Since 2001, *The Hinge* has had the honor of publishing the annual lectures so that they may be enjoyed by a wider audience and so that there will be a lasting record for future research. Thanks to the hard work and generosity of the Center for Moravian Studies, *The Hinge* is now available online so that an even larger audience can participate in the theological discussions found in *The Hinge*. To access *The Hinge* online, go to www.moravianseminary.edu/center/. We plan to post past issues on the website in the future.

This year our annual Moses Lectures issue is a double-feature. First we have the 2006 lectures by musicologist Alice Caldwell who discusses her effort to make the Moravian musical tradition a vital part of the worship and life of her Lutheran congregation. She draws upon the 18th century tradition of *Gemeinmusik* (community music) in creating a modern congregational *collegia musicum*. Dr. Caldwell presents some of her research into the Moravian musical tradition in Labrador and shows how that story offers insight and guidance for missionaries to modern America.

The second set of lectures was given in 1999, but they deal with themes that remain relevant in the 21st century. David Schattschneider, dean emeritus, was Professor of Historical Theology at Moravian Seminary for three decades and has had a profound effect on how Moravian pastors understand the history, theology, and practice of the Moravian Church. Dr. Schattschneider discusses how the Moravian story in North America has been viewed by scholars, church leaders, and museums. For non-Moravians, the story basically ends in the early 19th century, but for church leaders the 18th century has been seen as problematic. He advocates for a new approach to Moravian history that does not separate the history of the original Unity of the Brethren from the church of Zinzendorf. He also proposes that Moravians resist the temptation to tell our history in terms of three famous Moravians (Hus, Comenius, Zinzendorf). Instead, we should celebrate lesser known but important men and women who shaped the church that now exists.

In different ways these lectures address the question of how to make legitimate use of the past in creating the church of today. Caldwell boldly claims that a practice that was deeply woven into the life of the 18th century Moravian community and was an expression of the European cultural context can reinvigorate modern worship. Schattschneider challenges modern Moravians with the task of learning from history rather than simply praising or blaming those who shaped the church we now have. Thus, in this issue of *The Hinge*, we are raising the question of how to make the church we have inherited meaningful in the world that we now inhabit.

2006 MOSES LECTURES

Moravian Music on a Mission

Alice M. Caldwell

LECTURE ONE — *GEMEINMUSIK*

Because of the nature of this event I think I should begin with a foreword to the two lectures I will be giving today. “Moravian Music on a Mission” could potentially cover a wide territory; in fact, it could cover a large part of the world. I have narrowed it to two topics, the first is based on my own, present-day experience which is partly informed by my engagement with the historic Moravian church. The second is one based on second-hand knowledge from the research and experience of others. What ties the two together is the common denominator of Moravian music, or the Moravian way of making music, appearing in a community where one wouldn’t ordinarily expect to find it and taking root in that community.

Some acknowledgments and disclaimers are in order before I begin. The narrative of my first lecture takes place in a wider context of how music traditions of different denominations can cross-fertilize and benefit each other. The developments I will outline occur in the shadow of the big questions hanging over all of us who care about good church music: where is church music headed today, and what can we do to ensure the viability of our cherished traditions? I will

not attempt to grapple with this huge question; it is too big for me and properly belongs in its own forum. Instead I will focus on how one church community that cares about the quality of its music was able to build and enhance its program with the inspiration of ideas borrowed from the history of Moravian music. I will show how the solid educational principles embodied in Moravian music history can help us to deal with questions of diversity and tradition today.

My second lecture owes its existence to other people. I first heard about Moravian music in Labrador in 2002 when Paul Peucker, who at that time was the archivist in Herrnhut, mentioned that he had seen stacks of music manuscripts stored at the churches he had recently visited there. Later, musicologist Tom Gordon held his listeners, including me, spellbound as he spoke of his work with those manuscripts at the Sixth Bethlehem Conference on Moravian Music in 2004. I originally took up correspondence with Professor Gordon because he mentioned that the extensive holdings—some 10,000 manuscripts in three collections—included works by Christian David Jaeschke, the Herrnhut composer whose life and works I have been studying for some years. Our correspondence grew from there,

Alice M. Caldwell, historian and musicologist, has done work on the social setting of Moravian liturgical music in the 18th and 19th centuries.

and I am deeply indebted to him for generously sharing his materials with me and advising me. I was able to obtain another point of view on Moravian music in Labrador from a long telephone conversation with the Reverend Sam Proptom, now living in Alberta, who worked as Leadership Developer for the Moravian Church in Newfoundland and Labrador from 2000 to 2005. Pastor Proptom was also very generous in sharing his knowledge and experience. Any errors I might make in quoting these two gentlemen are entirely my own responsibility.

In depicting a brief history of Moravian music in Labrador I will be using sources going back as early as the 1820s. Not surprisingly, some of the reports and descriptions as expressed by the early missionaries sound shocking to our modern ears. I have tried to avoid making value judgments in my narrative, since doing so would divert attention from my main thesis. Also, I should point out that the early documents refer to the native people as “Esquimaux,” whereas the preferred name used today is “Inuit.”

Today many people, myself included, are concerned about the future of church music. That is not the topic of my lecture, although I think it is a topic worthy of continuing, intense discussion. Nor will I be speaking at great length about the past history of church music, as I would be in a context devoted to musicology. Instead I will begin by talking about the present day, examining one particular church community where I have the role of music director, and I will show how I have drawn upon my knowledge of the past history of Moravian music with the goal of enhancing the present-day practice of church music in that community and in the hope of

ensuring the viability of good church music well into the future. Church musicians sometimes feel like missionaries as they attempt to bring new or unfamiliar music to an unappreciative congregation. I think that the Moravian way of doing music has a great deal to teach us members of other denominations. Together, now, we will explore the idea that Moravian music on a mission can contribute to the further positive development of church music in 21st century America.

I was grateful to the Moravian Music Foundation for printing a copy last fall of Paul Westermeyer’s essay “Worthy is the Lamb: Moravian Worship and Music in Ecumenical Context” in its newsletter because this essay provides an interesting counterpoint to what I intend to say.¹ While I don’t know much about the situation in which he first gave his lecture, I gather he was addressing the concern that some forms of contemporary music could be making inroads into the rich Moravian musical heritage in ways that diminish rather than enrich it. Westermeyer seems to be urging Moravians to resist the call to jettison their musical heritage in the interest of reaching out to a contemporary culture largely alienated from that heritage, even if this is done, as he says, “for the sake of mission.” My point of view in speaking to you today is that some aspects of the Moravian musical heritage have already enriched the musical life of my congregation, and I think have the potential to do so elsewhere “for the sake of mission.” The Moravian model, with its solid foundation of good pedagogy, can provide a congregation with the tools for meeting the challenge of “contemporary music,” in whatever

form it may take, with informed engagement and good musical judgment.

In order to show you how I arrived at my conclusions I will begin with my own background, because a particular set of influences on me, as well as educational paths that I followed, enabled me to make the connections and draw the conclusions that I will share with you today. I have to start by describing the church in which I grew up, Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Glen Head, Long Island, New York, which was founded in the postwar suburban boom by Norwegian immigrants moving out from New York City.

Today I look back with an adult perspective and appreciate the richness and pedagogical integrity of music at my childhood church: weekly Sunday School sing-alongs beginning in nursery school and continuing through grade school, strong congregational singing accompanied by a modest pipe organ, and competent music leadership that reached a new level of excellence when Our Savior's began to hire graduate students from the church music program at Union Theological Seminary. Thanks in part to their teaching and encouragement I entered the Oberlin Conservatory as an organ performance major and then added music history as a second major. As a graduate student in musicology I found my way to a dissertation topic in Moravian music, and I have continued research in that field to the extent my other responsibilities allow. In the meantime, I worked as a church musician in various denominations, spent time as a stay-at-home mother, and studied at the Hartt School of the University of Hartford

to become a certified pre-kindergarten through grade 12 music teacher.

My first encounter with Moravian music on a mission came in my early years in graduate school, when I took a part-time position as organist/choir director at Grace Lutheran Church, a Missouri Synod congregation in the Bronx. Although founded by German immigrants, by the late 1970s Grace was an ethnically diverse congregation, so I didn't take particular notice when I heard that a Nicaraguan family would be joining the church. The pastor quickly introduced us to each other, explaining that the newcomers wanted to join the choir right away. Now I began to pay more attention.

I met a family of three generations, an older couple, their daughter and son-in-law, and two grandchildren. They had arrived in the Bronx a short time earlier, fleeing turmoil in their homeland with only the suitcases they could carry. But still one of the first items on their agenda was to find a Lutheran church and join the choir.

Hoping to conceal my utter ignorance about Nicaragua, I gingerly inquired into their musical background, on the assumption that they couldn't possibly have any experience relevant to singing in an American Lutheran church. The story that came out left me speechless and quite humbled: they were Miskito Indians from Nicaragua, and lifelong members of the Moravian church; in fact, I recall the grandfather said that his father had been a pastor. They explained that they had sought out a Lutheran church because our hymns were the closest thing to the German chorales they had sung "back home."

Once I admitted what I didn't know, they explained the history of German Moravian missionaries coming to Nicaragua and teaching their music to the Miskitos.² It soon became obvious that they were musically quite well educated, were fluent sight-singers, and I often heard comments such as, "In our hymnal back home the bass line goes like this..." Clearly the music brought across the ocean long ago by those German missionaries had taken root in Nicaragua, and the Nicaraguan Moravians had since made it their own.

In the intervening years I have often thought about the questions raised by my rewarding acquaintance with that Nicaraguan family, although I never followed up with formal research. I credit them with provoking me to undertake a research project in the early period of Moravian music in Germany and America. I started with materials at the New York Public Library, which led eventually to my dissertation topic and beyond.³ Just in the past two years, however, the idea of "Moravian music on a mission" has suddenly become relevant to my work again in more ways than one.

In October 2004 I had the pleasure of participating in the Sixth Bethlehem Conference on Moravian Music. Focused on the Moravian trombone choir, past and present, the conference first got me thinking seriously how I might form a brass ensemble either at the small Episcopal church where I was the organist at the time, or in some kind of ecumenical endeavor. One presentation distracted me from thinking about trombones, however, as I listened to Canadian musicologist Tom Gordon speak about his work photographing and studying the manuscripts

of Moravian choral repertoire played and sung by the Inuit of Labrador after the arrival of German Moravian missionaries in the eighteenth century.

Professor Gordon is Director of the School of Music at Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, and has been working with the Moravian manuscripts in Labrador for several years. Among the composers represented in the Labrador manuscripts is Christian David Jaeschke (1755-1827), the Herrnhut composer whose life and works I have been studying for some time. According to Gordon, the Inuit had cultivated virtually every form of Moravian music-making: hymn-singing, trombone choirs, string and woodwind playing, and the choral/orchestral repertoire of European Moravian and non-Moravian composers.

I then began to make connections and wonder: just what is it about Moravian music that allowed it to travel to remote regions of colonial North America, or nineteenth-century Central America, or nineteenth-century Labrador, and to flourish among such disparate environments and cultures? And only a few days later I would add Fairfield, Connecticut to that list of exotic and far-flung locations.

Shortly after returning home from the Bethlehem conference, I headed off to an interview for a position as music director at a Lutheran church in Fairfield. Interestingly, the church's name is Our Saviour's, just like the one in which I grew up. Founded by Danish immigrants about a hundred years ago, Our Saviour's developed a local reputation for excellence in music in the 1980s and 90s under

the leadership of a pastor who was himself a trained musician. By the time the people of Our Saviour's were searching for a new music director in 2004, they knew they wanted to maintain their strong tradition of choral and congregational music, but were also looking for ways to grow in new directions. We were not far into the interview when I began to think, almost in so many words, "Here is another place where Moravian music can go on a mission."

Before delving into the details of music at Our Saviour's, I would like to establish a bit of context. Protestant church music in Connecticut, and perhaps in the entire Northeast, is alive and well in many larger churches in important population centers. There are flagship churches with fine music programs that serve their communities well with organ and choral music and strong children's programs. Problems arise in the smaller to medium-size churches where dwindling congregations have a hard time supporting quality music programs. While I often look to the exemplary musical offerings of the larger churches for learning and inspiration, I am excited by the challenge of working in a smaller church where the goal is to make the most of limited resources. I believe this is the context where the Moravian model of church music has the most to offer. In a small congregation every church member has an important role to play and there is an enormous potential to reach people through music, not only helping great traditions of church music to flourish but also enriching our American music culture as a whole.

I began my interview at Our Saviour's by rehearsing the choir—a small group of about ten people who were obviously well-trained in

choral singing and clearly had high expectations of themselves. We then began to talk and I learned of their tradition of "Cantata Sunday"—performing a larger work with professional instrumental accompaniment during a Sunday morning service twice a year. They listed some of the repertoire they had done over the years and my first reaction was, "This church needs a Collegium Musicum not only for special occasions but also for accompanying voices and playing on its own throughout the year." Then they outlined some goals of their long-range plan for church growth as they related to music: 1) to make the church more visible in the community, and 2) to "enhance" the music program. With regard to the first, I replayed in my head an eloquent statement I had heard spoken in Bethlehem just days before: "We consider the trombone choir of Central Moravian Church to be a form of outreach to the community." What better way to make a church and its music program visible than to send a brass choir to play at appropriate public and community events? With regard to the second goal, it was obvious to me that Our Saviour's needed to "enhance" its music with comprehensive children's and youth programs, something which, for various reasons, had been neglected for years. So I proposed the following based on what they were telling me about their needs and goals:

- 1) Form a string quartet to rehearse regularly with the goal of building it into a resident church orchestra to accompany the choir in larger works (the idea of calling it a Collegium Musicum came later)
- 2) Develop a brass quartet to accompany the choir and congregation at festival

services and play at appropriate events in the community

3) Form children's and youth choirs grouped according to age and give them a role in Sunday morning worship

My goals for the music program at Our Saviour's grew out of my understanding of Moravian history and belief, which I think set the conceptual framework for why the Moravian music model was successful in early Moravian communities, why it addressed the needs of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, and why it was successful in other communities. I believe it comes down to the concept of *Gemeinmusik*—music of the congregation. I am indebted to Dr. Peter Vogt and his essay on this topic, read at the Second Bethlehem Conference in 1996.⁴ This term, *Gemeinmusik*, recurs throughout early Moravian documents, and shows the Moravians as conscious of doing music in their own way.

The early Moravians placed such a high value on the concept of community as an expression of Christian faith that they created their own clearly defined, discrete community of believers. A Moravian congregation, or *Gemeine*, encompassed all aspects of life, including schools and music. Children growing up in the *Gemeine* would be educated in its schools and be given the skills necessary to participate in the *Gemeinmusik* as singers in the congregation or choir, or as instrumentalists both as children and as adults, whatever their station in life. *Gemeinmusik*, encompassing the congregation's total repertoire of hymn-singing, liturgical singing, instrumental and sacred vocal music, was both a body of music and a program of music-making that represented

the Moravian belief in the unity of the sacred and secular, and the oneness of performer and listener within the local community or congregation. *Gemeinmusik* encompassed ever-widening circles from local communities to the world-wide community of Christian churches, and to the transcendental communion of saints in earth and heaven. I believe that the appeal of making good music within one's church community today is as strong as it ever was, and that the Moravian concept of *Gemeinmusik* has a place in our contemporary community life. It can take root in a congregation of the right size and demographics, one that wants to make the music of the community a high priority.

Let's take a look at how music functioned in an 18th century Moravian congregation to see what lessons can be drawn from history for our benefit. It would take less time to say where music was *not* present, since music pervaded virtually all aspects of Moravian life. Following the diary of a congregation over a period of years, as I did for the Herrnhut congregation from 1784-1827, reveals a steady schedule of meetings for worship and other purposes where music played an integral role: hymn singing, liturgical singing, Singstunden, trombone playing at particular holidays and services, funeral music, newly-composed accompanied vocal music at lovefeasts, visits by dignitaries, or other special events, not to mention music taking place in homes, of which we have no record.⁵ Who was responsible for the constant outpouring of music? Members of the community, children and adults, some with special training as singers or instrumentalists, some without. And what made possible this virtually universal competence in music? An

educational system that immersed children in a musical environment while teaching them the skills of music from the earliest age.

We can appreciate the intensity of music education in a Moravian community by following the career of Christian David Jaeschke, one of the premier Moravian composers and the organist in Herrnhut from 1786-1827.⁶ Jaeschke was a true child of the Moravian church, almost literally, and spent his entire life in the fold of the Moravian church in Germany. Born in Berlin to missionary parents, Jaeschke was placed in the Catherinenhof, an early-childhood boarding institution near Herrnhut, at the age of 22 months. Records show that his mother visited him at least once, but by the time he was 5, both parents had traveled to the Moravian mission in east India and died within a few months of each other. Jaeschke had nobody but the Moravian church to teach him music (or anything else). Singing pervaded life at the school, and was part of the liturgical gatherings, funerals, Singstunden, and other events that punctuated each day. At the frequent lovefeasts, the younger children listened while older children and adults performed.

As a young man Jaeschke attended the Paedagogium in Niesky, where the regular curriculum encompassed Latin, history, Greek, mathematics, Hebrew, French, calligraphy, and geography. Lessons in music and art were optional, according to a student's aptitude. Music students took two 1-hour lessons a week in violin and piano. The daily schedule began with three academic periods, then a period of Collegium Musicum, and music instruction from 11-12 o'clock. After lunch, two more academic periods

were followed by music again from 4-5 o'clock. A weekly Singstunde was open to all, but one teacher conducted a nightly Singstunde for gifted students to sing and play. For at least a part of Jaeschke's time in Niesky his house father was also one of his music teachers. One can imagine that informal instruction and mentoring must have been a continual process.

Jaeschke's secondary education took place at the Barby seminary from 1774-1777, however, documentary evidence of his musical education disappears at this point. His first job was as a schoolteacher and organist; then he began a career in editing and writing for the Moravian church administration. Jaeschke took a second job as organist of the Herrnhut congregation in 1784, and held it for over 40 years. We know that Jaeschke wrote a set of six monumental, fugal motets dated 1786, pieces that are practically unperformable and may have been a form of final examination in composition. Alongside his other job as a scribe for the Unity Elders Conference, Jaeschke carried out the manifold duties of a Moravian organist, not only playing the organ, for which he was renowned for his improvisational skill, but also leading the non-professional choir and instrumental ensemble, teaching music, composing about one hundred new works, and copying music. His training in both violin and keyboard left him competent to work with both voices and instruments. A picture develops of a seamless progression from early childhood music making, through rigorous school training in music, to an adult career encompassing virtually all aspects of music performance, composition, and pedagogy.

But apart from Jaeschke's professional leadership, lay members of the congregation learned music and contributed in their own way to this rich, all-encompassing musical life. Children sang for their elders at the festivals of married brethren, or widows and widowers, or on Christmas Eve. Young women sang in the choir while teaching music in the Moravian schools. Young men played and taught their instruments. Ownership of keyboard instruments was widespread. Chorales were sung at every kind of gathering. Music enriched Moravian communities from the bottom up and across all walks of life. It was not an occupation reserved for a select few but was truly *Gemeinmusik*—the music of the congregation. When the archdeacon of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig visited Herrnhut in 1811, he left "astonished and moved by all that he had seen and heard."⁷ Undoubtedly that included music performed without benefit of a dedicated choir school or specially employed professional musicians. In those days, virtually all Moravians learned music, learned it well, and made music throughout their lives.

Now let's imagine a Moravian musician of the late 18th century—we'll call him a musical missionary—traveling across time to visit an average American Protestant church in the year 2006. Will he find music instruction beginning with small children and continuing through elementary and high school? Will he find an adult congregation universally able to sing a particular repertoire of hymnody? Will there be young people and adults musically literate and skilled enough to perform a large body of concerted vocal and instrumental music? Will there be a high percentage of keyboard players,

many of them able to improvise fluently? Will the congregation include a number of composers able to write new pieces to fit special occasions?

My guess is that the typical small to medium American congregation would score quite low on most, if not all, of these criteria. Of course, there are the shining exceptions as well, but these do not concern us right now. But when a contemporary American church music program does attain a level of excellence, how often is that due to the contribution of paid professionals brought in from outside, and how often does it come from committed members of a congregation, a true *Gemeinmusik*?

This was in part the situation I found as I began my work at Our Saviour's. Despite a core group of dedicated and well-trained singers and a generally high level of congregational singing, the special music for the Cantata Sundays was heavily supported by professionals and college students who played or sang for the occasion and then left. Children's music centered on the contributions of a small group of talented students who had been well taught by an outstanding local music teacher, but children who attended other schools were left far behind. My assessment was that it was necessary to make Our Saviour's a center of high-quality, comprehensive music education for congregation members of all ages so that the contributions of outside professionals would be a complement to, and not a substitution for, a true *Gemeinmusik*.

At the outset we need to acknowledge that the close integration of school, childcare, and church that worked in early Moravian communities to foster musical learning generally

does not exist today in the type of community we are considering. The task for us as we imagine a modern version of *Gemeinmusik* is to promote music learning, whether it happens inside or outside the church music program, and to apply it, as the Moravians did, from the bottom up and across all walks of life.

I will start by detailing the goals I set as I began my work at Our Saviour's (some of them still unmet), and make clear some of the educational principles I have been using to guide me. I'll begin with an unmet goal, the brass quartet, which, as of this writing, consists of a pick-up group that includes one member of the congregation and one paid professional, and plays twice a year for festival services. A permanent, resident ensemble is beyond our reach at the moment and will require some more discussion with local band teachers on my part. The comment on the Bethlehem trombone choir as a form of outreach continues to echo in my memory.

Next I turned my attention to forming a string quartet as the basis for building an instrumental ensemble. I should mention as an aside that, in our area, instrumental ensembles as a regular part of a church program are very rare. But, thanks to a good string program in the local schools, it didn't take long to assemble four high school musicians, only one of them coming from outside the congregation. With limited time available in the students' busy lives, we began by rehearsing easy pieces for student string ensemble and a collection of standard hymns arranged for quartet. We discussed what the group should be called. I felt "String Quartet" was too restrictive, since the long-term goal was to grow beyond a quartet. I mentioned

the term "Collegium Musicum" to the players, with the idea of using it not in the present-day sense of a college or university ensemble devoted to early music, but in the spirit of the 18th century, as the Moravians used it: a resident church, court, or university ensemble capable of accompanying voices or playing independent instrumental repertoire. The players were in favor of that name and we have used it ever since, while continuing to teach some members of our congregation how to pronounce it.

Once we started calling ourselves Collegium Musicum I realized it was time to make our debt to the early Moravians more explicit in long-term program planning and by directly teaching our student musicians about their artistic forebears. Nola Knouse, in her recent essay titled "The Collegium Musicum: Music of the Community," shows how the Moravian Collegium Musicum developed from the larger tradition of amateur musical ensembles in German-speaking Europe. An early 19th-century writer describes the Collegium Musicum as a "weekly music gathering on a specific day. This was neither an ordinary rehearsal in which new pieces were practiced or already-familiar ones prepared for public performance, nor a public concert. Rather it was intended to keep the orchestra 'in practice' on already familiar pieces."⁸ Around the same time, the Moravian musician Christian Ignatius LaTrobe described a similar group of amateur musicians whose main job was to accompany concerted anthems. Most applicable to the present-day suburban church situation, however, is LaTrobe's statement: "The practice of instrumental music is recommended by the Brethren, as a most useful substitute for

all those idle pursuits, in which young people too often consume their leisure hours; and since its application as an accompaniment and support to the voice is calculated to produce the most pleasing effect, its use in the Church has been retained.”⁹ As the mother of a teenager I am all too aware of the lure of “idle pursuits” that “consume the leisure hours” of young people, and I am more convinced than ever that every church needs a Collegium Musicum both for the educational benefit of the members and as an enhancement to the church’s music program.

So with a string quartet in place and rehearsing more or less weekly, it was time to think through a program of long-term teaching and programming goals. But first I want to point out how the Collegium Musicum has also turned into a solution to the limitations posed by our building and our organ (or lack thereof), limitations shared by many other small churches. As I worked through these problems I realized that a permanent Collegium Musicum could help us overcome many of these limitations. Our Saviour’s is a small church, seating about 160, with scarce space for musicians only in the front sanctuary. The organ is an outdated digital instrument with glaringly poor tone quality, useful only for accompanying congregational singing. Good pipe organs are extremely rare in our area, and the prospects of Our Saviour’s acquiring a new organ in the near future are dim indeed. On the positive side, a forward-looking church member donated a 6-foot Yamaha grand piano a few years ago, and for some categories of repertoire, this instrument is ideal. But that still leaves other periods unspoken for, notably Baroque, early Classic, and yes, Moravian,

repertoire, for which our small building and small choir are otherwise well-suited. Here, a Collegium Musicum bridges the gap beautifully, and with the addition of a one-manual Martin harpsichord, which we acquired thanks to a generous donor this past summer, we are well equipped for music of the Classic period and earlier.

With the core ensemble in place and a harpsichord at our disposal, the Collegium Musicum was ready to explore the possibilities. From hymns and simple arrangements we moved on to accompany the adult choir in a performance of Buxtehude’s cantata *Alles, was ihr tut*. Here we were helped by a local professional violinist who played first violin and gave our students some valuable coaching in Baroque performance practice. Later that year we performed an early Mozart mass. For an ecumenical Thanksgiving service we played a sonata by Corelli for strings and oboe. We are beginning to explore the Moravian repertoire, most recently with a duet by John Gambold in one of my own editions. All in all, we are doing many of the same things that an early Moravian Collegium would have done.

One of our ongoing tasks is to develop the ability to accompany hymns. The players have learned to read from hymnal scores, including our intrepid violist, who reads his part from the bass clef. We also prepared a program of secular music to bring to area nursing homes, including Strauss waltzes, a Joplin ragtime transcription, and, for a visit to the Jewish Home for the Elderly, a couple of Jewish folk tunes and klezmer *freylachs*.

I think we have created a viable, updated version of the 18th-century Collegium Musicum which provides young people with an enriching use of their “leisure hours.” Certainly they are exposed to repertoire rarely encountered in their school or youth symphony orchestras, with their emphasis on concert performance and competitions. And I feel this is an important venue for music education, much as the early observer of the Collegium Musicum described: “The Kapellmeister gave instruction between the different pieces as well as at the end of the performance, with friendly conversation about the pieces as well as generally about theoretical and practical subjects of the art.”¹⁰ Collegium rehearsals at Our Saviour’s consist not just of learning notes, but also include discussions of form, harmony, compositional technique, and the cultural and historical context of the music we learn. We have even made a few attempts at ensemble improvisation, and hope to do more.

At some point in my work at Our Saviour’s, I realized that not only history and theology, but also a modern-day theoretical framework borrowed from the world of music education helps to make clear the relevance of the early Moravian music model to the needs of small Protestant churches today. The goal of progressive music educators to develop their students into well-rounded, independent musicians who can perform, create, and respond to music is the same goal we should strive toward in building a good church music program.

The National Standards for music education were published in 1994, part of a larger project to create a system of national standards in all the visual and performing arts.¹¹ I recall seeing

the newly-released standards summarized in the newspaper and feeling astonished as I looked them over. My own college education in music did not adequately address all these standards as they were outlined for grades K-12:

- 1) Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- 2) Playing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of instrumental music
- 3) Improvising melodies, variations and accompaniments
- 4) Composing and arranging music
- 5) Reading and notating music
- 6) Listening to, describing, and analyzing music
- 7) Evaluating music and music performances
- 8) Making connections between music, other disciplines, and daily life
- 9) Understanding music in relation to history and culture

The standards serve today as a framework for training music educators and for writing school music curriculum. I would like to propose that they also apply to the ideal church music program in the present day, and, if we look back in time, to the Moravian model of *Gemeinmusik* in the 18th century. They also can provide a church with the means for handling the challenge of change in the face of tradition.

Let’s go through the standards one at a time and see how they can relate both to the present day, using Our Saviour’s as an example, and to the historic Moravian church music program:

1) Singing a varied repertoire: obviously this is heart of the music program in any Protestant church, and both Lutherans and Moravians are especially renowned for their singing. I will address the topic of “varied repertoire” shortly.

2) Playing a varied repertoire on instruments: this is where present-day churches might learn from the Moravians, by building a permanent instrumental ensemble as I have just described. Every Moravian congregation had an instrumental ensemble, and keyboard instruments were common in the home. As we have seen, the music curriculum in Moravian schools included both piano and violin.

3) Improvising: a skill that seems to have been lost some time in the 20th century, but has been showing signs of a comeback more recently. I am trying to work lessons in improvisation into our choral rehearsals, using folk tunes with a simple chord structure, and the Collegium has tried it as well with fiddle tunes. Improvisation was a skill demanded of every Moravian keyboard player, used to introduce hymns and fill the space between the lines of a hymn sung at the very slow tempo used in those days. Even string players accompanying a liturgy had only the first few bars of a chorale melody notated in their part; they were expected to improvise the rest.

4) Composing: this is not a strength of mine, but I would give lots of encouragement to any student who wanted to compose for our program. The Moravian tradition in

composition is, of course, overwhelming. Has anyone ever counted the total number of music manuscripts in all known collections of Moravian music? New pieces were constantly being written for special occasions, not just by congregation organists but also by pastors and administrators for whom music was an avocation.

5) Reading and notating: I firmly believe that instruction in sight-singing and ear training belongs in every school and church music program. Low levels of music literacy in our congregations make it difficult to introduce new music or reintroduce neglected music from the past. By contrast, there must have been nearly universal music literacy in Moravian congregations, not to mention a high level of aural skills. I once came across a Moravian sight-singing book from the mid-19th century which used chorale melodies for its teaching materials. Melodies were grouped according to their pitch content in a way that brings to mind the Kodaly method widely used today.

6) Listening, analyzing, describing: in all my rehearsals, with children through adults, we discuss style, form, harmony, and compositional techniques as we learn a piece. How else can we evaluate new music that comes our way, such as the new hymns and liturgical settings currently being published by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? We know that the early Moravians had a clearly-defined concept of what style of music was appropriate for use in church and what was not. The Synod of 1801 reminded church elders everywhere “to keep

a careful watch to ensure that worldliness or a foreign spirit will not sneak into the congregation through the introduction of unsuitable musical pieces.”¹² I found it noteworthy that a soprano solo by Jaeschke that could easily pass for an operatic aria exists in only one copy, whereas many of his other works, that conform to the accepted style of *Gemeinmusik*, disseminated all over the world.¹³

7) Evaluating music performance: we listen to our own recorded performances, as well as commercial recordings, and discuss ways to improve. For the early Moravians, evidence is hard to come by, but the memoirs or obituaries of prominent musicians show that the Moravians recognized outstanding talent. John Gambold, for instance (1760-1795), was described as a “master of music when he played the organ and clavier.”¹⁴

8) Understanding relationships to other arts and disciplines: some of our discussions relate to visual art, theology, and church teachings. The early Moravians had a clear understanding of music in the context of their faith and theology, for example in the belief that singing was an outward manifestation of faith and commitment, or that music made on earth was a reflection of the music made above by the heavenly hosts.

9) Understanding music in relation to history and culture: this is also included in our discussions. Moravians understood the role of music in their own history and culture, for instance, in recognizing the Singstunde as a distinctively Moravian institution.

Music in an early Moravian community met virtually all of these standards to a high level, and I believe that is why we can look back to the Moravians for inspiration today. On a cautionary note, however, there is one criterion which needs to be brought up to date, and which has a special importance for our concerns today; that is the “varied” repertoire called for in standards 1 and 2. Early Moravians expressly avoided “variety,” at least in the sense of “diversity,” in their repertoire. Music was an expression of their communal identity and religious conviction and thus needed to be clearly and narrowly defined. Today, however, a church that restricts itself to one musical genre, style, or period, risks becoming a museum, as Paul Westermeyer asserts in his essay. Now, the Moravians themselves began to explore a wider range of music toward the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, as noted by Peter Vogt in his analysis of the Moravian handbook for church musicians in its various editions.¹⁵ I firmly believe in applying the term “diverse,” used in its true sense, to a contemporary program of church music. I was delighted to find an article by Richard Bunbury in the February 2006 issue of *The American Organist* that put my thoughts into a concise argument for a synthesis of “depth”—reaching back through the historic periods of music—and “breadth”—reaching across the various genres of music available to us today.¹⁶

I think the concept of “diversity” takes us to the heart of the controversy over “contemporary music” that occupies congregations and church musicians right now. My contribution to the debate today has been to present the model of a church music program that encourages the

lifelong growth of congregation members in music learning. What better way is there to equip people to make decisions about what kind of music belongs in their worship, and to deal with change and new ideas constructively?

I will close by sharing with you some more details of how Moravian inspiration, shaped by the nine standards in music education, have helped to build our music program at Our Saviour's. Perhaps some of you will be able to take home some ideas to use in your own congregational music or ministry.

Our adult choir needs to improve music reading and ear training skills. With barely enough rehearsal time to learn our week-to-week repertoire, I looked for some modern technology to help out. There are a number of free websites available on the Internet that offer programs of ear-training and sight-singing skills. I encourage choir members to use them at their own pace. We have long-term plans to use technology to promote congregational singing as well, by providing digital versions of new hymns and liturgical music on our church website.

Children's and youth choirs: here I needed to build a program from the bottom up. We all know how scarce and valuable children's "spare" time has become, and I think it is more important than ever to make sure that every minute we spend working with them brings high-quality instruction. As I said earlier, we cannot reproduce the integrated community life of the early Moravians, but we can treat every age group with the respect and consideration for educational needs that it deserves. We need to acknowledge that young people and children have their own

important roles in our congregations as well as adults. Children and youth deserve high-quality, age-appropriate instruction in music.

We have also developed a music internship program to keep college students involved in our program to the extent they are able. In early Moravian communities, young people finished their education and then took up positions in other congregations, or missions, so that the world-wide Moravian community, or *Gemeine*, benefited from its investment in education. We have seen this in the example of Christian David Jaeschke, who was educated by the church and then went on to serve the church for his whole life. In an effort to keep our valued young people involved with our congregational music, this year we selected as interns a pianist who is majoring in music at Susquehanna University, a violinist who is studying music education at the Eastman School of Music, and a vocalist entering St. Olaf College. The program was inaugurated with a fund-raising concert, and continues as our interns present performance projects and offer free private lessons to congregation members on a trial basis. I have to add that this last idea derives from a present-day Moravian model. At one of the early Bethlehem Conferences I remember hearing that the Lititz trombone choir had been revitalized by Jean Doherty, its director at that time, offering free private lessons to anyone willing to join the choir. That emphatic message of commitment to music learning has stayed with me, and we hope to see our own version of it promote music learning in our congregation.

I have tried to show how the Moravian model of *Gemeinmusik*, with its solid foundation of comprehensive music education, has helped to

guide my work at a small church in Connecticut. Because the Moravian way of doing music comprised both voices and instruments, people of all ages, and creativity as well as performing, I think it offers something to inspire or enhance just about any music program in any kind of church, large or small. I also think that a church that maintains such a comprehensive, well-rounded music program is well-equipped to handle the challenges faced by church music today. After all, diversity rightly belongs in such a program, as well as the informed evaluation of music and performance. A congregation that is well-educated in music is capable of making sound judgments about what is good and worth maintaining, and what is not, with respect to its own traditions or when evaluating new trends in music. Moravian music on a mission can bring a message of excellence in education, performance, and creativity that has the potential to help any congregation integrate music into its own mission and spiritual journey.

LECTURE TWO — LABRADOR

Twenty years of successful mission work in Greenland led the early Moravians to expand into Labrador in 1752. The first attempt was unsuccessful, but a settlement was begun in 1771 that was later named Nain, a community that still exists today. Two years later the eminent German educator Paul Eugen Layritz visited, and the first baptism took place in 1776. In the same year a new settlement, Okak, was founded north of Nain, and in 1782 Hopedale, to the south. Multiple settlements were needed because

the Inuit moved around so much, following the seasons for hunting and fishing.¹⁷

Mission work in the far north was a tenuous proposition. Two other settlements begun in the nineteenth century, Hebron and Zoar, lasted only to the middle of the twentieth century. Okak had to be dissolved after the flu epidemic of 1918 decimated the population. The buildings were dismantled and some of the materials re-used to help rebuild Nain after a catastrophic fire in 1921 destroyed many of its buildings.

In 1896 Makkovik was founded for the purpose of working with the so-called “settlers,” people of mixed race (Inuit, French, and English) who hunted and trapped and tended to have more contact with the south. The sheet music collections extant today belong to the three communities of Nain, Hopedale, and Makkovik. They include some manuscripts that originally belonged to the settlements no longer in existence.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the three settlements numbered 228 converts. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a new missionary arrived from Germany, Benjamin Kohlmeister, and a period of revival and growth began. A hymnal in the Inuit language appeared early in the nineteenth century and in 1824 the Herrnhut congregation sent an organ to Nain. By the end of the 19th century, there were 1304 church members along the Labrador coast, 455 of whom were active communicants. Thirty-seven missionaries were employed over six stations.

The missionaries brought their music and musical instruments to the Inuit practically from the beginning. In fact, two French horns came

over on the first settlement voyage in 1771.¹⁸ We will see how, despite the hardships of a harsh natural environment that we might assume to be hostile to the cultivation of European musical traditions, the Inuit took the music of the Moravian missionaries to heart and made it their own with conviction and fervor.

An anecdote from the later 19th century illustrates the importance of music in the lives of the Inuit Moravians: In 1880 a Hamburg enterprise persuaded an Inuit family to tour Europe as a spectacle. For part of their tour they were put on display inside a fenced-in area of the Berlin Zoo. Fortunately, they were visited by German Moravians, including some who were former missionaries to Labrador, spoke their language, and invited them to services at the Moravian church in Berlin. An observer reports that the whole assembly was deeply moved as Europeans and Inuit kneeled together in prayer in the Inuit language, and makes particular note of the “heartfelt joy in their faces, as they heard the sound of German chorales and the trombone choir.”¹⁹

Considering this anecdote, and thinking back to the Nicaraguan Moravians I once knew and their fondness for German chorales, I wonder if the Moravian missionaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries used music somewhat as the Roman Catholic church used Latin as a *lingua franca*, a common language of melody, harmony, and rhythm which, once it had been imparted to a group of people, was able to transcend the limitations of language and cultural differences.

Teaching music was a high priority for the missionary effort in Labrador from the earliest years. Missionary Jens Haven, on a visit to Labrador in 1764, noted that the Inuit sorcerer and his followers stopped dancing and singing for their visitors and listened attentively when Haven began to sing a hymn in the Greenlandic language.²⁰ A later missionary mentions the existence of a provisional hymnal translated into the Inuit language as early as 1797.²¹ In 1800 a woman missionary describes her “first business” upon arrival in Okak: teaching hymns to the women, which she did with great satisfaction.²² A report from 1807 describes a high level of emotion associated with hymn singing, among both children and adults, to the point that “they burst into loud weeping.”²³

An account by missionaries Benjamin Kohlmeister and Georg Kmoch from 1811, again emphasizes the affinity of the Inuit for European music, and implies that it filled a vacuum left by the limitations of traditional, indigenous music. Note also the description of women’s voices:

In the evening, our people met in Jonathan’s tent, and sang hymns. Almost all the inhabitants were present. They afterwards spent a long time in pleasant and edifying conversation. It may here be observed, that the Esquimaux delight in singing and music. As to national songs, they have nothing deserving of that name; and the various collectors of these precious morsels in our day, would find their labour lost in endeavouring to harmonize the incantations of their sorcerers and witches, which more resemble the howlings of wolves and growlings of bears, than any thing human.

But though the hymn and psalm-tunes of the Brethren's Church are mostly of ancient construction, and, though rich in harmony, have no airy melodies to make them easily understood by unmusical ears, yet the Esquimaux soon learn to sing them correctly; and the voices of the women are remarkably sweet and well-tuned. Brother Kohlmeister having given one of the children a toy-flute, Paul took it, and immediately picked out the proper stops in playing several psalm-tunes upon it, as well as the imperfect state of the instrument would admit. Brother Kmoch having taken a violin with him, the same Esquimaux likewise took it up, and it was not long before he found out the manner of producing the different notes.²⁴

Music education seems to have progressed rapidly in the 1820s. One missionary expressed a desire for "more violins, and a violincello. As likewise a larger assortment of strings..." since the Eskimos learned to play so readily. By 1824, Nain had acquired an organ, "and before long an Eskimo organist was able with good taste to accompany the sweet and hearty singing of the congregation." One of these early music teachers remarked upon the difficulty the Inuit had in understanding the European concept of beat: "The most difficult part is keeping time, and that seems to puzzle them exceedingly. When seven years ago, I made a beginning to teach two young Esquimaux the violin, one of them grew so peevish about keeping time, that he declared, that it was impossible to learn it; but he is now one of my best scholars."²⁵ We will see the wider implications of this so-called "difficulty" in "keeping time" when we hear some examples of

performance and look at Tom Gordon's theory of the "Inuitization" of Moravian music.

Soon the German missionaries had built up the skills of the Inuit to a level where they carried out all the musical roles one would expect to find in a European Moravian congregation, as these quotations indicate:

September 9th, 1828

You will be glad to hear, that our Esquimaux retain their love, and cultivate their talent, for music. They play and sing anthems on festival days, and on other occasions. One of them has learnt, in a very short time, and with but little instructions, to play the violoncello pretty well; but the most pleasant part of their performance is, playing hymn tunes in four parts. The first violin player has learned the verses and the tunes belonging to them so well, that if he only hears the beginning of the first line, he immediately falls into the proper tune and key in which the singing is begun.²⁶

The violinist described here would have been perfectly at home accompanying a Singstunde led by Zinzendorf himself, moving by ear from one key to another as the sequence of hymn tunes required.

The Inuit musicians quickly developed their own *Gemeinmusik* and claimed their place in the *Gemeine* of the wider Moravian Church, the world-wide Christian church and in the *Gemeine* of the heavenly hosts:

Nain, 1830

Our musical performances, in the house of God, have continued to afford pleasure

and edification. The organ has remained in tolerable tune, and been in frequent use during our public and private services. All we have to regret is, that the compass is so small, and the pitch so high; the latter circumstance is productive of much inconvenience to our violin players. The singing, both of our little choir, and of the congregation, is very pleasing; and our people evidently take great delight in this enlivening portion of the Christian worship. Their predilection for extreme simplicity of accompaniment is remarkable, and their example in this particular is not unworthy the attention of their more civilized Brethren in Europe. When visitors from the other congregations at Okkak and Hopedale attend our services, they are much struck with the effect of the organ, and loudly testify their gratification. An Esquimaux, from the former place, expressed himself as follows: "How happy I feel; I am reminded, by what I have heard, of Jesus and of the company of the saved, who surround His throne, and sing his praises. There are indeed delightful notes, which I shall not soon forget." Some of the more intelligent of our people have come to me, and requested that I would shew them the interior, and explain the construction of the instrument. This being done, their wonder has been extreme. As long as they continue in their present simplicity, and neither knows nor desires any other use of "stringed instruments and organs," than that which has an immediate reference to the "praise and glory of God," we can not but feel disposed to encourage their attention to the study and

practice of music. May it long be sanctified to them as a means of spiritual blessing.²⁷

In 1836 the Nain congregation acquired two clarinets, which were taken up and used in anthem accompaniments. Comparing one of Jaeschke's anthems (*Der Herr wird hervorbrechen*) as it exists in a Labrador version with the original version, we find clarinets instead of flutes. Probably this substitution dates back to the arrival of the early clarinets. Many years later, a German visitor in 1861 remarked on the playing of chorales by trombones and clarinets.²⁸

Mission reports for the remainder of the nineteenth century mention the high quality of music made by choir, strings, brass, and organ, and remark upon the aptitude for music shown by the Inuit. By the early twentieth century the German hymn repertoire had been augmented by American gospel hymnody, including the Moody and Sankey collections.²⁹ The departure of the annual mission ship in 1913 was marked by a brass band in a small boat playing "God be with you till we meet again" and "Shall we meet beyond the river?"³⁰

Education was of course an important component of the missionaries' work, and a report from 1800 shows that the singing of hymns was taught along with scripture.³¹ Schooling took place in the winter, before children left with their parents for hunting in the spring. Probably music education happened during this time as well. In any case, the missionaries did a thorough job of teaching music to the Inuit, and before long, they were singing, playing and leading the music themselves. Detailed descriptions of musical activity in the settlements are found in the published report of a voyage to Labrador by

Benjamin LaTrobe in 1888.³² Clearly by this time Moravian music was firmly established in the Inuit communities; not only did they play and sing well, but a number of them owned harmoniums:

The next service was commenced with a choir piece, when the organ and other instruments accompanied seven singers, four women and three men. The women especially had voices of power and compass. Alto, tenor, and bass were fairly sustained, as well as soprano, and the whole effect was good. The piece, which was not easy, but suitable in liturgical character, was well rendered both in forte and piano passages. This time Ambrose, another native, presided at the organ, and Ludolf played the first violin.

I took the English service at three o'clock. Soon after we again assembled in the church, for the Eskimo choir had sent a deputation to request that they might sing some more of their pieces for us. The programme of their really excellent performance included such pieces as Hosanna, Christians Awake, Stille Nacht, Morgenstern (Morning Star), and an anthem (Ps. 96) containing effective duets for tenor and alto.

Our second call was on Abraham...As his harmonium and violin show, he is very musical; indeed, he is a leading member of the Nain choir.³³

The German-language *Missionsblatt* reported regularly on news from far-flung mission fields. Volumes from the 1890s include a few isolated references to music in Labrador, or, more specifically, musicians, for the reports

focus quite intensely on the human beings whom the mission was intended to serve. A common thread in these references to Inuit musicians is the linkage between participation in church music and the expectation of a high standard of moral character. We see this in an 1897 report of the tragic death of two young men who fell through thin ice while hunting seal: "One of them, a skilled violinist, was not very often allowed to participate in the church music, as this is something only permitted to congregation members who conform to church discipline."³⁴

An account from 1895 includes a paragraph titled "Moral conditions and spiritual life" in which the writer decries an acute shortage of native leadership in the church due to perceived failures of morals and character. One man, evidently a director of the choir, is described as "an evil weed and worse. Caught in adultery he at first denied it, then half-heartedly confessed and entangled himself in more lies. Removed both from his leadership position and as director of the church choir, he will have nothing of repentance but rather in his anger has stopped going to church and is agitating against the missionaries behind everyone's back."³⁵ Clearly, participation in church music was considered a privilege, and one which conferred status upon the participants.

By now you are probably asking yourself, what does this music sound like? There are a few clues to be found in the written reports we have just heard, but of course one recording is worth a thousand words. I think it is best to start with a simple hymn. "Jesus makes my heart rejoice," No. 662 in the Moravian Book of Worship, is a classic Moravian chorale as recorded in St. John's, Newfoundland in the 1970s.³⁶ What are some of

the characteristics of this performance that strike us? I hear a slow tempo, lack of metrical accent, the penetrating timbre of the voices, especially the women and especially on the high notes. We also notice the simplicity of accompaniment, with the first violin playing a simple, harmonic descant above the melody. Now, what can we learn from these characteristics?

The slow tempo raises two possible explanations. 1) Could this slow tempo be a holdover from the introduction of German hymns in the early nineteenth century, when hymns were sung so slowly that instrumental interludes had to be inserted between phrases? In other words, could the Inuit performance practice of today be a time-capsule representation of European performance practice from an earlier era? 2) Former missionary Sam Proptom accounted for the slow tempo of hymn singing by explaining that the Inuit consider slow singing to be a sign of respect and reverence in worship; conversely, fast singing would be considered irreverent and disrespectful. These two explanations may well work hand in hand.

Certainly the German missionaries of the early nineteenth century also considered slow singing to be a sign of reverence; it was the norm for those times. As time went on, our culture has come to accept, and now, even demand, faster tempos in hymn singing, but the Inuit of Labrador may well have held on to the practice of slow hymn singing and the concept of reverence associated with it. Another comment by Sam Proptom sheds light on this suggestion: he observed that tradition and continuity are highly valued by aboriginal cultures such as the Inuit, where in earlier times all learning took

place through the handing down of tradition. The singing of Moravian chorales and anthems in Labrador may be the closest representation we have in actual performance to the sound of German sacred music as it was performed in the early nineteenth century.

Vocal timbre: we have already heard written descriptions of the sound of Inuit voices left by the early missionaries: “the sweet and hearty singing of the congregation;” “the women especially had voices of power and compass.” Certainly what we hear on these recordings is a non-European approach to vocal production, free of vibrato, with a direct and penetrating quality. The women in particular sound quite comfortable on high notes, and we will examine the question of tessitura and key in another example. Lack of metrical accent: this could be a manifestation of the “difficulty keeping time” described by an early missionary, as well as a by-product of the slow tempo. According to Tom Gordon, the Inuit concept of time was very much tied to changes in nature and the seasons, and abstract concepts of marking time did not exist in their language.³⁷ Perhaps this accounts for the difficulty noted by the early music teacher in teaching the concept of “keeping time,” which Europeans did by keeping a steady beat with a regular accent.

Simplicity of accompaniment: we hear the instruments generally doubling the voices, except for one violin. The early mission reports speak of the Inuit skill and facility in learning to play instruments, and one wonders if the simple accompaniment was more a matter of choice than of technical limitations. We will return to

this topic shortly in considering Tom Gordon's investigation of this question.

Now we will consider a piece of somewhat greater complexity, the venerable Hosanna, or Hosianna in its original version, by Christian Gregor. A modern-day performance is sung in the key of G, a modern transposition which takes the sopranos no higher than E.³⁸ The Inuit version, recorded again at St. John's in the 1970's, is sung in the key of C, Gregor's original key. The sopranos sing up to high A.

I believe that this comparison further supports the theory of a time-capsule preservation of performance practice across the centuries. Not only does the modern-day Inuit performance preserve a slow tempo, it also maintains the original eighteenth-century key of C major. The singers sound quite comfortable in the high register, and I don't get the impression that they are straining at all. The question to be answered by further research would be: did the Inuit keep this piece in its original key, high for our standards, because their style of vocal production made it easy, or did they cultivate the higher register of their voices over the years in order to keep singing their cherished music in its original key, out of the respect for tradition we have already noted?

Tom Gordon has written an article titled "Found in Translation: The Inuit Voice in Moravian Music," which sheds some light on the quick comparisons we have just made by ear. Gordon examined a piece by J. G. Naumann in the Moravian repertoire, originally titled *Schöpfer, Erlöser*, one of the choruses taken from the opera *Cora* and refitted with a sacred text. This piece was brought to Labrador from Germany in the

1830s by missionary Johannes Mentzel, who provided it with an Inuit translation, and it was then recopied over many decades and into the 20th century. Gordon's study reveals two almost contradictory findings which both, in their own way, support the time-capsule theory of musical preservation in Labrador.

First, Gordon found in the two earliest sources evidence of the missionaries' efforts to teach the then-current European performance practice of ornamentation to the Inuit. The violin part of the earlier sources has plain quarter and eighth notes, while the recopied version has the more elaborate ornaments written out.

Secondly, by analyzing the successive generations of copies made of Naumann's work, Gordon discerns a trend toward re-composing that he believes derived not simply from limitations on musical resources, but rather from clear aesthetic preferences on the part of the skilled Inuit musicians. The trend, over many copies made in succession, is toward simplification of rhythmic details and ornamentation, simplification of string parts so that they double the voices more often, and the favoring of a homogeneous texture. To quote Gordon's summary: "The result of all these changes is the transformation of a texture that was crisply articulated, ornamented and characterized by a miniature drama of contrasts into a blended and homogeneous texture, rich in close harmonic sonority, neutral of rhythm and with a minimum of contrasts."³⁹ In other words, intricate art music composed for voices with independent instrumental accompaniment became more hymn-like, with preference given to harmonies simply doubled by instruments.

Gordon theorizes that the Inuit had an affinity for “the sonorous and harmonic” aspect of hymn-singing, as well as an aversion to rhythmic complexity, which then carried over into their interpretation of Moravian art music.

Using a well-known non-Moravian composition, we will make a listening comparison to illustrate this last point. Haydn’s *Creation* is a staple of Moravian music collections, and the chorus “The heavens are telling” must have been a favorite of the Labrador Moravians. We can hear it on the St. John’s recording. When we compare a standard German recording from the 1970s to the Inuit version, also recorded in the 1970s, we hear a much-simplified orchestration, down to two violins and a cello, but the original is not otherwise abridged.⁴⁰ The violins take over the flute parts where necessary to maintain the thematic ideas, even when it takes them up into the higher positions. Contrasts are minimized to a fairly homogeneous sound, although the small size of the ensemble makes that unavoidable. The tempo comparison is obvious: the German recording takes about four minutes; the Inuit version takes nearly six minutes before it fades out at the final tempo change.

We have seen how Moravian missionaries brought their congregational music to an inhospitable part of the world where there were few resources to support the practice of European art music. In spite of many obstacles, the missionaries found a people highly receptive to their music, willing to learn challenging musical skills, and make that music their own over two centuries. Now the time has come to make an attempt to tie together any common threads between the two church communities I have

described today, radically separated by geography and culture. Without, I hope, contriving to depict connections that don’t really exist, I have to confess that as a working church musician and music teacher I sometimes feel that I face a hostile and inhospitable environment in suburban America, pervaded by a commercialized, popular culture alien to the values I try to uphold in my work. As I have learned about the history of Moravian music in Labrador over the past year-and-a-half, I have been able to draw some inspiration from the story of a tradition upheld over many years in a seemingly unwelcoming environment. It is clear that music held a special place in the lives of the Inuit Moravians from the very beginning, as Sam Propsom has noted: “Music in Labrador was an avenue for putting theology into the hearts of the people.”

We Lutherans also use music to put theology into the hearts of the people, and I think we will continue to do so, even as debate between old and new swirls around us. While the model of unchanging continuity presented by the history of Moravian music in Labrador is not necessarily one that we or they should follow into the future, it can help us come to a mature understanding of just what role tradition and continuity should play in the context of church music today. Perhaps the slow, reverential, even meditative pace of Inuit singing and playing in church can help us consider where to accommodate music that is slow, reverential, and lacking in strong meter or rhythm. Perhaps it can help us find a way to let music encourage us to “listen to God,” in the phrase I heard used by the great living composer of sacred music, Samuel Adler.

I wish I could close my story with a happy ending, one that depicts Moravian music flourishing in Labrador in the present day. Sadly, it appears to be in a precarious state now and the prospects for the future are grim. Both Sam Proptom and Tom Gordon describe the tradition of Moravian music in Labrador as hovering on the brink of extinction. I will quote Tom Gordon's summary from an email he sent me in February 2006:

[An] assessment that the music will disappear in 20 years is optimistic. The youngest organist on the coast is 65. Most of the other five are in their 80s or 90s. I interviewed four of them in November [2005]. Only one has made an attempt to pass the tradition on; and that was met with no success. Only one of the three communities has maintained an instrumental ensemble and that is now down to three violins (the cellist is now blind and no longer goes to church). The band is defunct. The choir consists of about eight people. One is 45; the rest are over 70. The communities still frequent the church on Christmas and Easter; all babies are baptized; every funeral is a Moravian funeral. But it stops there. The music tradition is pretty debased, not only in the declining calibre of musicianship, but in the fact that most of the hymns now sung are at best from Sankey, more likely from Pentecostal traditions.

Not all is without hope. All three communities on the Labrador coast now have full-time music teachers in the School. One is excellent; another makes an honest effort. In the schools where the teachers are good, there are efforts at reviving music literacy and some sense of respect for the

earlier traditions of the communities. It is hard to make a case for the relevance of the Moravian hymns to the kids, but these hymns have been integrated into the language and music courses in Inuktitut.

The battle being fought is with the seductions of secular and southern life which is seen daily on satellite television. There is, of course, also the considerable battle with substance abuse and a disproportionately high degree of emotional and psychological disorders. The early missionaries — once they succeeded in banning all open practice of aboriginal music on the coast — held the monopoly on the edifying and entertaining value of music with what they taught the local population. They were able teachers and brought the Inuit to a high degree of music literacy quickly. For their part, the Inuit are brilliant problem solvers and the codes of making instruments speak or of reading were quickly broken and mastered. As a people only recently literate, they maintained the remarkable abilities to retain the memory capacity of pre-literate people. This was brought home to me on my last visit. I called on an elder who was one of the remaining musicians. He was well into his eighties. I've visited him several times before and we are comfortable with each other. He always asks me to play music with him. Even though he can no longer see, he asked me this time and I said sure. He pulled out the old Moravian hymnal and asked me to play No. 111b. He tuned up his fiddle (sort of!) and started playing along. At the end of the strophe I stopped, but he said "No, no — keep going." For the second strophe he played the alto part; on the third, the tenor, etc. I soon realized that he could play from

memory all four parts of all 900+ hymns in the book. It was humbling.

Learning about the history of Moravian music in Labrador has left me feeling that I have been on a journey to a far-away place. Arriving at this remote destination, on the one hand I was greeted by a familiar tradition in the form of Moravian chorales and other music performed over two centuries by the Inuit choirs; on the other hand, that performance style is so different from our own that it does indeed transmit the values of a very different culture. Moravian music in Labrador is fascinating and worthy of study for its own sake, but I think it can also help us view our own practice of sacred music with a better perspective. We must consider the question of tradition and continuity in appreciating a tradition that has endured practically unchanged for such a long time, only to be brought to the point of extinction by the accelerated changes of the past few decades.

In our own tradition of sacred music it may appear at times that recent trends and changes threaten to disrupt a long and venerable heritage. I think that in both situations, as far apart as they are geographically, education is the answer to the challenge of change. Moravians brought music education with them wherever they went on a mission, and education sustained the ideals of Moravian *Gemeinmusik*, whether here in Bethlehem or in Labrador. I draw upon the ideals of good music education in my work as a church musician, in part inspired by the model of the early Moravians. All of us who care about good church music may be concerned about what the future may bring, but with strong educational principles behind us we can continue to “sing

praise to God, the highest good,” in the words of one of our enduring hymns.

(endnotes)

¹ Moravian Music Foundation Newsletter, Vol. XX, No. 3 (Fall 2005), Special Section.

² Information about Moravian mission work in Nicaragua can be found in J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem: Moravian Church in America, 1967).

³ Alice M. Caldwell, “Music of the Moravian *Liturgische Gesänge* (1791-1823): From Oral to Written Tradition” (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1987).

⁴ Peter Vogt, “The Cultivation of *Gemeinmusik*: Moravian Music in the Context of Moravian Spirituality in the 18th Century,” paper read at the Second Bethlehem Conference on Moravian Music, October 1996.

⁵ *Diarium der Gemeinde in Herrnhut*, MS Unity Archives Herrnhut, R6 A.b. N. 27.

⁶ Information on Jaeschke’s life comes from various manuscript sources in the Unity Archives Herrnhut, including: Jaeschke’s *Lebenslauf* (R22 37 no. 49), records of the Catharinenhof (R4 BV), records of the Niesky Paedagogium (R4 BIV), *Diarium der Gemeinde zu Barby* (R6 D Ib), *Protokolle der Aelt. Conf. in Herrnhut* (R6 Ab No. 41), as well as the Herrnhut congregation diary and typescript *Dienerblätter*.

⁷ August 17, 1811, *Diarium der Gemeinde in Herrnhut*, MS Unity Archives Herrnhut, R6 A.b. N. 27.

⁸ Nola Reed Knouse, “The Collegium Musicum: Music of the Community,” 2.

⁹ Knouse, 1.

¹⁰ Knouse, 2.

¹¹ John J. Mahlmann, project director, *National Standards for Arts Education* (Reston: Music Educators National Conference, 1994).

¹² Quoted in Caldwell, p. 364.

¹³ C. D. Jaeschke, *Seine Gnade reichet so weit*, MS Unity Archives Herrnhut.

¹⁴ Caldwell, p. 309.

¹⁵ Peter Vogt, "A Codified Repertoire? The Scope and Character of Moravian Music According to the *Hilfsbuch* of 1865, 1891 and 1901," paper read at the Sixth Bethlehem Conference on Moravian Music, October 2004.

¹⁶ Richard R. Bunbury, "Weaving a Seamless Garment: Integrating Choral Praise in Worship." *The American Organist* 40/2 (Feb. 2006), 81-84.

¹⁷ Information on the history of Moravian mission work comes from Hartmut Beck, *Brüder in vielen Völkern: 250 Jahre Mission der Brüdergemeine* (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev. Luth. Mission, 1981), and Kenneth G. and J. Taylor Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem: Moravian Church in America, 1967).

¹⁸ Cited in minutes of the Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel for 1771; quoted in J. K. Hiller, *The Foundation and the Early Years of the Moravian Mission in Labrador, 1752-1805* (M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1967), p. 85.

¹⁹ Alfred Gysin, *Mission im Heimatland der Eskimos* (Hamburg: Ludwig Appel Verlag, 1965), p. 30.

²⁰ First-hand descriptions of early mission work come from the *Periodical Accounts relating to the mission of the church of the United Brethren established among the heathen* (London: Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, 1790; continuous until

1961); hereafter referred to as *Periodical Accounts*.

This passage comes from "Retrospect of the History of the Mission of the Brethren's Church in Labrador for the Past Hundred Years (1771-1871), *Periodical Accounts* 28 (1871), 8.

²¹ "Memoir of Br. George Kmoch, Missionary in Labrador, who departed this life at Ockbrook, December 21st, 1857, in the eighty-eighth year of his age," *Periodical Accounts* 22 (1856-1858), 379-384 and 433-440.

²² Memoir of Sr. Maria Magdalen Hasting, Missionary in Labrador, who departed this life at Nisky, February 5th, 1871, *Periodical Accounts* 22 (1856-1858), 1-5.

²³ *Periodical Accounts* 5 (1806), 210-211.

²⁴ Journal of a Voyage from Okkak, on the Coast of Labrador, to Ungava Bay, Westward of Cape Chudleigh; undertaken to explore the Coast, and visit the Esquimaux in that unknown Region. By Benjamin Kohlmeister and George Kmoch, missionaries of the Church of the Unitas Fratrum or United Brethren.

²⁵ *Periodical Accounts* 10 (1826), 66-67.

²⁶ *Periodical Accounts* 10 (1826), 444.

²⁷ *Periodical Accounts* 11 (1829), 381-382.

²⁸ *Periodical Accounts* 24 (1862), 266.

²⁹ *Periodical Accounts* 58 (1894), 100.

³⁰ *Periodical Accounts* 1908-1913, 638.

³¹ *Periodical Accounts* 1789-1805), 467.

³² *With the Harmony to Labrador; Notes Of A Visit To The Moravian Mission Stations On The North East Coast Of Labrador*. London: Moravian Church and Mission Agency, [1888].

³³ LaTrobe, 11-20.

³⁴ *Missionsblatt der BrüderGemeine* (Herrnhut: Verlag der Missions-Verwaltung, 1827; continuous

through 1914). This citation from vol. 61, (1897), 140 („...der eine von ihnen, ein geschickter Violinspieler, hat sich nicht allzu oft an der Kirchenmusik beteiligen dürfen, was nur den nicht in Kirchengleichzeit befindlichen Gemeinmitgliedern gestattet ist.“)

³⁵ *Missionsblatt* 59 (1895), 3 („...war ein böses Kraut und ist's noch mehr geworden. In Ehebruch geraten, leugnete er, gestand endlich halb und halb und verstrickte sich dann wieder in neue Lügen. Seines Amtes entsetzt und der Leitung der Chormusik enthoben, will er indes von Buße nichts wissen, sondern geht in seiner Bosheit nun nicht mehr zur Kirche und hetzt und schürt im Geheimen gegen die Missionare...“).

³⁶ Undocumented compact disc recording attributed to Nain Choir, made in St. John's, Newfoundland, 1970s. The CD was played at the Moses Lectures.

³⁷ Tom Gordon, “Found in Translation: The Inuit Voice in Moravian Music,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, XXII:1 (Spring, 2007), p. 19 in pre-publication manuscript.

³⁸ Moravian Church Choir, *Joining Our Voices*. Moravian Music Foundation compact disc 0301.

³⁹ Gordon, 18.

⁴⁰ Joseph Haydn, *Die Schöpfung*, Rundfunk-Sinfonie-Orchester Berlin, Helmut Koch, Brilliant compact disc 00753.

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1999 MOSES LECTURES

The Roots of the Contemporary Moravian Church in North America

David A. Schattschneider

During the 1960s political, educational, and religious institutions in America came under attack for being outmoded oppressive paternalistic structures that were unable to cope with modern times. Historical studies were particularly hard hit as many questioned their relevance. In response, someone in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago came up with the idea that things might go better if the traditional courses in church history were taught backwards. That is to say, they would begin with a description of the contemporary church and then explore how it came to be in the condition it was. Leaving aside the debates about the merits of that idea, let me suggest that we are going to begin that way. If we are going to examine the roots of the contemporary Moravian Church in North America (the Northern and Southern Provinces), we have to share an understanding of what we mean by the “contemporary” church.

As of December 31, 1997, the two Provinces reported a total membership of 49,631 members (as compared to the all-time high of 60,643 in 1966). The members are found in one hundred and sixty-two congregations and fellowships in

nineteen states, the District of Columbia, and two Canadian Provinces. There are one hundred and ninety-four ordained ministers. Besides the congregations, the denomination expresses its institutional ministry in a variety of ways. There are two archives, six retirement communities, two urban social ministries, three camp and conference centers, two bookstores, three historical societies, and one music foundation. In addition, three preparatory schools, two colleges, and one theological seminary all claim their origins within the Moravian tradition, though with varying degrees of intensity. Within the denominational structure there are also a variety of boards, commissions, and agencies devoted to specific tasks. The mission of the church thus incarnated in its institutions suggests that it sees itself as a full-service denomination with specific programming from the edification of children to care of the aged.¹

Another way to define the contemporary Moravian Church is through an examination of its website (www.moravian.org). In answer to the question, “Who are the Moravians?” the reader is informed that the Church is a “mainline

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Protestant denomination” which predates the Lutheran, Presbyterian, or Methodist Churches whose history stretches back “even before the discovery of America.” Hallmarks of the tradition are: faithful living and Christian unity...preaching the basics which all Christians share ...and a mission commitment to working with the poor, the powerless, and “groups largely unreached by other denominations.” The following pages give specific examples of these forms of ministry, offer a very brief historical synopsis and end up stating that the Moravians are, “founding members of the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches.”²

Whether working from printed sources or electronic sources, we have here a description of the contemporary Moravian Church with which its members and friends are familiar. It sounds about right. While we can offer no opinion as to the spiritual vitality of this enterprise, its institutional forms are clear and the few historical moments touched upon are comforting. This is how the Church presents itself publicly today.

How did this all come to be? What are the roots of this contemporary Moravian Church? I believe there are actually two sets of roots that reflect two very distinctive periods of the history of the Moravian Church in North America and that they have given rise to two conflicting interpretations. The two periods are the colonial period for the Moravian Church (1735–1857), a period of one hundred and twenty-two years, and the contemporary period (1857 – now), a period of one hundred and forty-two years. The pivotal year is 1857 which was when the General (or international) Synod of the Moravian Church

recognized the results of sixteen years of agitation with the grant of autonomous Provincial status to Moravians in America and England, along with those in Europe. These two periods have been interpreted in two different ways.

I. Scholars and Tourists: scholars of North American religious life have created an external or public perception of the Moravians which knows only the colonial era, which is enjoyed by tourists, and valued by both groups.

II. Moravian Leaders and Synods: Moravian leaders have created an internal or private perception that rejects the external perception of the colonial era and does not value it. Their work created the groundwork for synods to set aside the characteristics of the colonial era and to embrace generic American Protestantism.

I propose to examine these two interpretations and then to offer some suggestions about what might be done to reconcile them in the future.

Scholars

In 1988 the American actor Eddie Murphy starred in a movie called *Coming to America*, which has been described as a good-natured comedy fantasy in which a prince from a fictional African country finds his queen in Queens, NY. *Coming to America* is indeed a theme that has fascinated all scholars of the history of religion in the new world.

Sydney E. Ahlstrom of Yale, in his monumental 1972 study, *A Religious History of the American People*, starts us on our journey through the public perception of the roots of the Moravians in North America with his discussion of what he terms “panoramic” presentations of American church history, grand overviews of the

whole story.³ This approach begins with Robert Baird's 1844 book, *Religion in America*. Baird presents the familiar history of the Moravians up to his time and offers some observations about the state of affairs on the eve of the dissolution of the settlements, "the pleasant villages of Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Lititz, in Pennsylvania, and Salem in North Carolina ...their doctrines coincide, in the main, with those of the Augsburg Confession ...Their settlements ...are the same abodes of order, provident regard for the morals of the young, and for the comfort of the aged, of cheerful industry, and pleasant social life, enlivened by the sweet strains of music, and, withal, of that deep interest in missions, which characterize their settlements in the Old World. It may be said, perhaps, that too much world prosperity has been to them, as to many other Christians, a hindrance to their piety."⁴

In 1888 Philip Schaff gathered a group of fellow church historians and formed the American Society of Church History that remains today the premier American professional society for the study of church history. A mere five years after its founding, Society members began producing the thirteen-volume *The American Church History Series*, described as a series of denominational histories. The thirteen volumes are a fascinating study of American religious life written in the hey-day of Protestant triumphalism. The series concluded with a summary volume thirteen, *A History of American Christianity* by Leonard Woolsey Bacon. His review of Moravian activity is, to the modern reader, almost embarrassingly positive. In the second, 1736, voyage of colonists to Georgia, "one ship's company,...included some mighty factors in the future church history

of America and of the world."⁵ Included in his list are Governor James Oglethorpe, Bishop David Nitschmann, and John and Charles Wesley. Noting the religious destitution of the Germans in Pennsylvania, he writes, "It seems to us...as if the man expressly designed and equipped by the providence of God for this exigency in the progress of his kingdom had arrived when Zinzendorf, the Moravian, made his appearance in Philadelphia."⁶ Bacon's discussion of Zinzendorf's efforts to form an ecumenical "Congregation of God in the Spirit," and his difficulties with the Lutheran Henry Melchoir Muhlenberg is decidedly favorable to the Count: "he retired from the field, leaving it in charge of Muhlenberg, 'being satisfied if only Christ were preached,' and returned to Europe, having achieved a truly honorable and most Christian failure, more to be esteemed in the sight of God than many a splendid success."⁷ The author does allow that those writing the volume on the Lutherans in America might have a different view of things!

The rest of Bacon's account of colonial Moravian activity is equally positive, with particular emphasis upon missions to Native Americans. "The story of these missions is one of the fairest and most radiant pages in the history of the American church, and one of the bloodiest...No order of missionaries or missionary converts can show a nobler roll of martyrs than the Moravians."⁸ Many late nineteenth century Protestant Christians believed that there would soon emerge a sort of general American Protestantism. Bacon assigned the Moravians a role in that process through their worship forms: "the inheritance of liturgic

forms and usages of unsurpassed beauty and dignity. Before the other churches had emerged from a half-barbarous state in respect to church music, this art was successfully cultivated in the Moravian communities and missions...when the elements of a common order of divine worship shall by and by begin to grow into form, it is hardly possible that the Moravian traditions will not enter into it as an important factor.”⁹

The first volume in the series deserves special mention for its uniqueness. *The Religious Forces of the United States, Enumerated, Classified, and Described on the Basis of the Government Census of 1890* was written by H. K. Carroll, who was “In Charge of the Division of Churches, Eleventh Census.”¹⁰ The five-page narrative about the Moravian Church contains a brief historical description and then a snapshot of the denomination as it was in 1890. The statistics are detailed. If the *Moravian Trivia* game is still around, you would be a winner if you knew that in 1890 there were 94 congregations in seventeen states and the Indian and Alaska territories with a total membership of 11,781. “Of these, 4,308 are in Pennsylvania, 1,734 in North Carolina, and 1,477 in Wisconsin. In no other state are there as many as 900. Half of the total valuation of church property, \$681,250, is reported for 24 edifices in Pennsylvania. The average seating capacity of the 114 edifices returned for the denomination is 277, the average value \$5,975; 4 halls, with a seating capacity of 715, are occupied.” The total seating capacity for all Moravian places of worship was 31,615.¹¹ Someone was really reading the Annual Reports then! In 1930 William Warren Sweet of the University of Chicago issued his *The Story of*

Religion in America.¹² Once again the story begins on a familiar note: “Among those connected with the German settlement of Pennsylvania, none are more interesting than Nicholas Ludwig Zinzendorf, a Saxon nobleman and a religious and social reformer, who was chiefly responsible for the Moravian migration to America.”¹³ The by now familiar story of Moravian activity in the early colonial period is then recited in six pages, ending with emphasis upon David Zeisberger’s work on the eve of the American revolution.

The only other significant mention of the Moravians in the rest of the book is to cite them as a negative example. In a review of denominational life after the revolution, it is pointed out that the Moravians were hampered from expansion in America by a number of attitudes, which we will mention later, and then Sweet remarks, “the Moravian Church is the best example among the churches of the folly of resisting the rising spirit of nationalism in America as it manifested itself in the years following the Revolution.”¹⁴ Ahlstrom claims that with Sweet’s history the field of American church history was now firmly established as a respected academic enterprise. It can be noted that Sweet’s work also gives evidence of the cozy church and state relationship of his era in another way. His *Appendix* reprints the 1926 “Census of Religious Bodies,” gathered by the Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., which compares the 1926 data against the 1916 Census data. The Moravians reported 110 churches in 1916 and 127 in 1926. The membership was 26,373 in 1916 and 31,699 in 1926.¹⁵ When was the last time the federal government conducted a census of religious bodies?

The next comprehensive presentation of the whole story appeared thirty years later when Clifton E. Olmstead produced *History of Religion in the United States* in 1960.¹⁶ I have a personal fondness for this book. It was the first scholarly study of American religious life I had read, having been directed to it in a course with Professor Ahlstrom. I was just coming to the realization that the Moravian story was an important one for the general history of America and that it was appreciated as such by ‘non-Moravians.’ There were all the familiar stories of Moravian colonial activity in this book even with their own sub-heading!¹⁷ But it was also from Olmstead that I first learned about what happened later. “Among those denominations that maintained ties with European religious bodies prior to the Revolution, the Moravians alone remained dependent upon the centralized authority in Europe after the completion of American independence.”¹⁸ The author carries the story through to the Synod of 1857, which he notes enabled the American Moravians to enjoy “some real measure of independence.”¹⁹

In 1965 Winthrop Hudson published *Religion in America*, a book which has appeared in many editions since then.²⁰ His discussion of the Moravians offers only a short discussion of Zinzendorf and a survey of the usual eighteenth century developments before they disappear from the general story.

The next year Edwin Gaustad followed with *A Religious History of America*.²¹ This book was aimed at college students and is sprinkled with pictures and quotes from various original sources, including Ben Franklin’s account of his visit to Bethlehem as found in his *Autobiography*,

and a quote from the Salem Memorabilia of 1766.²² While Gaustad’s account of Moravian life centers exclusively on the colonial era, there are pictures of restored buildings in Salem, and of a group of white-robed children identified as young Moravians in the Lititz, Pennsylvania Sunday School at weekly worship.²³

Ahlstrom himself has a Moravian reference rather early in his massive 1972 volume. He begins his discussion of American religious life with a lengthy description of fifteenth century European life and the Council of Constance. According to his view, the variety of opinions about authority in the church that would work themselves out on our continent was already present there. So he notes, “Also in the cathedral on 6 July 1415, John Huss, the patriot reformer of Bohemia, whose spiritual descendants three centuries later would be evangelizing the Indians in Pennsylvania, was condemned as a heretic and led out of the city to be burned for the manner of his invoking still another principle of authority, that of the Bible.”²⁴ His discussion of the Moravians proper comes in a subsection entitled, The Moravian Brethren. “The most important of the pietistic sects in America was the Renewed Church of the United Brethren.”²⁵

What follows is the standard accounting of Moravian activity in the eighteenth century, with an emphasis upon the Wesley connection. But then there is this comment: “The Moravians never succeeded in entering American life as an influential church movement despite the unique way in which they blended churchly and sectarian traditions. They were hindered at the outset by Zinzendorf’s grandiose ecumenical schemes, and then for a century they were cramped by

supervision of authorities in Germany.”²⁶ Wars and Jackson’s removal of the Cherokees ended the Indian missions. “They remained a relatively static movement, numbering about 3,000 in 1775, 8,275 in 1858, about 20,000 in 1895, and over 60,000 in 1965, scattered widely across the country, but still concentrated in Pennsylvania. Their largest influence in America probably came through the Wesleys, but more intrinsic to the *Unitas Fratrum* has been its characteristic form of pietism, its devotional literature, and a tradition of hymnody and church music that would make its mark on many churches in Europe and America.”²⁷ While we might be tempted to regard this account with characteristically modest Moravian pride, it also sounds uncomfortably like an obituary.

Ahlstrom’s book did not stem the tide of panoramic treatments of American religious life. They have continued to appear. Martin Marty published *Pilgrims in their Own Land* in 1984.²⁸ His presentation is focused entirely on the eighteenth century story with a particular emphasis upon the difficulties experienced by those Moravians who held to pacifist beliefs and behavior.

A more extended discussion is given by Mark Noll in his 1992 book, *A History of Christianity in the U. S. and Canada*.²⁹ The particular aspects of the general story that receive special attention are the relationship between Zinzendorf and John Wesley and the missions to Native Americans. Indeed, a sketch of Zinzendorf and Wesley deep in conversation while strolling through a garden is provided, as is a drawing from the picture collection of the New York Public Library entitled, “Baptism of

Indians in America.” Noll provides the caption, “Perhaps because they were themselves strangers and wanderers in the world, Moravians proved to be the most effective Protestant missionaries in America.” The singular reference to Moravians after the eighteenth century is an oblique one. In discussing the slump in Roman Catholic religious vocations following the Second Vatican Council, Noll claims that in 1984, “there were still more priests (57,000) than there was total membership in some Protestant denominations, such as the Moravians or the largest body of Quakers.”³⁰

Finally, in this year’s third edition of her book, *America: Religions and Religion*, Catherine L. Albanese restricts mention of the Moravians to a summary of the career of David Zeisberger and his work among Native Americans.³¹

Thus ends the litany of panoramic views of Moravians in America provided by historians of American religious life. This has not been an open-stack search. There may be other panoramists out there but this search of the major works of this genre from 1844 to 1999 (155 years) reveals several general themes which need to be noted. First, the coming to America of a genuine German nobleman has intrigued these historians. The personality and career of Zinzendorf plays a prominent role in most of the accounts. Secondly, there is a genuine appreciation for the work of Zinzendorf and his colleagues and their contributions to colonial American religious life. The unique characteristics of the settlements, the missionary work among Native Americans, the

devotion to the arts, are often cited as specific examples of positive activity.

Two other trends may be more disturbing. There is a general assumption that it is safe to say good-bye to the Moravians after bringing them into the late eighteenth century. Either the references to them disappear or they are dismissed from the scene with obituary-like summary statements. I am reminded of the remark by a student in a Moravian church history class some years ago, "After Zinzendorf it's all downhill, anyway!" Secondly, the closer one gets to 1999, the shorter the discussions of the Moravians become. There are simply more groups, and ideas, and trends, to cover. Recent listings of self-identified Christian groups in North America now number in excess of 225. This means that as with so many aspects of traditional Christian knowledge, the culture will no longer insure the passage of information from one generation to the next. To put it another way, it means that the college student in a history or religion course, or the lay person who picks up a panoramic treatment of North American church history today is going to learn less about the Moravians than they would have learned one hundred years ago.

This is the view that the scholars have created. The Moravians were a uniquely creative and important group in eighteenth century North American religious life, but, regrettably, they have no enduring significance. It is summed up in an essay by A. Leland Jamison, "Religions on the perimeter." In his discussion of German colonial sectarianism in Pennsylvania he claims, "The major Mennonite, Brethren, and Moravian groups...have more and more made their peace

with American society, until they can only with difficulty be distinguished from their more churchly Christian colleagues. Brethren and Moravian groups, indeed, hold membership in the National Council of Churches."³²

Tourists

The other group that I suggest has created an external and public view of the Moravians is the tourists as they encounter colonial era restorations and reconstructions. No one has yet produced any comprehensive discussion either of the history of or the impact of such exhibits so I will venture to offer some preliminary thoughts toward this project. These sites may be divided into two general categories. First there are congregations in the Northern and Southern Provinces that trace their origins back to the earliest days of Moravian activity on this continent. Some of them were originally settlement congregations while others resulted from early diaspora work outside the settlements. They are in control of the interpretation of their history and how it is presented, whether or not they possess buildings dating back to their beginnings. They are in the unique position of being able to present the continuity of their history. Colonial origins have led into a contemporary center for Christian life. While the structures for ministry have changed, the ministries offered did not fade away in the late eighteenth century.

The second category is perhaps more problematic. Here I would place those restorations and reconstructions that are not under the control of any agency of the contemporary Moravian Church. These include such sites as Old Salem, Inc., The Bethlehem

Historical Partnership, the Bethabara Historical Park, the Schoenbrunn Village reconstruction, the minimal effort at Fairfield, Ontario, and the emerging effort at Hope, New Jersey. Perhaps you know of others. The work of the Rev. Joseph Weinland in lobbying the state of Ohio to bring about the 1928 reconstruction of Schoenbrunn Village is well known. Moravian involvement in the origins of these other projects is perhaps less well documented or recognized. These projects do an admirable job of teaching local history and are worthy community efforts. Yet my sense is that the Moravian Church is unclear about its relationship to these efforts. Quite frankly, the comments I hear from Moravians about these efforts are usually negative ones. Yet these enterprises are involved in proclaiming the same public, external message as the panoramist historians. They are very good at depicting everything positive about eighteenth century American Moravian life to their tourist visitors. But, in varying degrees and for lots of reasons, the connection of these sites to the contemporary Moravian Church in North America is fuzzy.

The situation is summarized for me in a personal experience connected with the restoration efforts in Hope, New Jersey. Several years ago the community bank which is housed in the former *gemeinehaus* had restored the second floor so as to reveal its original wood and stone work. It had been the Moravian *saal*. I still don't know exactly how it came about but I ended up driving my father over to Hope since it was thought it would be good to have a genuine Moravian bishop offer a rededicatory prayer to mark this event. What we did not know until we arrived was that the former *saal* was now the

site of the bank's computer operations. So while we stood there and the computers hummed, the employees bowed their heads and my father prayed. His prayer was appropriate as always, but I sure wish I had a copy of it!

Moravian Leaders

The contemporary South African writer Andre Brink, in his novel, *Devil's Valley*, has one of his characters say, "Look, man, there's nothing one can do about tomorrow. It comes as it must. All you can do something about is yesterday. But the problem with yesterday is it never stays down, you got to keep stamping on it."³³

How have Moravian leaders and synods in North America gone about stamping on the external or public perception of our history so beloved by panoramist scholars and tourists? The story goes back to that thirteen-volume series on American church history produced by the American Society of Church History beginning in 1893. While Bacon was lavishly extolling the virtues of Zinzendorf in volume thirteen and Carroll was counting the number of seats available in Moravian edifices nationwide, J. Taylor Hamilton set out to tell the Moravian story in detail in volume eight published in 1894.³⁴ He shared the volume with the histories of the Dutch and German Reformed Churches in America. It is indicative of the situation that whereas the Dutch and German Reformed historians needed 423 pages to tell their stories, Hamilton used only 83 pages. Though he constantly stresses the connectedness of the American Moravians to an international denomination, his interpretation is decidedly pro-American. His comments about Zinzendorf are somewhat more even-handed

than those of Bacon: “He had eccentricities, and, being but a man, made mistakes; but he has left an imperishable name, as the one who recalled the church of Christ to the obligation of its missionary commission. He had sacrificed rank, wealth, and the joys of the home circle, and had spent his powers for his Saviour’s cause, though it entailed being misunderstood, reproached, and maligned.”³⁵ His discussion of what happened at the conclusion of the American Revolution is rather more opinionated:

With...the assured separation of church and state in the young Republic, there was no reason why the *Unitas Fratrum* in America...should not have entered upon a period of new life and extension. But now operations were cramped by the unwise extension of regulations out of keeping with the national life. Painfully minute attention was given to the development of subjective phases of piety in the exclusive settlements, to the cramping of energies in other directions. The financial demands of the church’s work were met by the proceeds of business enterprises carried on for its benefit, rather than by the voluntary gifts of the people. The use of the German language in worship was perpetuated, to the loss of members in the cities and the keeping of strangers at a distance. Persons who lived away from the settlements but sought the fellowship of the church were formed into societies sustaining only a quasi-connection with it, and not into regular congregations—a usage that had little meaning in a land free from government ecclesiasticism. The laymen had practically no voice in the general management. There was a deficiency of well-qualified ministers. Men of mature years, who were sent from Europe, however scholarly, could

not readily adjust themselves to the conditions and spirit of American institutions or appreciate the opportunities which [were] offered. Administrative affairs of highest importance had to be referred to a foreign executive board.³⁶

Thus ends this rather long quotation in which Hamilton set the stage for his presentation of Moravian Church history in America from 1782 to 1812, the year in which serious agitation for change began though it would not bear fruit until the General Synod of 1857. Hamilton here introduces two themes which will reoccur again and again in later interpretations and which will gradually produce the atmosphere in which synods will reject the panoramist view of the American Moravian story and look around them for clues as to what it means to be an American denomination. These themes are a growing lack of appreciation for the role of Zinzendorf, with an emphasis upon his “mistakes” and a growing tendency to blame post-Revolutionary foreign (read German) control for the failure of the American church to grow. Sometimes the discussions of these two themes will run together and Zinzendorf will be blamed for it all.

J. Mortimer Levering is best remembered for his 809 page tome on the history of Bethlehem, published in 1903. But on Trinity Sunday, May 28, 1899, he delivered an address, “The Modern Moravian Home Mission Revival,” at the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Bethlehem Home Mission Society that raised some different issues:

[I]t must be remembered that in the early days the Moravian Church carried on the work of evangelization among civilized and savage alike in nine of the thirteen English colonies supported by a Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel organized in 1745. In consequence of Count Zinzendorf's objection to distinct church extension and his well meant but impracticable plan of Evangelical Alliance (read: Church of God in the Spirit) with the Brethren serving the different elements in ways adapted to their various ecclesiastical characteristics, their work, outside of their few established centers, lacked cohesion and stability and most of the groups they had gathered were disintegrated when representatives of the several denominations came among them to organize on sharp sectarian lines. The Moravian Church had twenty-one congregations and twenty-four outposts and preaching-places, numbering about two thousand souls, under its care in six of the colonies at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. It is safe to assume that the Brethren might have had four times this number as the fruit of their remarkable activity if they had at the beginning adopted a policy of definite organization in every field they entered.³⁷

Levering offers three reasons why:

[A]fter the Revolution Moravian Home Mission work ceased almost entirely in America...One was the restraint of direct foreign supervision under a system which became most rigid just when the new era of American liberty required flexibility

and adaptiveness...another cause was the deliberate promulgation of the doctrine that because the Moravian Church seemed to have a special call to evangelize in heathen lands the duty of its existing congregations was to unite in the support of this work, leaving church extension at home to other religious bodies beyond here and there an exception where the duty of organizing a congregation was so imperative that it could not be evaded." Finally, there was, "a sad degree of spiritual stagnation which gathered upon the old settlements. People grew up in these congregations without vital godliness or even sincere loyalty to the Church as such in their hearts, while under the system which prevailed, they were members as a matter of course...the ministry consisted mainly of men past middle age, growing weary and preferring an easy walk in the beaten paths or unable to adjust themselves to new conditions. Even the younger ministers were for the most part men from Germany incapable of entering readily into the spirit of the country and quite satisfied to confine their efforts to that routine which was the same in both countries."³⁸

The remaining twenty-two pages of Levering's address constitute a valuable source of information on American Moravianism in the late nineteenth century. He skillfully weaves together the growing demand for constitutional change within the Unity, achieved at the 1857 General Synod, with the development of national home mission work from 1817 on, noting the formation of local and provincial home mission societies and chronicling the beginnings of new

congregations in the northeast, the south, and in what would later become the Western District of the Northern Province. It was not always easy work. He notes that in 1824, the Northern Province Synod directed the Provincial Helpers' Conference to establish home mission societies in congregations with the hope that they in turn would raise funds to support the expanding work. It took a while for the idea to catch on since, as he notes, "the idea of other Moravian congregations sending money to Bethlehem, however important and needy the object, was not popular."³⁹

In 1899 Levering was looking back over the previous years and noting signs of growing restiveness among the American Moravians both about the structure of church government and about their identity in America. They were no longer settlement bound pietists, but what were they? A diaspora society on the European model or an American denomination?

The Western Ministers Conference of the Moravian Church, meeting in Hope, Indiana, in 1853 had put it this way in discussing the diaspora idea: "Her [the Moravian Church] activity has thereby been limited, her energies crippled, her spiritual life well nigh extinguished; for we deem it a principle deeply grounded in the eternal truth of God, that Christ's people can only flourish, in proportion as they work for the salvation of others. Thus while other denominations have filled our young country with churches and preachers, we have for the last fifty years scarcely retained our own. Yes, and while our church in Germany through her diaspora work, and in England, by awakening an interest in our extensive missionary effort, has

existed to some purpose, it would be difficult for anyone to point to the great good we have done in this country. In our opinion we declare freely, though sadly, the Brethren's Church in America has been comparatively speaking pointless and fruitless. We therefore protest against the view of our Church so often put forth, that it is not a distinct and independent church, but rather a society within the Church. Political necessity has caused the assumption of that character in Europe; no such necessity exists here."⁴⁰

Levering and other Moravian writers often cite the establishment of Moravian Theological Seminary in 1807 as one example of the American restiveness leading up to the constitutional changes of 1857. The centennial of the institution was observed on October 2-3, 1907 and ranged from a solemn service in Central Church to many speeches in Comenius Hall on the campus. Since a collegiate department had been added in 1858, it was also possible to have a baseball game between the college students and the alumni, which the alumni won 8 to 3. Various distinguished alumni were asked to share recollections of their student days. Bishop Edward Rondthaler had this to say:

When I became a student in the Seminary it was not long enough after 1857 to permit the beneficent alteration in the government of our unity to have had as yet any marked effect. We had just become...an independent American Church...but the lack of appreciation of the distinctive features of our unity which had arisen, through the earlier excessive centralization, still prevailed. It was still a time when old things were discounted, without due regard to the good that was in

them, and which might have been transferred into new forms and fresher ideals. This radical state of feeling was reflected in the Seminary. Probably no subject elicited so small an interest as Moravian church history, and no danger was greater than that of belittling the characteristic achievements of our Moravian Unity. There has been a great change in this respect, and a happy one. It has come through the independence of the American church, and through its increased activity along its own chosen lines. The historical labors of Reichel, deSchweinitz, Hamilton, Clewell, Fries, along with those of other workers, have opened a new era of generous recognition of the gifts of God to our Moravian Unity. We can say, in the main, that a school of church patriotism has succeeded one of church disparagement.⁴¹

The opening address for the celebration was delivered by the now familiar J. Mortimer Levering. He made it abundantly clear that the establishment of Moravian Theological Seminary was a key to the independence of the American Moravian Church, and that it helped bring the Church into alignment with everything else that was good in contemporary American Protestantism.⁴²

When Rondthaler referred to the work of Hamilton, he might have had in mind the large one volume *A History of the Church Known as the Moravian Church, or the Unitas Fratrum, or the Unity of the Brethren, during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, which had appeared in 1900.⁴³ Here Hamilton's assessment of Zinzendorf has moderated slightly from his earlier opinion. "Being but a man, Count

Zinzendorf had his faults." But they were faults for a good purpose and his achievements are recounted. "Zinzendorf was worthy of a place in Germany's Walhalla."⁴⁴ But Zinzendorf's legacy in his diaspora ideas, though not attributed to him by name, is roundly condemned for nearly two pages. The familiar devil of German centralization and control would be the root of problems for the next fifty years. "Had Ettwein and his associates received a freedom of operation even measurably corresponding to that enjoyed by Asbury and Coke, or Seabury and White and Provoost, the future of the Moravian Church in America would have assumed a different form. But just at the time when the Methodist and Protestant Episcopal Churches were making provision for natural activity and expansion, the tendency to ultra-centralization in the Moravian Church caused it to ignore the boundless opportunities in America which carried with them proportionate responsibilities." He even suggests that the political slogan, "No taxation without representation" and the American institution of the town meeting should have had an equivalent in church government.⁴⁵

The Moravian Manual, Containing an Account of the Moravian Church, or Unitas Fratrum, third edition, appeared in 1901, carrying on a tradition begun by Spangenberg in 1774.⁴⁶ The text for this manual was originally written by Edmund de Schweinitz and published in 1859. Although the contents cover the church north and south, this third edition appeared with the imprimatur of the Northern Province Provincial Elders' Conference. The historical synopsis of the American experience covers the involvement of Zinzendorf but offers virtually

no assessment of his contributions or ideas. However, there is no lack of opinion about what went wrong with Zinzendorf's legacy. Again, the implicit failure of the Count to understand American realities as reflected in the policies of his successors is condemned. Regarding the diaspora idea and America, "This was a radical error which the Brethren committed, in the very inception of their work in America. They failed to recognize the religious difference between it and Europe...A domestic mission, in order to be successful, must be equivalent to church-extension." After explaining the German control and the centralization that developed in post-Revolutionary America, we read, "This is the sufficient answer to the question often asked: 'Why is the Moravian Church so small?'"⁴⁷

We leave the shores of North America and American writers for a moment to consider the British Moravian historian, J. E. Hutton, and his *A History of the Moravian Church*. The second, revised and enlarged edition of this work appeared in 1909.⁴⁸ His bombastic style is often fun to read, though he displays the annoying trait of too many Moravian history writers. The text is sprinkled with wonderful quotes and a bibliography is provided, but the connection of quotes to sources through footnotes is omitted. His treatment of Zinzendorf provides a case in point. After describing Zinzendorf's funeral in detail, he launches into his assessment of the man. This covers such judgments as, "His faults and virtues stood out in glaring relief. His very appearance told the dual tale. As he strolled the streets of Berlin or London, the wayfarers instinctively moved to let him pass, and all men admired his noble bearing, his lofty brow, his

fiery dark blue eye, and his firm set lips; and yet, on the other hand, they could not fail to notice that he was untidy in his dress, that he strode on, gazing at the stars, and that often, in his absentmindedness, he stumbled and staggered in his gait. In his portraits we can read the same double story. In some, the prevailing tone is dignity; in others there is the faint suggestion of a smirk."

Still, when all is said and done, "Of all the religious leaders of the eighteenth century, he was the most original in genius and the most varied in talent; and, therefore, he was the most misunderstood, the most fiercely hated, the most foully libeled, the most shamefully attacked, and the most fondly adored."⁴⁹ Hutton's view of what happened in America after Zinzendorf's death is clearly stated in the title to Chapter VI, "The Struggle in America, 1762-1857." It begins, "For nearly a century the Moravians in America had felt as uncomfortable as David in Saul's armour; and the armour in this particular instance was made of certain iron rules forged at the General Synods held in Germany."⁵⁰

Back home in America, Harry Emilius Stocker published *A Home Mission History of the Moravian Church in the United States and Canada (Northern Province)*, in 1924, probably the only book length treatment of the subject ever produced.⁵¹ It brings together in one place a lot of valuable information. His presentation of the story has a slightly different spin to it. Chapter I is a thorough explanation of the diaspora movement in Europe. The history of this method of planting renewal societies within state churches is reviewed with appreciation as he notes that the great leader Spangenberg, who

later led the church in America, was himself a “recruit” from the diaspora. The application of this method in America is noted and Zinzendorf is clearly identified as the originator of this approach. All this is offered without judgment. But the implication is that some congregations formed in colonial America (and he discusses those in North Carolina, too) almost came about by accident and in spite of the preference for the forming of settlements and diaspora societies. But, “the Moravian Church learned nothing from the outcome of the American Revolution. This was perhaps natural for its seat of government was in Germany, where wholly different conditions obtained. ...an exclusive system that practically paralyzed all effort in the direction of church extension was inaugurated.”⁵² According to Stocker, there were sporadic efforts at growth in the post-Revolutionary period but the modern era did not really dawn until North Carolina Moravians moved to Indiana in 1825 and began what became the Hope Moravian Church.

J. Taylor Hamilton’s son, Kenneth G. offered a revised and updated version of his father’s book in *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum, 1722-1957*, which appeared in 1967.⁵³ The rhetorical flourishes of the earlier version have been reduced to a much sparser style, in part to allow for the coverage of an additional fifty-seven years of history that had passed by since the original work appeared. There are other subtle changes. The son reproduces the chapter on the theology of Zinzendorf that the father had written, although he eliminates the paragraph concerning the controversial “sifting period.” References to that era, as well as to other

controversial aspects of Zinzendorf’s thought show up in small print endnotes. A good example is the comment, “The designation of the Holy Spirit as our ‘Mother’ ...is an illustration of the danger of substituting vivid figures of speech for logical ideas.”⁵⁴ Modern readers will find as much of interest in the endnotes as they will in the text. He faithfully reproduces his father’s comments on the situation after Zinzendorf with their condemnation of the policies of the Count’s successors as being responsible for the stunted growth of the American Moravian Church. Kenneth G. (or his editor) made their opinions clear in the very way they organized the book into three sections: The Moravian Church under Zinzendorf, 1722-1760; A Century of Centralized Government, 1760-1857; and The Unity Takes Form, 1857-1957.

This review of the writings of Moravian leaders has not been an open-stack search either yet it presents an overview of the general interpretative pattern followed in viewing the development of the American Church. It goes like this. Zinzendorf was an important but controversial figure to whom the church will always owe a debt of gratitude. The Moravians grew in Europe in three ways under his leadership. Three forms of church life reflecting his ideas were developed. There were the self-contained settlement congregations which were to provide the “home base” from which to develop the two other forms of outreach: missionary work among those peoples who had never heard the gospel and the formation of renewal societies (the diaspora movement) among European state churches. This approach was followed in colonial America with negative results. The inability to recognize

the changed political situation which rendered the diaspora approach ineffective resulted in missed opportunities in the colonial era, and, coupled with the control from Germany which followed, permanently crippled the church until the mid-nineteenth century. Who was to blame? Zinzendorf and his ‘wrong ideas?’ ...his successors and their passion for control?

Opinions would vary but there was clearly emerging a tendency to view both Zinzendorf and his era in a negative light. Moravian leaders were crafting a view of their early history in America that would be at variance with the positive evaluation of the panoramist church historians and the tourists. Or, as Arthur Freeman, himself the author of the most recent study of Zinzendorf’s theology, stated in a lecture last month, “As to the Zinzendorf period, the century of control of the North American Provinces from Europe ending in 1857, which limited its indigenous development, left an unpleasant taste. Zinzendorf and his ideas were often seen as the cause rather than the post-Zinzendorffian conservatism of the Moravian Church. Even in my lifetime I heard older ministers and even bishops lay the blame on Zinzendorf for the smallness and the limits of the Moravian Church. An elderly bishop recently wrote me after reading my book...indicating that he now sees himself as more of a Zinzendorffian Christian than he thought he was—though he still has some reservations.”⁵⁵

Moravian Synods

Through much of the nineteenth century Moravian Church synods set about the task of disassembling the old order and, at least in

America, looking around for new ideas about how to develop a denominational identity. The examples that follow concern primarily the Northern Province. On the eve of the 1857 constitutional changes, the Southern Province had 1,930 members. It was devastated by the Civil War. The Southern Synod vote in 1868 to seek union with the Northern Province, though approved by the Northern Province and the General Synod, came to naught when the southern congregations could not afford the congregational assessments, which were a condition of merger. In 1884, a southern Synod proposal to dissolve itself failed to pass by only one vote. That was enough shock to revitalize the Province and lead it to the growth it would experience in the twentieth century. I suspect, however, that further study of twentieth century Southern Province synods would reveal the same trends we are about to see unfold at an earlier time in the north.⁵⁶

The old settlement congregations of the Unity gradually gave up their distinctive communal arrangements from the 1840s on and converted themselves into “normal” towns. Some traditions were dealt with on the international level through the periodic meetings of the General Synods. In 1818 the ceremony of foot washing was abandoned. The use of the lot as a means of resolving difficult decisions proved particularly vexing. By 1818 the Americans had succeeded in their desire not to have it used any longer in the process of selecting marriage partners. But the matter would drag on as the occasions when the lot could be used would be continually restricted until the General Synod of 1889 eliminated the obligatory use of the lot altogether. Concessions

to what both Hamiltons refer to as “the spirit of the age” rolled on. This was evident in 1836 when the Kiss of Peace evolved into the Right Hand of Fellowship in the Communion ritual “where the former no longer tends to edification.”⁵⁷

The Americans lost no time in looking for new ideas. In preparing for the upcoming General Synod of 1857, a northern synod met in 1855. A group of New Yorkers suggested that the new organizational form should be patterned on that of the Episcopal Church and the name of the denomination changed to the “Moravian Episcopal Church in the United States of North America.” Synod demurred and the idea died in committee. The 1856 Synod was worried about freedom of the press when it learned that the Germans were preparing to present to General Synod a proposal calling for the approval of all articles in church periodicals by the executive board of the Unity. It was deemed that “the adoption of such an act by the general Synod would be an act of retrogression, highly injurious to the best interests of our Church, and its execution so far as the American Provinces are concerned at least, absolutely impossible.” The resolution passed on this declared “its adoption would necessarily endanger our farther connexion with the Unity.”⁵⁸

The moderation-in-all-things approach of the traditional Brotherly Agreement was momentarily forgotten by the Northern synod of 1893 with its ringing condemnation of “legalized and organized liquor traffic” and its resolution “that the only position which the Christian Church can occupy with regard to the liquor traffic is one of uncompromising hostility.”⁵⁹ This synod also heartily endorsed participation

in the Christian Endeavor Society movement as a primary youth programming vehicle for the Moravian Church. The Southern Moravian Christian Endeavor Union would be formed in 1928. This American non-denominational, ecumenical, evangelical youth movement would become the youth program of both Provinces until the 1950s. Levering, in his review of home mission activity, could report favorably about the formation of the American Bible Society, American Sunday-School Union, American Tract Society and the American Home Mission Society.⁶⁰

Synods often have to try to catch up and offer an opinion on things that are already happening. The northern Synod of 1913 was no exception in its resolutions, “Synod expresses its conviction that it would be a very difficult matter to change the practice in those churches where the individual cups are used in the Communion or the pulpit gown for preaching....Synod sanctions the introduction of the individual cups in connection with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.”⁶¹

Throughout the 1920s synods south and north were busy appointing representatives to the plethora of ecumenical organizations forming throughout the period such as the Federal Council of Churches, the International Sunday School Association, and many of the other American societies on Levering’s list. That is a trend which would continue to the present day as the American Moravians more and more took their clues as to how to “be a church” from the surrounding larger denominational and ecumenical bodies. Their confidence in themselves as an American Church was reflected

in the resolution of the 1925 northern Synod which instructed the secretary of synod, “to send to the President of the United States a copy of the preambles and resolutions number 28 to 32 inclusive, on the subject of War by this Synod, with the assurance also of its support in his efforts towards the peace of the world.”⁶²

One could go on, and on, but the drift is clear. But there is one additional issue I have left until now due to its timeliness. In the mid-nineteenth century American Protestants were embroiled in controversy over the role of women in the church. Could they teach? Could they preach? How would one know the difference? What about public versus private gatherings? So the debates went and the Moravians were not immune. The northern Synod of 1856 issued recommendations as well as formal resolutions. One of its recommendations read, “Concerning the question of the propriety of females praying in a promiscuous assembly, the Committee, inasmuch as there is no definite rule in regard to this point laid down synodically, would endorse the views set forth by the P.E.C. on a recent occasion viz: First. We do not object to audible prayer by sisters, married or unmarried, in the family circle. Second. But we disapprove of the offering up of audible prayer in a more extended circle, or in a more public place, which is visited by persons of both sexes, by any but brethren. And we rest our disapproval upon the instructions, which the apostle Paul has given on this subject I Cor. 14, 34,35; I Tim. 2, 11-13. Deeming it, moreover, inconsistent with the relation assigned to woman by the Creator, and incompatible with the female virtue of modesty, that she should, in such companies, put herself

forward, and by her audible prayer, for the time, occupy the highest place.”⁶³

And you can guess what happened. The very next Synod, in 1861, received a petition from sixty-six members of the Gnadenuhnten, Ohio, congregation proposing a resolution to be substituted in place of the recommendation, but with a plea for mutual respect among those who may differ on this issue. It was referred to the committee on worship and discipline. The following resolution came back and was adopted:

Whereas, a distinction should be recognized to exist between a private dwelling house, and the public house of worship, where all members of the church have equal rights and privileges of divine worship, therefore Resolved,

1. That in the public house of worship, the apostolical rule should at all times be observed: “Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.” (I Cor. 13, 34 and 35; I Tim. 2, 12.)

2. That our ministers should not encourage their people by word or example, to act contrary to our synodical recommendations, but strive to enlighten the minds of their people by sound scriptural teachings, to prove themselves law-abiding members of the church, in accordance with the prayer in our litany, “Purify our souls in obeying the truth, through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.” (I Pet. 1, 22)

3. That our members have the right in their own houses to allow females to pray audibly, even though others besides members of their own families, be admitted to these religious meetings.

4. That the Provincial Synod enjoins the duty upon all the ministers and elders of our churches most carefully to watch over meetings for social prayer, lest what is begun in the spirit, should end in the flesh.

5. That we deem it of paramount importance most affectionately to request those brethren and sisters who take part in such social prayer meetings...and those who are not in favour of them, mutually to abstain from all harsh and uncharitable judging of those of their brethren and sisters who differ with them on this question, bearing in mind the injunction of the Apostle, "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13, 1) and the declaration of our Saviour, (John 13. V. 34, 35) "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye also love one another, by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one to another."⁶⁴

Remember that this discussion took place a mere twenty or so years after the dissolution of the settlements which in their earlier days were regarded as enlightened for the active role which women played in those communities.

Bringing it all together...conclusion

I will conclude with several suggestions as to how we might view the history of the American Moravian Church in a useful way in the future. I do so bearing in mind the admonition of the noted theologian Franz Bibfeldt, "By the grace

of God, the church moves forward, even while constantly sidestepping."⁶⁵

1. Let us abandon the traditional bifurcated approach to Moravian history in favor of a unified approach to the history of the Moravian Church. Banish forever talk of the Ancient Church and the Renewed Church. Recent scholars have provided abundant knowledge about the origins of the Moravian Church in the teaching of Hus and his first followers. What is needed now is an integrated approach as we write and talk about a tradition that institutionally stretches from 1457 to yesterday. The Moravian experience is not unique. Groups as disparate as the Waldensians and the Jesuits have experienced periods of growth and vitality followed by times of suppression and near extinction which gave rise to periods of renewal. The Moravian version of this cycle should be treated in a holistic manner.

2. Let us honor Zinzendorf and let us forget Zinzendorf. Next year will bring many celebrations to mark the three-hundredth anniversary of Zinzendorf's birthday. The best possible celebration would be to undertake a translation of Zinzendorf's major writings into English, Swahili, and Spanish, to be published along with critical commentary. The fact that such translations do not now exist is the result of remaining mired in nineteenth century attitudes regarding him. This project is needed for Zinzendorf to be finally blended completely into the life of the contemporary Moravian Church worldwide.

My proposal to forget Zinzendorf is a little more complicated. There is a tendency in a lot of Moravian literature and now even on the history

screen on the website to try to build a tradition around the ideas of three men—Hus, Comenius, and Zinzendorf. Frankly, I think this is a case of trying to ride their coattails to fame and recognition. These are three well-known figures who have a reputation in their own right beyond their connection to the Moravians, however important that may be. The thinking seems to be that the reputations might guide people beyond them to the community of which they were a part. It is a classic problem in Comenian studies. Comenius is famous for this or that educational idea and, oh yes, he was a bishop or something in this obscure group called the Unity of Brethren or something. And we try to build a tradition by trying to figure out how their ideas played out in the Moravian Church. Let's turn the process around. The description of the tradition should place its emphasis upon the 542-year story of a Christian community—the beliefs, activities, and life style of that community in many places and circumstances. Along the way it has been influenced by a variety of leaders who played their roles and made their contributions. It is time for a new assessment of the way we consider these three to be a part of the ongoing tradition.

Let us find new heroes and heroines. In keeping with the above thought, it's time to look beyond the big three. We need to identify people—primarily American, men and women, clergy and lay—whose life stories send meaningful messages to contemporary Americans. The recent studies of settlement era women have started the process but what about nineteenth and even twentieth century people? The true story of the remarkable Moravian persistence over 542 years may lie in the faithfulness of women and men

to the Gospel in the midst of the mundane ups and downs of life. The Gospel proclaimed in the Moravian context sustained them and their witness can be mighty.

3. Let us establish a positive relationship with the restorations and reconstructions. Notice I did not say reclaim them. If, as I have maintained, an ambiguous relationship to these enterprises now exists it is time to explore building a positive relationship. Like the big three, these entities from our history have a meaning beyond our history but they need to be blended into the larger picture of our history.

4. Let us examine the connection between our history and our contemporary mission. After 1857, American Moravians, like many other American Christians began to buy into American cultural values in a big way. Voices are now being raised from within the Christian community, which question the continued wisdom of that approach. Some say the authentic Christian witness in tomorrow's America will be a counter-cultural one. We have been counter-cultural a few times. What are the values from our tradition that can provide a Christian critique of American ideas about sexuality, consumerism, violence, and the other plagues of modern life?

Finally, I end with a story about traditions and the contemporary world. The 1998 Northern Province Provincial Synod passed a resolution allowing elders in a congregation to assist the pastor in the distribution of the bread and wine at Holy Communion.⁶⁶ This is not a new idea. During the 1950s the pastor of the New Dorp congregation on Staten Island instituted this practice. He consecrated the elements at the

table, handed the trays to the elders, and then he sat down behind the table. The elders moved among the congregation, passing the trays through the aisles as people helped themselves first to the bread then one of those individual communion cups. When all had been served, the congregation partook together, first the bread and then the wine.

There were three principles at work here. 1. Theological—in the service of Holy Communion, the method of distribution is not an essential, as that term is understood in Moravian tradition. 2. Pragmatic—there was a task which needed to be done in the most efficient manner, bearing in mind the setting of a crowded church, the length of the service, and so on. 3. Contextual—at that particular time and place many of the members of the congregation came from Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed backgrounds. This way of receiving the elements was familiar to them. The “traditional” Moravian way was not. And so the decision was made to proceed in the manner described. What better discernment can we bring to our appropriation of Moravian history in the contemporary American world than theological, pragmatic, and contextual?

(endnotes)

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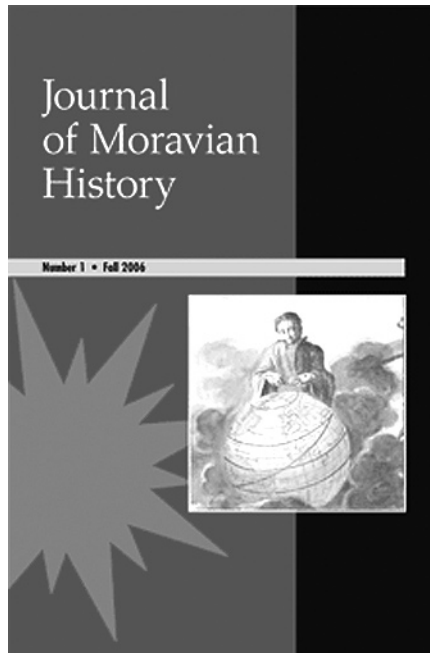
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