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The Moravian Church and its legacy in the US  
Moravská církev a její odkaz ve Spojených Státech

Bachelor's Thesis

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I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis, *The Terrible Twos: Translation and Stylistic Analysis of Selected Parts of Ishmael Reed's Novel*, is the result of my own work and that all the used sources have been properly cited. I further declare that this thesis was not used to obtain another academic title.

Prague, April 19<sup>th</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The primary focus of this thesis is the phrase “Moravian Brethren” which implies both geographic entity (Moravian) and tribal cohesiveness (Brethren). This sharply contrasts with the universalist and cosmopolitan outreach of this church. This thesis therefore seeks to explore the degree to which the original precepts of Moravian Brethren have been retained. By reading major studies and dissertations that already exist on Moravian Brethren and their expansion to and missions in North America, I have assembled and synthesized the main and most important facts of similarity and distinction of their practice in Europe and United States, thereby ascertaining the degree to which the current practices correspond to the core of Moravian credo.

## KEY WORDS

Moravian Brethren, Count Zinzendorf, Herrnhut, mission to North America, Pennsylvania and further expansion, Moravian Church values and beliefs, Moravian Church in America and Europe today, comparison of Moravian Churches

## ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se primárně zaměřuje na slovní spojení „Moravští bratři“, které zahrnuje jak geografickou entitu (Moravští), tak kmenovou soudržnost (bratři). Je totiž ostrým protikladem univerzalistického a kosmopolitního dosahu působení a služby této církve. Tato bakalářská práce proto hledá a zjišťuje do jaké míry jsou původní zásady Moravských bratří uchovány. Studováním zásadních děl, studií a dizertačních prací, které na téma Moravských bratří a jejich rozrůstání se a mise v Severní Americe již existují, jsem shromáždila a syntézou utřídila hlavní a nejdůležitější fakta podobností a rozdílností jejich existence a fungování v Evropě a ve Spojených Státech, a následně vyhodnotila, do jaké míry se jejich současné konfesní praktiky shodují s jejich původními hodnotami.

## KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Moravští bratři, hrabě Zinzendorf, Herrnhut, mise do Severní Ameriky, Pensylvánie a další expanze, hodnoty a přesvědčení Moravské církve, dnešní Moravská církev v Americe a Evropě, srovnání Moravských církví

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## **1. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 EUROPEAN ORIGINS OF MORAVIAN BRETHERN**

The beginnings of “Unitas Fratrum” – the Unity of the Brethren, formerly known as Moravian Brethren led by the Czech reformer Jan Hus – are found in Suchdol nad Odrou in the Fulnek county of the Moravian region. In English-speaking countries the accepted title has become “The Moravian Church”. The region of Suchdol nad Odrou also served as a refuge for the Valdenses who, with their reformatory theology, were the closest to the Unitas Fratrum. This religious formation also marks the beginnings of the local reformation, which took place around 1481.

Later on, the non-Catholic faith, which was practiced in secret, was still present and active thanks to the tolerance of the aristocracy. The Schneider family was also an important part of this, sending all of their sons to study abroad in protestant countries to get reaffirmed in their faith and then return to teach and pass it on to the people of Suchdol. Martin Schneider, the father of the family, not only provided a shelter for Brethren ministers who were arriving in secret, but was also actively participating in efforts for the protestant faith to prevail. They strongly believed in the power of prayer and thus, congregational prayers were held regularly.

One hundred years later, after the battle at Bílá hora (White Mountain), Suchdol was still predominantly protestant even though the Protestant Church throughout central Europe was almost destroyed. The Unitas Fratrum did not convert to Catholicism. They instead founded an underground movement called ‘the Hidden Seed’ and kept on proclaiming their Protestant faith. In fact, the Moravian denomination was almost wiped out during the religious wars during the 1600s, experiencing a rebirth later on. (Říčan 5-6)

As the Thirty Years’ War broke out in 1618, Jan Hus and the Unitas Fratrum group were persecuted by Catholics, and more surprisingly by some Protestants as well. The final casualties from the war were enormous and the Bohemian population declined from three million to eight hundred thousand (Gallagher 4).

During the 1710s, Protestants became the target of intense monitoring and scrutiny. If any kind of suspicion of connection to the protestant faith existed, feudal lords were



allowed to threaten and punish individuals. In the 1720s, the persecution of non-Catholics intensified and worsened. People from Suchdol were put on trial, punished by financial payments and made to work in chains.

Refuge for these persecuted folks was found in a village that the Brethren built themselves called Herrnhut. Herrnhut was 360 km away from Suchdol, located close to Dresden in Saxony. Estate owner Count Nicolaus Zinzendorf provided land for the people of Suchdol on which they could build a village. Kristian David, who in the 1720s initially came to preach in Suchdol in order to bring a spiritual awakening for the locals, brought them up to Herrnhut. The very first refugees came to Herrnhut on May 12, 1724. Their journey took ten days and they were incredibly detailed in describing the whole journey as they went, which later was helpful for others coming to Herrnhut to join them. The first five men made the journey and thus were called ‘The Pillars of the Church’ – the renewed Unity of the Brethren. Between the years 1726 and 1753, not only did the inhabitants of Suchdol go into exile but so did people from villages far and wide; altogether, over 550 refugees that made the journey to Herrnhut (G. A. Říčan 9). As this community grew and the sense of fellowship deepened, they felt a common awareness of a calling for overseas missions. (G. A. Říčan 7-11)

### **1.1.1 COUNT ZINZENDORF**

Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf was a crucial figure in the development of the Moravian Church’s ability to reach places with the Protestant faith. He was raised by his aunt, a very devoted Christian, who thoroughly studied the Bible in its original language. This was the first spark that gave rise to vital mission to occur later in Zinzendorf’s life. Early on in his childhood, he knew how important it was to live his life according to the Christian faith. He devoted a significant time of his life to studying Christian theology and scripture and was reminded of the freedom in worship that the Roman Catholic Church restricted. He learned that there was a Biblical responsibility to teach those lacking the knowledge about Jesus Christ as their Savior who had died for them to obtain eternal life.

Francke and the Halle Pietists especially also helped to consolidate the adolescent Count's biblical theology of mission. They emphasized the heartfelt religious devotion of the individual, belief in the Bible as the Christian's guide to life, and a complete commitment to Christ that would manifest itself in ethical purity and charitable activity. In doing so, they stressed the importance of personally experiencing God. These theological views would become the central tenets for later Moravian mission. (Gallagher 6)

During his studies at prestigious universities (with academic success), Zinzendorf experienced the life of high society, including excess and gambling. This sinful life continued until he visited an art museum in Dusseldorf where he encountered a painting of Jesus' crucifixion. Its caption read: "All this I have done for you; what have you done for me?" (Gallagher 7) It was a very personal and intimate moment in which Count Zinzendorf realized that he had been learning all about Him [Jesus], His Word and His theology but he had not actually done anything for Him practically. "He knelt in front of the painting and rededicated himself for the service of Christ. 'From now on I will do whatever he leads me to do'" (Gallagher 7).

A few years later, Zinzendorf married and within a year he made contact with Kristian David, a man with the same approach to the Christian life and worship. David told him about the situation of his brothers in Moravia. Zinzendorf was touched and he promised Kristian to provide a safe place for them to freely practice and grow stronger in their faith. Ultimately, it was his own estate that he gave to these people and where they slowly started to establish a settlement called Herrnhut, which translates as 'the protection of the Lord'.

Herrnhut grew rapidly. There was a mix of people: some were coming with a more Catholic identity, while others trying to leave it out and practice the more "freeing" faith according to Protestants. Therefore, Count Zinzendorf establish rules for the Herrnhut community – its life, organization and functioning of the church. Moreover, the Moravians were not the only nation for whom Herrnhut had become a refuge. Count Zinzendorf also welcomed persecuted Protestants from various parts of Germany who were of the Lutheran confession. Thus, on May 12, 1727 the Moravian Church formally adopted Herrnhut's new constitution. The constitution mainly allowed for differences in

opinions but with emphasis on practical Christian behavior. Moreover, they wanted to escape the possibility of being too vague in their beliefs and how they lived it out. The most important points affirmed:

It shall be forever remembered by the inhabitants of Herrnhut, that it was built on the grace of the living God, that it is a work of his own hand, yet not properly intended to be a new town, but only an establishment erected for the Brethren and for the Brethren's sake.

Herrnhut, and its original old inhabitants, must remain in a constant bond of love with all children of God belonging to the different religious persuasions – they must judge none, enter into no disputes with any, nor behave themselves unseemly toward any, but rather seek to maintain among themselves the pure evangelical doctrine, simplicity, and grace. (Memorial Days of the Renewed Church of the Unitas Fratrum 111)

Nevertheless, there were two different streams that arose in Herrnhut. 'One part consisted of the descendants of the old Moravian Church; the other consisted chiefly of the Pietists. Together, they formed a powerful combination. The Moravians were stern and laid the chief stress on ethics; the Pietists were more evangelical and sentimental.' (Hutton 11)

Count Zinzendorf has become the central figure of spiritual life and its ascension. Kristian David, later the same year, commented that it was truly a miracle of God that with all the different kinds of confession that were present in Herrnhut, they were able to become one body and at the same time a living congregation of Jesus Christ.

However, Count Zinzendorf sensed a considerable amount of ill feeling between the Moravians and Lutherans. He was, to some degree, a mediator between these two camps but what he aimed to do was to 'change the duel into a duet' (Hutton 12) and organize the whole community. He started a training that lasted four years with the goal to teach the settlers obedience, Christian charity, deepen their spiritual experience and establish a monthly Missionary Prayer Day.

By 1727, the community in Herrnhut continued to grow while division of the congregation into small groups began to occur. They called it Choirs. The Choirs were

established according to age, gender and marital status. After a baby was born, they stayed with their mother for eighteen months after which they were cared for in nurseries. Boys and girls were in nurseries together until the age of four when they were separated into their gendered Choirs, Little Boys' Choir and Little Girls' Choir. Next were the Girls Choir and Boys Choir for those aged between twelve and nineteen. Then from the age of nineteen until marriage there were either the Married Couples' Choir or Single Sisters' Choir and Single Brethren Choir.

Members of the same choir worked, ate, slept in dormitories, attended school and worshiped together. It strengthened the communal unity and Moravian society as a whole due to their reliance on each other – for help, advice, encouragement, and simply living together as a family. Choirs, apart from those listed above, met separately and regularly every day for worship and discussion. The separation also increased the variety of religious services and the atmosphere, encouraging innovations in each of their worship styles.

The Choir system emphasized not only the reliability within each individual group but also of the whole congregation. They relied on fulfilling goals they had set for themselves for the whole community to grow and deepen, and never doing it for money or self-reward. They were rewarded for their work with food supplies, shelter, education and a place to worship. (Hutton 220-224)

Prayer has been always very important to the Brethren. They strongly believed in its power. From August 27, 1727 it was decided they would hold prayers without ceasing. Twenty-four brethren and twenty-four sisters would take turns and rotate so there was an intercessory prayer every hour of the day. This prayer system carried on for one hundred years. Furthermore, they met weekly for conferences and discussions, also reading letters from their brothers from distant places in order to be provided with specific prayer requests for projects and people.

### **1.1.2 MORAVIAN WORSHIP**

Today, the Moravian Church is not only found in North America, with a total membership of over one million, but also all over the world. However, the Church still

holds traditions of worship and liturgy that can be traced back to the earliest times of the Church in Moravia. (Moravian Church in North America)

### **1.1.3 HISTORY OF THE ORIGINAL MORAVIAN WORSHIP**

Moravians have always preferred simplicity and freedom both in life and in worship.

We are people who have decided once and for all to be guided only by the gospel and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and his holy apostles in gentleness, humility, patience and love for our enemies. By this we may do good to our enemies, wish them and pray for them. (R. Říčan 30, translated by S. J.)

The worship they practiced was Bible-centered, and always included preaching and congregational singing from their own hymnal. For the Christian community, prayer was a central aspect that was officially held three times a day that everybody would attend. It was of utmost importance in order to receive God's guidance and peace. Moreover, it must be noted that the Lord's Supper was highly valued.

Further, the group observed three main principles known as the "Brotherly Agreement of the Moravian Church": salvation by the blood of Christ, sanctification through the work of the Holy Spirit, and love for one another. (Gallagher 20)

Before the establishment at Herrnhut, Luke of Prague suggested the Brethren should enrich their worship from both Hussite and Catholic forms and to ensure their uniformity. Thus, a new set of prayers and readings was introduced to be used for particular Sundays or services. Hymns whose lyrics would fit with the topic of the worship service were established and newly updated hymnals were also issued. (Linyard, Tovey 5-6)

Nevertheless, what made Moravian brethren unique in worship and influenced the whole of Czech Church, life and culture, was in publishing the vernacular *Bible Kralická* (*Kralice Bible*) from which they would also read during worship services starting in the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. (Linyard, Tovey 6)

#### **1.1.4 SEASONAL SERVICES AND THE CHURCH YEAR**

The Moravians, for their worship services, use a *Liturgy Book*: containing six Orders for regular use, the offices for Holy Communion, baptism, confirmation, marriage, funeral, and the traditional Moravian services of Lovefeast and Cup of Covenant. They also hold seasonal services for Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Whitsuntide and Trinity Sunday.

The First Order is the traditional Moravian order that comes from the Litany of 1566. It starts with a Call to Worship to which the congregation responds. Then the words of assurance follow, all of which are taken from Scripture and concludes with a prayer of confession.

The Second Order contains prayers from the Book of Common Prayer. The Third Order deals more deeply with the Lord's Prayer. The whole fourth order basically comes from and is inspired by the Prayer Book and 129 prayers and liturgical readings. The Fifth Order is meant for young people's services and the Sixth Order is used for Advent, Lent and before the Lord's Supper. It includes the typically Moravian Christ Litany of Zinzendorf. (Linyard, Tovey 7-8)

It must be noted that the Liturgy Book contains the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and five Confessions of Faith.

The Moravian Church also has special worship customs for each season of the year. The Church year starts with the first Advent Sunday, signified by singing a hymn with lyrics welcoming Jesus to Jerusalem. On the Sunday before Christmas or on Christmas Eve, the so-called Christingle Service is held. These focused on Jesus being born and his coming to Earth in human form in order to come and save all of humanity.

The next and the most important Church year events for the Moravians are Passion Week and Easter. The Christ's life is coming to an end and the purpose of his coming is to be fulfilled. Every day during Passion Week, the congregation meets in order to read a part of the whole story from the Bible that talks about Jesus coming and dying for each of us.

The peak of this whole celebration comes very early on Easter Day with the words "The Lord is Risen" being proclaimed. The Easter service then continues with an actual outside burial and Holy Communion.

The first Moravian practice of the Holy Communion had a preaching service followed by communion immediately after. Some changes were made later when moving to Herrnhut. Zinzendorf would send these brethren some food after which the community would proceed into praying and worshipping. Thus, the *agape*, meaning ‘having a meal together’, became an integral part of the Holy Communion, followed by congregational prayer and hymn singing. The meal would include bread and wine, the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus to celebrate the Lord’s supper; the reminder that Jesus is coming again. However, until his return, it is by this act that Jesus is present in his Church. Holy Communion would finally end either with a thanksgiving prayer or a hymn of thanks. (Linyard, Tovey 9-14)

### **1.1.5 THE RENEWED CHURCH**

Given that Herrnhut was part of a Lutheran parish, the settlers would attend the local church. However, as they were developing their own form of worship to have their settings more ecumenical and clear they were slowly separating from this church parish and emphasizing their world-mission vision. The Moravian Brethren came with a slightly different theology but it did not seem to be a problem when joining this Lutheran-based community in Germany. In fact, both Christian denominations emerged peacefully into a combined theology where the core values remained the same with their mutual desire of an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ and the only true salvation through faith in His death that is the only way to the life eternal. This desire was also intensified by the longing to share this good news with the rest of the world; to take it with them to the end of the world as the Bible commands. They did not focus on small differences in their faith because they knew they believed in the same true God. They always regarded the bigger picture, which was to serve Jesus with their whole heart through their work, relationships, pointing not to themselves but to Him in everything they did or said. (Linyard, Tovey 6)

When looking at the Brethren history throughout the centuries, there are generally two noteworthy motives they follow, „the motive of separation and the motive of unity in faith and creed” (R. Řičan 441, translated by S. J.); acknowledging each individual’s

and uniqueness and form of worship and the unity of the broader purpose that brings them together.

### **1.1.6 THE CHURCH TODAY**

In general, for all the Moravian churches spread all over the world, there are clear links between contemporary Moravian worship and the traditional forms. Yet, each continent, state, country or province takes into account the cultural differences and mainly the need of each individual church community. However, the common heritage is clearly seen in the Holy Communion, liturgical practices and customs associated with Advent and Easter. (Linyard, Tovey 7)

Chapter 1.2 details more about the practices of the Moravian Church in the United States today.

### **1.1.7 PARTICULARITIES OF THE MORAVIAN BRETHREN DENOMINATION**

The Moravian church is divided into self-governing regional administrative units that are organized around a provincial synod administered by a provincial elders' conference. The churches are linked by a general synod of elected representatives that meets every 10 years and is authoritative in all matters of doctrine and organization. The power to ordain in the Moravian church is reserved for the bishops, but the episcopal office does not in itself have an administrative function. In practice, however, bishops more often than not are elected to administrative office. The church is organized into 19 autonomous provinces, representatives of which meet every two years at the Unity Synod. (Fogleman 90-94)

As mentioned before, the Moravian Church always draws from the Bible for both faith growth and practice. They do not have their own creed but use the Apostle's Creed as well as the Nicene Creed. The church's main beliefs are summarized in the litany during the Easter sunrise service. Their worship is liturgical and follows the traditional church year. The celebration of the Lord Supper varies; it is either held six times a year, or



monthly. They are strongly Christocentric, emphasizing the suffering of Christ during the Holy week, which precedes Easter.

Some specific points of difference in Moravian belief and practice include:

## WOMEN PREACHING

One very special aspect that Moravians brought to American religious life and leadership was allowing women to hold special roles within Moravian communities. A significant factor was letting women preach and hold office. They found their justification for doing so in the New Testament and Zinzendorf even explained some Biblical interpretations to make it clearer.

As they were settling down in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania between 1740 and 1742, there were already a few women preaching and working with non-Moravians. There was also plenty of work that women took over when new schools were opening up for children. Later on, in the 1750s, women would start working outside of the communities and even went on a tour in the country to reach people further abroad. Some of the women would also combine with men and together work among European, African or Native American communities and deliver them pastoral care.

However, letting women do such work was not welcomed warmly. Moravians would face harsh criticism and were threatened by society. Despite this, the number of women preaching and taking care of other pastoral work grew and became very significant. (Fogleman 95-104)

## ECUMENISM

Allowing women to preach was not the only challenge that the Moravians faced against the already established American churches. Their desire was to unite them under one faith. However, they did not encounter a positive response, but rather strong offensive feedback. Still, there was a silver lining:

For the Moravians, however, the key issues were not defining and defending institutional boundaries and dogma, but rather understanding the meaning and

death of Christ and expressing this to as many people as possible. This could be done while at the same time honoring liturgical and other traditions in the state churches, they thought (Fogleman 106).

They did achieve some success and the first two ecumenical meetings were held in 1742. During these meetings, Zinzendorf's goals were outlined, specifically with regards to how to create the body of Christ in Pennsylvania. This unification effort of the Pennsylvania radicals would soon falter. Thus, the Moravians started to develop new ecumenical plans, whilst preparing to encounter protests from their enemies, who were closely monitoring what Zinzendorf and his communities were planning next. The Moravians needed to convince the Protestant world of America that what their actions, teachings and beliefs within these communities were indeed proper and not in contradiction with the rest of the Protestant communities around them.

Zinzendorf pursued his conviction that "America needed to be dipped in the blood of Jesus and they [Moravians] intended to make every effort to do just that" (Fogleman 112). With this as their motivation, there were more German and English-speaking preachers within the group of Pennsylvanian Moravians by 1743 than all other preceding Reformed European Radicals and authorities. By May 1745, the Moravians were able to hold meetings with 68 men and women involved in spiritual work outside of Bethlehem. From 1740 to 1754 there were a total of 186 communities of Moravians in North America, 171 of which worked in the "Pennsylvania field" (Fogleman 113).

Bethlehem thus became a center not only of planning missions but also a center of communications, spiritualism and economic dealings. During the Great Awakening period in the 1730s and 1740s, the Moravian church also developed excellent travel and communication networks which made contact with further colonies easier to achieve, all while facing their enemies' opposition and persecution.

Finally, the Moravians desired to be familiar with the Reformed and Lutheran liturgy in order to communicate effectively and not in the disinterest of their brothers. If they lacked some knowledge there were always people available in Herrnhut to educate and train them. Therefore, as the Moravian community developed during the 1740s and 1750s, they were able to provide places of work, worship, and relative comfort and

spiritual devotion – most notably in the communities in Nazareth and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. (Fogleman 105-130)

#### MORAVIANS' FEMALE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

By the 1740s and 50s, the Moravians notably feminized the Holy Trinity. This stance took the view of the Holy Spirit as a mother figure. God remained “God the Father” and Jesus was still seen as an earthly man. Many references proving this aspect are found in a Bethlehem, Pennsylvania community diary from 1747. Furthermore, the concept of the Holy Spirit as a mother is evident in the addenda of the Twelfth Appendix of the *Moravian Hymnal*. By understanding the Holy Spirit as a female entity, the Moravians were not referring to biological features, but rather to a metaphorical concept. However, what the Moravians presented and believed during this period was considered as blasphemy to other mainstream Christian denominations.

At the time, most theologians believed that according to the Bible, the Holy Trinity, as a whole, was male in character. This new perspective presented by the Moravians violated the contemporary general truths, even though this female concept of God was neither new in the history of Christianity nor in North America. In attempts to justify their claims, they referred to the whole church community as female, ala “the bride of Christ”, as the Bible also refers to. They tracked these views of the complex unity of male and female back to the beginning of Adam and Eve who were created in the image of God – therefore, both genders must have already existed in the deity. It is crucial to mention this theological belief held by the Moravians as it was one of the main reasons they were faced much persecution by other Christian denominations, also new in the North America. (Fogleman 74-85)

#### COMMUNAL LIVING

The majority of Moravians lived and worked in closed communities, just like they had been used to it in Herrnhut, their place of origin. They did not receive any money; it was the church that provided everything they needed, such as housing or food. Some of

these communities even became centers of industry and commerce, most notably in Pennsylvania and North Carolina.

Choir and liturgical life was central in these communities. There was a system and structure that divided Moravian society, dictating daily life within each specific group, including the way they worshiped. Every group, representing one choir, had its own leadership, assigned work and liturgical life. Special attention was also paid to special events, feasts, traditions and other important dates of Moravian history.

According to Zinzendorf's theology, everyday life should be based on liturgy, thus keeping all members of the community focused on their mission. It was not the nuclear family household that shaped the structure of Bethlehem, but rather the choir system. It started with the so-called "Baby Choir" (as explained previously) and continued on so that everybody would develop, through liturgy, an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Since this liturgical system separated the whole community into different categories, it also brought some difficulties, such as children living separately from their parents or even married couples being apart for the majority of the time when serving and working within these gender-divided choir groups. On the other hand, it was not just negatively perceived since the female groups could find independence from male control for example, and had the opportunity to use their own willpower— something not prevalent in American society at the time.

Ever since the Moravian brethren arrived in America, one of their signature rules was to restrict spouses to be only from within the Moravian community. Initially, they were not open to any interaction with the general public. It was not until the time of the Civil War that Moravians were allowed to marry non-Moravians without it being regarded as a betrayal or breaking the rules.

By this time it also became common that brethren from one community would change their place of service and move to another state to join another local Moravian community. If the person was single, there was no restriction. If married, it was required that the whole family would move to the new place even if the mission for the man, the head of the family, was supposed to be temporary.

The community began each day with a worship service at dawn. Late morning service was only for senior members and children. The day would normally end with a music service. On Sundays, a whole round of worship would be held consisting of an early morning prayer, including meetings of the various bands before another service held at 11:00 am. In the afternoon, a service was held for those unable to attend the morning session, as well as for incoming visitors. Herrnhut never separated religious life from secular life in the highly disciplined, hardworking, and praying congregation. Sleep was dedicated to the hours between eleven in the evening and four o'clock in the morning. Furthermore, the spiritual leadership in Herrnhut was based on charismatic principles and not based on formal training.

The leaders in Herrnhut emphasized that life there should be spread outward around the world. Their form of Christianity was seen as naturally contagious. Moreover, the Moravians had pilgrimage in their blood and were ready to evangelize. (Fogleman 84 - 90)

### **1.1.8 THEOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EARLY MORAVIAN CHURCH MISSION**

At the centre of Moravians theology was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. He experienced suffering and mockery, ultimately leading to his death as an act of love for sinners. They paid special attention to his physical wounds and the blood that was shed, in order to be vividly reminded of the picture of His great deed. They also typically displayed paintings of Jesus being crucified in their sanctuary as a constant visual reminder; they needed and wanted to be appreciative of Jesus' blood.

The Holy Spirit was the effective leader the brethren followed. „Zinzendorf believed that the Holy Spirit was the only true missionary. In his view, the Spirit prepared the hearts of people to hear and receive the message of Jesus Christ. He was the One who called individuals to be converted to Christianity. The Moravian missionaries were then led to these people by the Spirit“ (Gallagher 14). Ultimately, conversions were never the work of people but always work of the Holy Spirit. That being said though, the Church did not count the number of „saved people“ as the motivation for the mission. On the

contrary, Zinzendorf would encourage his people to pray for the people that were supposed to be saved and for the Holy Spirit to be their compass, which would lead them to seek those people. (Gallagher 12-15)

Importantly, the Moravians believed in one singular church of believers. They wanted and worked toward a truly united fellowship. No matter where they served in the world, they considered themselves part of one universal church. Therefore, the local church was never excluded from the larger picture of the church of Jesus that was united by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was considered one for all mankind.

In other words, „the Moravian missionaries preached Christ and his salvation through the Holy Spirit before they spoke of other issues such as creation, the history of Jewish people and the work of the early church. They centered on Christ, his person and the work of salvation“ (Gallagher 24).

Lastly, they were also of the mind that every Christian missionary should be a witness of their daily work, which led them to work alongside with the indigenous people. This was especially evident in American colonies, where Moravian efforts in agriculture, arts and crafts were of strong assistance in the frame of successful European colonization. (Gallagher 22-25)

## **1.2 MISSION PRAXIS**

Since the Moravians had their main focus on building relationships and trust by working and living together with the locals, opportunities to preach were earned and thus regarded as an addition to their actions. They were following Zinzendorf's words, which stated that the goal was not to build and establish Herrnhut communities all over the world with cultural differences being erased, but to preach Christ by showing love and humility. This was particularly done by taking language and cultural differences into account and approaching with respect and in gentle evangelism. The goal of their mission was not to change anybody's native culture but to introduce them to Christ in parallel with their culture. „Apart from this, they shall remain Indians.“ (Gallagher 29)

### **1.2.1 FAILURE IN GEORGIA AND STARTING MISSIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA**

Zinzendorf had travelling to America on his mind from the very beginning when he discovered the Moravians' missionary outreach. In fact, „the Moravians' energetic faith induced them to take on the staggering task of converting the world's peoples, a project that included the founding of Bethlehem.” (Engel 14) Note that they were part of a larger international movement whose goal was to revitalize Protestantism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century worldwide. America was definitely one part that these Moravians wanted to reach. The movement's patroness was none other than Count Zinzendorf's grandmother. It was she who first brought young Nicolaus to the Pietist fold. Thus, from an early age, he was connected to the movement to some degree. Finally, he came back to be a part of it more actively once he felt called by the Lord to devote his life into the ministry field.

For that reason, Zinzendorf sent the first Moravian evangelist George Böhnisch to Georgia with some other brethren to be the first group of colonists and missionaries in 1734. They were supposed to settle near Savannah, Georgia and they eventually did in 1736. Two years later another colony was being established in the state of Pennsylvania. A few years later they even spread to the New York - Connecticut border.

Sadly, the Moravian community in Georgia never flourished and they had to leave. This was not only because of the lack of mission success, but also due to the arrival of Spanish settlers from Florida around the same time, who started to evade and take over the state of Georgia. For the Moravians, this meant ending in failure. The remainder of the Georgia settlers decided to go north and settle in the state of Pennsylvania. (Wienlick 151-152)

These resettlers were able to purchase five thousand acres of land and built a town on it. They named it Bethlehem, making the town a “house of bread for all the preachers in North America” ’ (Hutton 81). The town was located at the junction of the Monocacy Creek and Lehigh River in the Northampton County.

They built the first two houses with their own hands. In one, singles Brethren lived (see pictures 1-4), and families in the second. Single sisters lived in the nearby town called Nazareth. They, too, built their chapel (see picture 5), made clothes, boots, bred cattle,

grew vegetables and other daily necessities for living. Both brethren and sisters lived according to this motto: "*In commune oramus, in commune laboramus, in commune patimur, in commune gaudemur*" which means, "*Together we pray, together we labour, together we suffer, together we rejoice,*" (Hutton 82).

The design and structure of the Brethren town were thoroughly planned. Every street, community building, industrial site and house was designed and constructed with a purpose and located according to its function and in favor to serve the Brethren not only personally, but also in their manual and missionary work (see Figure 6). Moreover, the layout of the town also reflected their religious beliefs. For many years, the Nazareth-Bethlehem colony remained a center for not only the mission in North America but also for the West Indies. One important task of these missionaries from the very beginning was the conversion of the Red Indian tribes in North America, which they would do with honest zeal and devoted hearts.





*Figure 1 – The Single Brethren House in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania*

(Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: A Moravian Settlement in Colonial America)

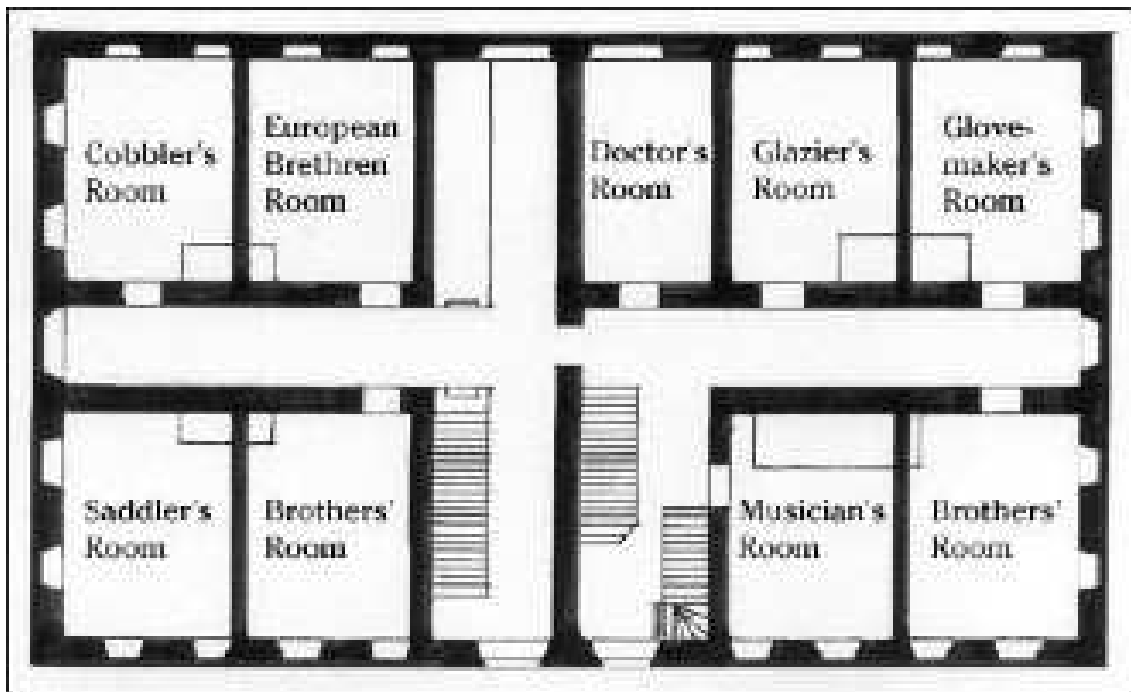


Figure 2 – The Single Brethren House – First floor

(Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: A Moravian Settlement in Colonial America)

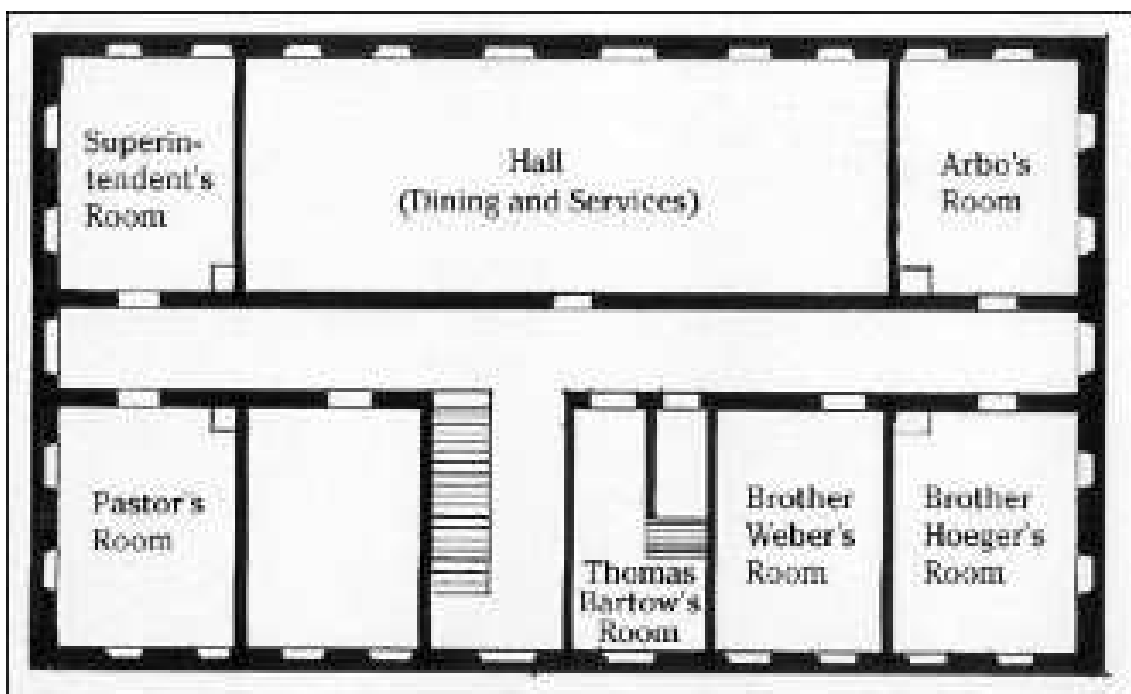
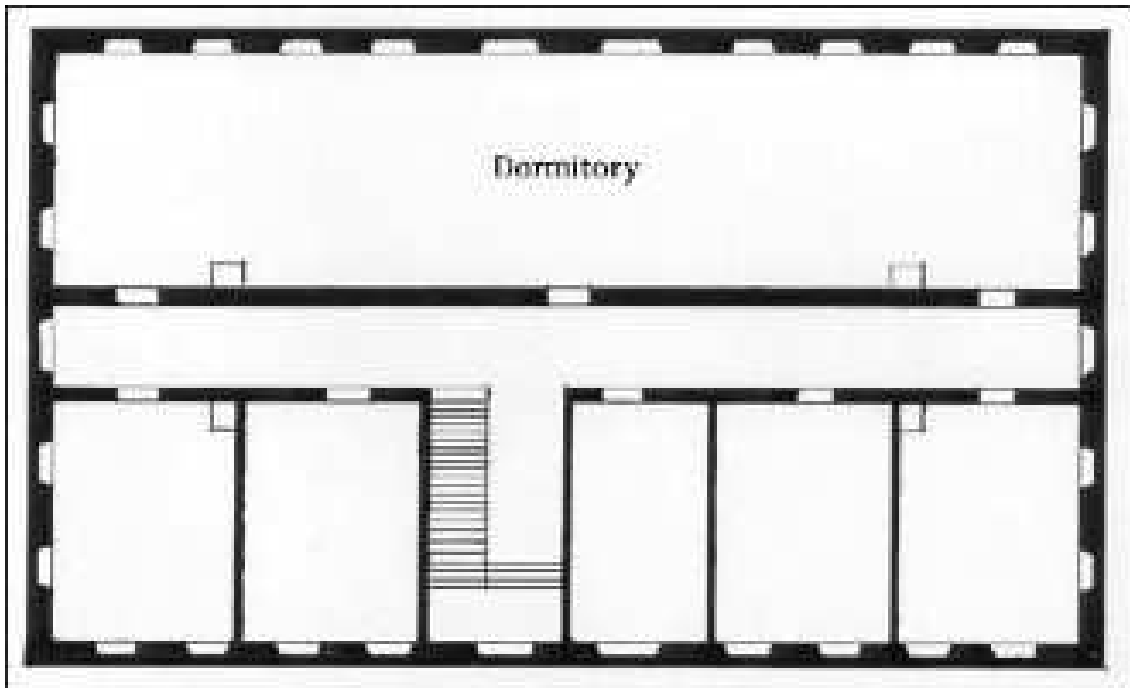


Figure 3 – The Single Brethren House – Second floor

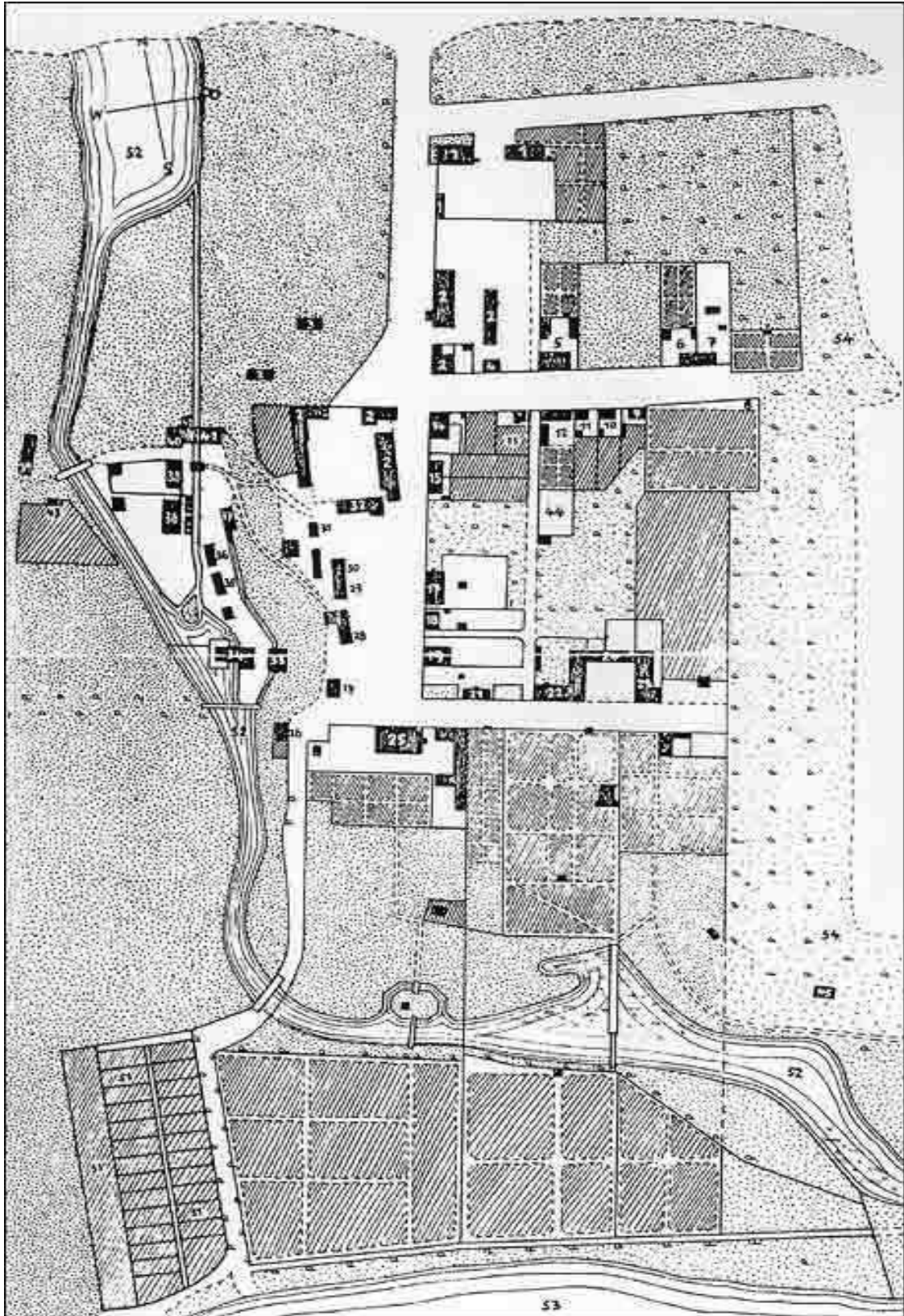
(Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: A Moravian Settlement in Colonial America)



*Figure 4 – The Single Brethren House - Third floor*  
(Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: A Moravian Settlement in Colonial America)



*Figure 5 – The Moravian Chapel in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania*  
(Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: A Moravian Settlement in Colonial America)



*Figure 6 – The Original Bethlehem Town Plan in Pennsylvania*  
(Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: A Moravian Settlement in Colonial America)

Another important figure in the history of the Moravian immigration to North America was Bishop David Nitschmann who brought a group of Moravians from Europe to Pennsylvania. In late 1740, they joined the core group together with those coming from Georgia. Shortly after the purchase of the five thousand acres of land in 1741, the Moravians found themselves in possession of two promising locations for settlement to evangelize and do missionary work among the Germans and the Indians as the native inhabitants. The Moravians saw the need of knowing the indigenous languages in order to be able to present the Gospel to them and preach to them. In the early years of American colonies, the Bible had already been translated to the most used and known indigenous languages. Nevertheless, some of these languages were not easy to learn, for example the missionaries that went to serve with Cherokees were never able to learn the language well enough to communicate with the Indians even though they lived among them for twenty-five years. (Hardin 89-90)

The attempts to bring some Indian communities together were not successful even though their approach was with the best intentions to establish harmony with the nearby living groups. In reality, it was not possible because of the contentious history between the communities.

Sunday, December 24, 1741 was a very special day for this young settlement in Pennsylvania. It was the day on which Bethlehem received its name. It was a Christmas evening and the special day climaxed with the Holy Communion. Count Zinzendorf had been present with these people in Pennsylvania for six months assisting and leading them into the missions, but he was due to leave back to Europe. Thus, he gave his first sermon for them before doing so.

After Zinzendorf's departure in 1743 (after fourteen months of being in America), the Moravians set the goal to convert The Six Nations or the Iroquois. Every move was always well planned, but each attempt ended in failure. Some of the failures included finances, arresting of two envoys by an Albany Mayor, orderly Christian life that was impossible for some Indians addicted to drinking and brawling, and the war between England and France in which the French tried to persuade the Indians that Christ was born in Paris and was crucified by the Englishmen. (Weinlick 159-163)

Furthermore, a large conflict between the Brethren and Indians broke out and the Brethren saw the need of building a barricade around the whole Bethlehem town. The Indian converts, by that time, already lived in an 'Indian House' and were prepared to obey the Moravians. Despite the peace that had come, Indians still wanted their independence and the Brethren remained in danger. They had to move to a nearby village and shelter the converted Indians. Thus, even though it had been more than twenty years from the launch of their Mission, there were only one hundred and seventy converted all together (Hutton 102).

After the peace was finally restored in Pennsylvania, the Brethren went with the message of Christianity to Delaware. Their mission now was not only to preach to a few but to convert the whole nation. A new leader emerged: David Ziesberger was a German from the Brethren community in Herrnhut and who went with the Moravians to America. With him, the greatest era was to come. Ziesberger was very effective in many fields of the mission and it was soon realized that this was their moment to leap forward. The Indian language was studied more intensively, Indians were taught how to read and write, the most important parts of the Bible were translated into their language, and all converts were taught the Christian life.

The town of Bethlehem still remains the northern center of the Moravian community in the United States. Many communal buildings and houses have been destroyed, though some of these have been restored to the original appearances. However, the original church and the choir buildings are the only ones remaining the same since their first construction. They are even still in continuous use today.

„In the present day, a large electric star sits on the hillside over the hulking, rusting mass of steel mills and railroad tracks that for a century dominated the life, economy, and even air of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, a symbol of the town's desire to be known as the "Christmas City." To justify this claim, residents call on their colonial heritage as a communitarian religious enclave of Moravian Church.” (Engel 13) It is called “Christmas city” also because Count Zinzendorf christened the place on Christmas after it was founded earlier that year in April. And as already mentioned, „the name's biblical resonance signifies the deep religious sentiments of the Moravians and the shared sense of missionary zeal that animated them.“ (Engel 13)

### **1.2.2 BUILDING AND ESTABLISHING NEW SETTLEMENTS IN NORTH CAROLINA**

At this point, the Moravians were well established in Pennsylvania and Georgia with their communities having positive influence on the locals, working, living and sharing the Gospel with them. They had become successful in reaching a bigger number of the indigenous inhabitants and teaching them about Christ, how to serve others and most importantly they shared Jesus simply by how they lived. Pennsylvania in particular had become a very important base; several permanent congregations and preaching places were established. They even developed a training school where missionaries would get trained and be taught how to become involved in the lives of Indians and how to serve and teach them best with a Jesus-centric goal. They expected the mission stations to be involved in mission sending as well, such that nationals were getting trained to become elders and teachers.

Thus, the desire and newfound professionalism raised the possibility to found another settlement in a different state. North Carolina was proposed as the new location; the land of Der Wachau (the Latin form Wachovia was later adopted), or creek along the meadow, was an option for a new Moravian community. This time it was not as easy to attain new land as in Pennsylvania and some political and financial problems were faced. A new bishop of the American branch of the Unity August Gottlieb Spangenberg was asked to go to North Carolina, explore the land and select the best location to establish a new Brethren community. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1752, he led a small group of Brethren and left Bethlehem in Pennsylvania, travelling by horseback to Wachovia in North Carolina to investigate the property and its potential.

They did not reach North Carolina until early November. On their way there, the weather was not in their favor, and one of the Brethren had fallen seriously ill. These were some of the complications that delayed their investigation of the property. For three months, they were wandering throughout the countryside, taking notes, drawing detailed maps, writing down all their remarks so that once they departed and headed back to Pennsylvania they would have the most accurate records of the possible place for founding the new settlement. (Fries 65-66)

In the spring of 1753, Spangenberg took all of their data and went to England to present the land possibilities to the English Brethren. The English were now in charge of financing and deciding where the Moravian Brethren were to spread in America. At that time, the English and German Moravian Church were experiencing a tough financial crisis, which led to an inability to raise needed money for purchasing the amount of acres they had firstly agreed on. Moreover, the Brethren in England learned from Spangenberg's data that the land was actually very poor quality and the potential for a new settlement thus lowered. Given this, they decided to step back from the contract with Lord Grandville, to whom the land belonged, though he insisted on no changes already seeing the profit it would make him. Nevertheless, he reconsidered and realizing he did not want to lose the new settlers and their revenue stream, he accepted some contract changes with new terms in favor of the American Brethren with a final agreement of 100 thousand acres. It was signed on August 7, 1753 by the Earl John Grandville, John Hutton, the Secretary of the Unitas Fratrum and Arthur Dobbs, who was soon to move to North Carolina and become the next Governor of that Province. A map of The North Carolina Land and Establishment, dated 1754, "shows the Wachau as divided into 'Societaets Land' (for the Land Company) and 'Unitaets Land,' (for the Unity)" (Fries 69).

Once it was arranged in London, the instructions of who was to be selected as the first colonists in the North Carolina settlement were sent to Bethlehem. The majority of those moving there were from Nazareth, Pennsylvania. The colonists were prayed for by their church and sent on their journey to start a new community in North Carolina on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1753. They walked from Pennsylvania all the way to North Carolina and arrived on November 17<sup>th</sup> 1753. As they reached their new homeland, they sang these verses, composed by the fifteen colonists:

We hold arrival Lovefeast here in Carolina Land,

A company of Brethren true,

A little pilgrim Band,

Called by the Lord to be of those

Who through the whole world go,



To bear Him Witness everywhere,  
And naught by Jesus know. (Tursi 30)

They shared a simple meal after their arrival, followed by a Lovefeast, a traditional Moravian ceremony of sharing bread or cake and coffee, tea or wine.

During the first year in North Carolina, they built and established their new settlement - houses, a mill, and they sowed for the first time and harvested a half-year later. Even though there was a lot of work to be done, they never neglected worship, spiritual growth and community life. By 1776, the houses were finished and married couples moved to one and single Brethren to another. This new settlement was named Bethabara, meaning "House of Passage". During the first twenty years of their serving in Bethabara, they built over seventy-five buildings. In 1753, the French and Indian War broke out. Later during the war, Bethabara and its two forts served as a defensive settlement and a supply center for the British Allies until the end of the war in 1762.

After a large fire in 1802, Bethabara became more of a farm than a town. It was meant to provide food for Salem, another settlement established thirteen years after Bethabara. Throughout the 1800s, Bethabara life declined, and early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were only ruins remaining from the once important missionary center in North Carolina. (Fries 227-232)

Today, only the Bethabara Park is preserved and has served as a non-profit museum since 1970. The mission of the museum is to preserve, acquire and interpret the Moravian past in order to make a better future.

The Brethren wrote a very detailed diary detailing the way in which their religious life was practiced and anchored in daily routine, beginning in infancy all the way to the grave. The main purpose of their lifestyle was to depict what Christian community life should be like to others. The history of the settlement is as follows.

In 1759, another location was proposed to be settled in by the Brethren and the community spread further within North Carolina. Earlier that year, the locals guided by the Holy Spirit chose eight married couples and eight families from the Bethabara

community. On July 18<sup>th</sup>, these couples finally moved from Bethabara to start a new Moravian community, named Bethania.

Seven years later in 1766, as Bethabara and Bethania were successfully growing, yet another opportunity to build another town arose. It was to be called Salem, today known as Winston-Salem. Eight brethren moved there. During the first year, only three houses were successfully completed. They lacked the means necessary expand in order to invite more Brethren to join them. However, the Lord was with them and they remained grateful for all they were able to accomplish within that first year. (Moravian Church in North America)

All three of the new towns grew in population, community work, evangelization, working and reaching for the locals, and establishing the life of worship, as they knew from their time in Herrnhut. This included daily prayers, services, festivities, establishing choirs, accepting more Brethren from the base in Bethlehem, and keeping the tradition of separating working life of single women and men but still sharing lives together in order to worship God as one body.



*Figure 7 - Moravian Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina (Home Moravian Church)*

It is important to mention that before becoming completely independent as two Moravian communities in northern and southern America (in regards to overseeing the smaller settlements that belonged under their missions region), a close working relationship existed with the base settlement where it all started, Herrnhut. They had follow their lead, ask for permission, discuss new opportunities, and essentially apply what was being done in Europe in America without diverging from the path that the Moravian Brethren were known for and attached to. However, due to time constraints and communication distance, sometimes these Moravians in America had to make decision themselves without the benefit of counseling with their wiser and more experienced brothers in Europe.

Naturally, as these occasions were happening increasingly often, the American Moravian brethren were slowly gaining their independence from the brethren in Europe.

### 1.2.3 GOING FARTHER

When America bought Alaska from Russian in 1867, the Moravian community considered establishing a new settlement north and to make contact with the locals, the Eskimos. The very first village was named Bethel and for the three brave missionaries that moved there from Pennsylvania, the beginning was very challenging. This was not only because of the weather conditions but also because of the Eskimo culture, living nomadic, shamanistic lives. It took twenty years, by 1887, when one of the missionaries gifted in linguistics, mastered the language enough to finally tell the story for which they had primarily come to share with these people. By Christmas 1887, the story of Bethlehem, the birth of the Savior Jesus, the only true God was told. Since Eskimos had their own idols and explanations for life, they did not see the need for Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, during the Passion week of the next year, 1888, (nowadays known as the Easter period), the Moravians had their traditional ceremonies during which the first lives of the locals were touched, realizing why Jesus came and what his death meant to everybody on Earth. Within the next two years, over one hundred people came to belief. This village of Bethel, was one of the few locations where successful conversions occurred. Other villages Brethren visited and met people were not as successful. The majority of local populations still remained in their traditional sorcerous way of life, besides one village whose chief was converted and decided on building the very first church where all the Christian Eskimos could gather, worship God and have community. The missionaries taught them how to 'do' church and the Eskimos learned the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the words for the institution of the Holy Communion and some hymns and passages from the Scripture.

Moravians were also spreading further West from their base in Pennsylvania. In the late 1880s they saw the option of settling in California. Due to conflict between whites and Red Indians, there were some societies formed to protect the Red Indians and one in particular appealed to the Moravian Church. They took this opportunity and appointed one missionary who, together with his wife and children, moved to a Red Indian village called Potrero not far from Los Angeles. This was where the first Moravian Mission Station was built. He bought some land in order to build a church and a school. One year later it all became Moravian property. (Hutton 394-415)

After twenty-three years of missionary work the number of converted Indians and become a part of the Moravian church life was still very low. However, the Moravians remained steadfast in their mission as not being based solely on statistics, since they faced the same problems with the locals as their brothers in other places around the American continent such as alcohol addiction, land rights issues, education and deeply ingrained religious beliefs and traditions passed down from a generation to generation. Furthermore, especially in California, there was even a clash of Moravians, Protestants, and the Roman Catholic Church trying to convert the Indians. Since the Government was in favor of the Roman Catholic Church, at the 'to be a Protestant was to be insulted' (Hutton 415).

#### **1.2.4 THE FIRST MORAVIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA**

The year 1739 was important and significant for the Moravian Church. It was the year "the Church acquired, through an act of Parliament, a recognized status in British dominions and assumed a distinct denominational position...specially commemorated by sesqui-centennial celebrations." (Levering 2) This made the Moravian Church the first missionary society in America. It was called *The Society of the Furtherance of the Gospel*, which was fully organized on November 28, 1745 and founded by Bishop Spangenberg. To create this kind of society was inspired by events in Amsterdam where none other than Count Zinzendorf created a similar society in 1739. Zinzendorf lived there at the time, and established the society with the help of Bishop Spangenberg who came to Amsterdam, Holland to negotiate with the Dutch Surinam Company to send out missionaries to their country. Even though the inspiration for its creation in America came from Amsterdam, the real model of the functioning *Society of the Furtherance of the Gospel* was from London, England. Moreover, its first efforts and benefits were directed to the new world as well. (Levering 2-10)

There is no earlier record of any kind of missionary society in the new world prior to the Moravian one. Although there are scarce resources detailing this society, there are some manuscripts and passages in which *The Society of the Furtherance of the Gospel* is mentioned and which give some information about their activity and impact. One record

that refers back to this first missionary society is called *"The early History of the Church of the United Brethren, commonly called Moravians, in North America, A. D. 1734-1748,"* by Bishop Levin Theodore Reichel.

The Society started with thirty members but grew steadily with time, almost all who were from the Moravian Churches of the Brethren in America. They established an official board, appointed certain members to different roles with specific responsibilities in order to perform and appear in public as an official body. They created their own constitution in order to stay united in important core values, defining this community. They also included specific goals, the rules of the voting system, what the rights and responsibilities were for the appointed committee and for its members, the admission of new members and also most importantly that the Society was founded on the Exhortation of St. John in his third Epistle as well as in their current situation.

Nevertheless, they were not autonomous. Since they wanted to exist as an official body, they had to report to a higher authority, the Synod. The Synod would oversee their work, financial management, investments and selection of whom to support. They also insisted on they keeping track of each sum being handed after the Synod would approve it.

As mentioned above, one of the main activities of the Society was to collect money for missionary purposes. Within two years of their existence, they collected over £454, equivalent to around \$641 in modern terms, which for the time then was a very significant amount of money given for a mission work - for Foreign Missions and Home Missionary work. (Levering 3) The Society also financially supported the neighborhoods in which its missionaries lived and worked. This included providing Bibles, selling or donating hymnal books, catechisms, devotional works and also some special publications written by the Moravian Church. They would even provide some schoolbooks for children, sometimes in at least five languages.

The years 1745 – 1755, which were the most active years for the Moravian Church in America, were also the most fruitful years for the Society of the Furtherance of the Gospel. In three years of the Society being active „87 men and 53 women with 17 children had gone out from Bethlehem to engage in mission work among the heathen

and among nominal Christ” (Levering 29). Great work was also noticeable across the state of Pennsylvania where the number of preaching places grew to 20. It was stated that this increase had happened thanks to the efforts of the Society and the Furtherance of the Gospel. The first religious awakening baptism took place among the Delawares with the whole Sunday service being held in the local Indian language.

By April 1749, the membership of the Society had quadrupled, with one third not even strictly connected to the Moravian Church. Over the years, the Brethren developed thirty new stations in Pennsylvania where they were serving. The cooperation of the Synod in Pennsylvania and the Society actually bore much fruit and unity. However, the visiting and deputizing Bishop John the Watteville was asked to carry out some changes regarding the organization of the Moravian Church, its external policy and methods. This resulted in the Synod losing its power, being basically abandoned. What remained was only its name. Hence the Society of the Furtherance of the Gospel continued its existence under the Moravian Church.

The new Bishop John Nitschmann was appointed in 1749 and finally replaced Bishop Spangenberg who had gone back to Europe for two years. The next few years were fruitful for the Society as well. Many of their missionaries who went to reach the Indians were successful and it was later recorded that more than 350 Indians were baptized. Up to this point in 1754, the Society had donated more than £1,900, given to the mission expansion. (Levering 29-35)

From this time, the Society of the Furtherance of the Gospel began to slowly decline and they never really reached the same level of activity again. One major factor for its ending is due to the crisis happening in Europe which resulted in the Moravian Church in America becoming bankrupt. Speculations say that another reason could be the significant rise in supporting missions outside of the Moravian Church with no connection to them whatsoever. It is not known exactly when the Society officially ended its practice, but it appears that it came to an end on May 30, 1762 with the abrogation of the cooperative association in Nazareth and Bethlehem, and also with the final departure of its founder Bishop Spangenberg back to Europe on June 22, 1762. „The whole system from 1762 to 1771 was transitional and unsatisfactory. ... The existence of the Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel disappeared in a dishonored

burial given it in the great Ledger of the General Diaconate of 1762- 1771.” (Levering 45)

Nevertheless, the decline and then the termination of the Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel did not mean an end to general missionary work. There were new ways and means created for the mission work to continue the ongoing missionary interest in America, especially with regards to helping missionaries in practice and to raise new missionaries for missions both within the country and for overseas.

The Moravian Church though continued what they had started and pursued the reason why the Moravians had come to America in the first place. However, there was a new system, which released the Church from paying back the remaining debt and explaining that the debt must be forgotten since the work of the Society is viewed as heroic.

With the onset of the American Revolution, the Moravian Church faced some difficulties. Fortunately, after the war’s conclusion, the Church managed to revive itself. The United Brethren in England worked on a renewed version of the Society of the Furtherance of the Gospel for the Brethren in America and created a plan for reaching and serving among the Heathen in 1786. This plan was „kindly received amended, approved and recommended for execution, which was cheerfully done, and the Stated Rules of the Society of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen agreed on and subscribed in Bethlehem the 21 of September, 1787, as printed.” (Levering 46)

### **1.2.5 MORAVIANS IN THE CIVIL WAR**

The Civil War in America occurred between the years 1861 and 1865 as the battle North against the South, or the industrial North fighting against the Southern exploitation of slavery. At this point in history, the Moravians were settled in both – Pennsylvania, New York or Ohio in the north, and North Carolina or Georgia in the south. In addition to this, the Moravian mentality had changed. They were no longer just Europeans trying to reach Native Americans, but they had also become Americans too. Through the generations, they became a part of their surrounding culture present in their respective states. Thus, they were not only actively a part of the political life but



also aware of their political duties (this is contrast to the earlier Moravians who lived more or less in and for their communities avoiding the political aspect of them living in America). Therefore, they sought to be involved in the Civil War conflict. (Robertson 7-11)

Nevertheless, at the same time, their approach differed from the regular Northerners or Southerners and because of their devotion to Christ. Even though these Moravians fought against each other as representing either South or North, it was noticed and recorded that both of these groups seemed to follow something deeper which influenced their motivations and what they fought for. These men brought up and educated in Moravian community, „created for themselves identities based on their military and political affiliation, but throughout their communication they maintained a definite sense of their identity as Moravians.” (Robertson 15) Others often asked them how is it possible that they keep their status of being civil and religious during war and how they accomplish to combine these two contradictory ideas. Their responses explained the fact that it is not only a one-way influence their predecessors had come to perform but also it had become reciprocal. Their community was open and offered what they lives to reach non-Christians, but the American culture influenced them as well, This was more and more recognizable as new generations of these Moravians were raised in the new world.

There are many publications and correspondences amongst the Moravians, which highlight their identity being a Moravian as equal if not even greater than their civil identity. In Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the periodical called *The Moravian* published some of the prayers meant to assure that „the side of the Union was the side of the right, but also tried to explain how Moravians in North Carolina chose to fight for the Confederacy.” (Robertson 16)

Yet, it is important to mention that some Moravian Southerners had tendencies to put their civil duties before their faith and beliefs they held toward God’s will, whereas for the Moravians from the North seemed more devoted to keep their beliefs always before anything else. For northern American Moravians, the possibility of going against God’s will was never a question, even during war.

Nevertheless, even though the Moravians in the North seemed devoted without a flaw,

the reality started to change. They were more in touch with their non-Moravian neighbors and thus were becoming more of Americans than they primarily had intended to; especially those in Bethlehem who still wanted to prevail as a closed community with life devoted to Christ, prayers, service and modesty. Given this fact, their lifestyle and pacifism started to grow weaker. Therefore, the Civil War was a major turning point for Moravians. Their influence and activity experienced rapid decrease and almost a total disappearance of their and their Church's existence in America. They were forced to redefine themselves, the crucial points of their faith and also forced to adapt to new conditions and realize what it meant for them to be not simply the Moravians but Moravians in America.

After the Civil War was over, Moravian communities in the North and South were separated from each other even more and became completely independent of Europe – not only religiously but economically as well. The only settlement that still had responsibilities toward Britain was Wachovia, which had to pay rent for the land they settled on. Moreover, they could not exist outside of political alignments anymore, so they had to redefine themselves as either Revolutionist or Royalists. The American Revolution had permanently changed the Moravian Church, the communities and their unique way of life. (Robertson 36-58)

## **2. CURRENT SITUATION AND STATUS OF THE MORAVIAN CHURCH IN THE USA**

### **2.1 GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MORAVIAN CHURCH AND ITS LEAD TOWARD THE FUTURE**

Even though Count Zinzendorf's vision to unify the whole Moravian Church all over the world was not successful, he did successfully establish (with the help of countless missionaries from the Brethren community) the Moravian Church in the New World – America. Some Moravian Churches in America were established for Moravian community only, so-called closed communities, while the rest served alongside other denominations. For one whole century, only Moravian Church members could live in the towns of Bethlehem, Nazareth and Lititz, another smaller Moravian community that

had been established near Bethlehem in the Pennsylvania Moravian region. The subsequent evangelical missions to Native Americans arose from the main Moravian centers in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Many children also attended Moravian boarding school for education, not only those connected to the Moravian community but also from the outside.

In spite of this outreach, the Moravian Church still remained small because of the control that was coming from Europe and its traditions of maintaining smaller and closed communities. Nevertheless, in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Moravian Church experienced large growth thanks to the autonomy the American Church gained from the International Moravian Church. The population growth in the northern part of America was due to immigrants from Norway and Germany who were joining the Moravian communities, whereas the growth in North Carolina came from the native population that the missionaries were reaching. This resulted in separating the administration into northern and southern provinces. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, they decided to share the same board of foreign missions, a common seminary and a free exchange of ministers.

Two colleges were also founded, Salem College in Winston-Salem and the Moravian College in Bethlehem. Apart from this, there was also another Moravian group called the Unity of Brethren that was in close relationship with the Moravian Church and focused on overseas missions.

Examining the Bethlehem region closer around the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a significant change can be observed. The presence of coal was discovered at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the area turned into a mining region. Since it was a hub between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Bethlehem became an important transportation midpoint. Commerce was naturally developed and many brethren were involved in it in order to create ties between the Moravian Church and the residents of Bethlehem, which was now growing in population.

Nevertheless, Bethlehem went through a very serious economic depression in 1837, followed by huge flooding in 1841. This affected the Church to the point that they had to release the ties which they had made with the European division, since there was no

aid coming from Europe. Thus, the Moravians in Bethlehem had to go through another self-redefinition that the Industrial Revolution had provoked.

A different situation was happening in the South. North Carolina was dealing with slavery and its acceptance within the Church. After a period of allowing Africans as slaves, the Church looked at it from a different perspective of why slavery should be banned. It provoked the idea and tendencies that white men would become lazy once having these slaves working for them. For the Moravian Church and its core values, this was unacceptable.

After they forbade slavery, the Moravians opened their communities for these African Americans as well. (Moravian Church in North America, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: A Moravian Settlement in Colonial America, Home Moravian Church)

## **2.2 MORAVIAN CHURCH TODAY**

Today, the Moravian Church is a worldwide church reaching every continent. Regarding North America, “Moravians are a distinct minority in the Moravian Unity, making up less than 10 percent of its total membership.” (Moravian Church in North America) The Church in the United States is divided into two provinces: The Northern and Southern.

“The Northern Province of the Moravian Church in America, headquartered in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, counts more than 21,000 members in 93 congregations in 13 states in the U.S. [...] The Southern Province, headquartered in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, includes nearly 16,000 members in 58 congregations, which are located primarily throughout the Southeast. Moravian congregations can be found in California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Washington DC” (Moravian Church in North America).

Moravian Brethren missionaries are known for reaching places and areas where others are unwilling or unable to go. This characteristic can be traced all the way back to the very first missionary tendencies of these Moravians. This aspect has remained part of the Moravian Church mentality, no matter where in the world they actively serve.

The Moravian Church has been a „member of the World Council of Churches since its inception. They are also active members of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. and participants in Christian Churches Together in the USA. In addition, the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church are in full communion relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) and the Episcopal Church, and in a covenant partnership with the Presbyterian Church (USA)” (Moravian Church in North America).

Apart from the Apostles’s and Nicene Creed that the Moravian Church embraced as their belief statement, they have also accepted the Augsburg Confession. Their motto is: „*In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; and in all things, love.*” (Moravian Church in North America)

### **3. COMPARING AND CONTRASTING: USA VS EUROPE**

When looking at the multiple Moravian churches anywhere in Europe and USA, there are significant traits rooted in the very first Moravian community and their Christian brotherhood originating in Moravia as *Unitas Fratrum*.

Moravian Brethren are known for expending all over the world. They wanted to reach every nation and place, especially those deemed too difficult to reach or settle. Apart from this thesis’ focus on the legacy in the USA, it is essential to compare how much of the core values and traditions representing the original Moravian Brethren community has been maintained. The Moravians who went to America came from Europe. They brought with them what they had become accustomed in Herrnhut, Germany to the New World. Count Zinzendorf’s focus was the importance of bringing Jesus to people without changing or eliminating their original culture. He always emphasized this in the community and in what he taught. This meant keeping the core Moravian values but applying them in new contexts wherever they expanded. For the USA, as already studied above, the circumstances were changing and differed from those in Europe. The gradual independence from Europe enabled them to become more American culture-friendly. Ultimately however, Moravians were still Moravians no matter what country or continent they were in.

Some of the most important and influential Moravian Churches and communities in Europe today are found on the British Isles, Western Europe, mainly Netherlands, then Eastern Europe, such as Latvia, and Central Europe in Czech Republic from where the original Moravian Brethren had sprung. In all of these, we can observe the same roots being traced back to Moravia to the very beginning of Moravian Brethren. All their worship styles are Bible-centered, with prayers as the central aspect of each service, and a specific set of readings given to particular worship ceremonies such as Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Withsuntide and Trinity Sunday. They all hold the six orders for regular use: the Holy Communion, Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Funeral and Lovefeast. In some Moravian churches, in the above-mentioned countries in Europe, they still hold *agape*, the shared communal meal, which is an integral part of the Holy Communion as it always used to be for the community in Herrnhut. (Moravian Church in Western Europe - World Council of Churches)

Nevertheless, since it started in Herrnhut where different backgrounds of people's faith and denominations were brought together, it was essential for the community to establish some changes and compromises in order to retain unity among them. It never influenced any of the core faith values; it was only the practical outcomes that experienced some clash. Additionally, the Moravians started pursuing the world-mission vision as one community. Thus the clarity about their faith proclamation and practice was essential to be understood and embraced by everyone. This resulted in slight shifts, but did not affect any foundational values, only minor elements. As Zinzendorf taught them to always remember – looking at the larger picture and what united them, not what might separate them.

Another unifying aspect of the Moravian Church in America and Europe is to be seen in their approach to serve practically and manually. The Moravians are known as hard-working people and they always started by trying to meet others' needs and fulfilling them. They never set up churches in opposition to already existing churches but rather aimed to work with them. They always considered establishing a new community only when there was evident need.

No matter if in America or Europe, the Moravian community remained small and rather closed. It is important to specify what "small" refers to in Europe and America. As

mentioned above, after the Moravians won their independence from Europe after the Civil War, they started to grow significantly. While member attendance was higher in numbers compared to Europe communities, it does not even nearly compare to a large church membership as in other more common American denominations – much less to today’s terminology of a “mega church”. Even though the American Moravian Churches are bigger regarding the number of members, it is still considered as small today.

On the other hand, there are differences between the Moravian Church in America and Europe, due to the different cultural contexts. The European Moravians’ focus on overseas missions is still strong whereas in the USA, they focus on local missions. Europe has also, to some degree, adopted ecumenism in their outlook in order to work and be involved in many ecumenical projects, which is quite a novelty for the Church.

More specifically, in Britain, the Moravian Brethren embraced more creeds and confessions of faith as time went on and proclamation developed. This only means that the tradition of specific readings during the worship became freer and thus options more abundant. It never affected the worldwide Moravian ground of unity. The beliefs and practices are still kept unchanged. (The Moravian Church British Province, Moravian Church in North America, The Ground of the Unity)

Looking at the Brethren in the Czech Republic, the Moravian Brethren Church uses the official denominational name *Unitas Fratrum* (*Jednota bratrská*) as they used to be called during the times of Jan Hus. The term Moravian Brethren or “Moravští bratři” connotes now the general identification of the historical background and context. The population in the churches throughout the country today is still decent and follows the pattern of small community. They are still very much focused on the positive influence on the people who surround them. Not only spiritually, but also socially, educationally, culturally and practically. They do so by providing activities, which are hosted by church families and communal centers. Moreover, they provide education at the elementary, middle and high school level. (*Jednota Bratrská Česká Republika*) This still holds the communal way of living as the very first Moravian communities in Herrnhut started doing so, but also in establishing settlements in America. This is not only a specific trait for the Czech Republic. The same applies to the Moravian communities in

the British Isles and Western Europe. Again, this confirms their relatively isolated community living.

To be mentioned lastly and importantly, another unifying aspect for all Moravians in America and Europe is that they want to be seen as Christians whose lives reflect Jesus as *living* God.

Interestingly, the ending of the Moravian motto for Brits differs from the American one. The motto of the British Moravians is: „*In things essential, unity... in non-essentials, liberty... in all things, charity*” (Moravian Church British Province), whereas the American is: „*In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; and in all things, love,* ” (Moravian Church in North America). The words *charity* and *love* are semantically different, but according to the Moravians, charity cannot be done without the love for others first, in all things; and love, if genuine, automatically brings charity for others. To them, these two are not mutually exclusive but rather complementing.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This thesis seeks to outline the original creeds and practices of Moravian Brethren and observe how these have evolved through time, especially with regard to the geographic dispersion of the early practitioners.

The Moravian Church, whose roots are in the Czech nations back in the fifteenth century under the leadership of Jan Hus, today represents a Christian denomination reaching every continent. It started small and local, eventually becoming a world-wide movement. After studying the founding of the Moravian Church in the USA with its history, hardships they had to overcome, and the American cultural context interacting with the missionaries who brought Moravian faith to Pennsylvania and then spread all over the country, it can be said that they are a well-established community which still follows the same creed, values and vision as the Moravians established centuries beforehand. They maintain what Count Zinzendorf taught the first missionaries who went to America as the Moravian pioneers, which was to always remain Bible-centered, authentic, united as one body with Jesus Christ as its head, to hold the Apostolic



following, serving the needs of the wider society and not living for themselves but for the sake of relationships and the values of society, never ceasing in helping others and practical serving. Since their focus and importance fell on communal living, they tended to be a small and rather closed community, even providing school education in their own way and within their traditions (in accordance with the state law).

Nevertheless, they took into account the cultural differences, taking particular care not to change the local people in the areas they served, encouraging them to embrace their own cultures. Still, it was necessary to accommodate communal living to the country's traditions and habits but still performing the reason they came for –to present Jesus to them as the one true living God. As the years and centuries passed, the American Moravians became slightly different from the European Moravians, some being more independent of the European culture and the others becoming more modern in order to meet the needs of new generations and cooperation with other denominations. No matter what minor changes occurred, the foundational aspects remain the same and thus the Moravian Church, whether in the USA, Czech Republic or in any other country in Europe where the Moravian Church can be found, still proclaims and actively lives according to the core values and beliefs set at the very beginning of this protestant denomination in Moravia.

Concerning the geographic roots in and attachment to Moravia, it still holds the tradition in terms of the place where it all began and thus *Unitas Fratrum* (*Jednota bratrská*) still keeps its status (to a lesser but still significant degree), importance and territorial value, not only in the Moravian region but in the whole Czech Republic as one nation where the seed was sowed, later taken to be spread and now planted all over the world. Even though the name of the brethren still retains the word “Moravian” no matter where in the world they went to establish a community, what was firstly thought as a local denomination for the “neighbors” in Moravia, then became more of a mission to which the brethren were called – to take the Word of God to the places where it has not come and to people who have not heard it yet. The meaning was thus shifted to signify and be understood as the place of the origin rather than the place where and people for whom the ministry should be performed.

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