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Religion of the Heart:

Zinzendorf's Theology and its Implications for Sexuality in the Moravian Church Today

by

Rachel Marie Schachter

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the role of the theology of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-60) in the discussion of human sexuality within the Moravian Church in North America today and puts forth an argument for the validity of same-sex sex from within Moravian tradition. The theology of Zinzendorf, though it manifested itself in 18th-century General Economy Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in its highly structured and participatory community, did not manifest itself fully; its otherwise egalitarian notions of sex were codified by stringent sex roles and marital status. While the theology of the side wound, through which it is understood that Christ birthed the Church and which therefore represents a female and motherly mode, validates the human state of women, Moravian society deferred to men. While all souls were considered brides of Christ, sex roles were stringent and similarly deferred to man as representative of Christ.

These sex roles are, perhaps most importantly, based on a cultural understanding of sex and gender largely understood to be socially constructed rather than inherent. Through an understanding of gender as performed, it is possible within Moravian tradition to reinterpret the theology of Zinzendorf to allow for fluidity of sex roles and fluidity of gender that extends to the sex act. It is possible to use Zinzendorf's understanding of *Verstand*, reason used to understand the natural world, to see these

stringent sex roles as unnecessary and not necessarily reflective of the nature of humanity. The set of conflicts surrounding sexuality is one in response to which the Moravian Church has the opportunity to redefine its identity, and the Church must do so within the context of its own history and theology. This thesis argues that same-sex sex viewed through a Zinzendorfian lens can achieve reflection of unity with Christ.

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Introduction

I approach this project, as does every researcher, as well as everyone who has ever crafted an argument, with biases. Mine are personal, impassioned, and quite literally close to home. Raised in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and introduced into an incredibly supportive and loving Moravian Church congregation and community early enough in life that I have no recollection of the surrounding events, I have a longstanding attachment to the Moravian Church. My attachment to the Church goes hand in hand with my attachment to Moravian theology and history and the impact of that theology and history on Moravian community as well as communities with strong Moravian presence. This project, bringing 18th-century Moravian theology to bear on issues of sexuality within the Church presently, stems from a vision that arose at a time when I became concerned about a lack of impact of Moravian theology on our communities today. The event in question was a 2010 meeting of the Northern Provincial Synod that took place in Bethlehem, and even more specifically the discussion surrounding a proposal to the Synod regarding human sexuality, including same-sex sex. That all of this is taking place in my hometown of Bethlehem, where the 18th-century theology of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-60) first took hold of a collective people and facilitated a truly Moravian community, seems serendipitous; I have not far to look in terms of location, but I have centuries to look back.

The community on which the Moravian Church ultimately bases its history is the pre-Reformation *Unitas Fratrum* (Unity of the Brethren) that arose from the Bohemian Hussite Reformation of Jan Hus. The Czech Reformation of the fourteenth and fifteenth

centuries opposed the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the pope and the cardinals of the Catholic Church, asserting that they reveled in their own power, rejecting the self-sacrificing example of Christ and taking on the character of an Antichrist.[1] The Czech reformers considered opposing this corruption as essential to following Christ. Though many teachers preceded him in the Czech Reformation, Jan Hus (1369-1415) can be credited with bringing together the popular and the academic in the movement, focusing on practicality and stripping away the wealth of the clergy. Much of the argument of Hus is based on the philosophical realism of English reformer John Wyclif (1320-84), who emphasized the authority of Scripture and opposed much Catholic doctrine. Hus was burned at the stake in Constance on July 6, 1415, and the community left behind took what they understood to be his martyrdom as a reassurance that their persecution was unjust. The "Four Articles of Prague" proclaimed in 1419-20 by remaining Hussite Reformers in Bohemia and Moravia demanded freedom for preaching the Word of God, that the Lord's Supper be served regularly to all believers, that priests and monks have no secular authority and live in poverty, and that all of Christian society must repent. This community of believers formed the *Unitas Fratrum*.[2]

The influence of Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670), the priest "in whom the Unity reached its height and nearly finished its course" served to bind the Brethren of Moravia (his country) and Bohemia closely with the *Unitas Fratrum* once members of those

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1. Říčan 2.

2. See Říčan chapter 1 on the roots of the Unity of the Brethren.

communities had taken refuge with Zinzendorf.[3] In 1624, in the midst of forcible mass conversions to the Roman Church, priests of the Brethren were banished from Moravia and Bohemia. Comenius had a thorough knowledge of Czech biblical texts as well as Latin and German (Lutheran) ones, and he came to embrace the Pietism that would also come to so clearly distinguish the Moravian Church. Also carried through Comenius from the Brethren to the Moravian Church are distinctions between "essentials" and "nonessentials" and an opposition to theological speculation; these distinctions come to be greatly important to Zinzendorf. When a congregation called Herrnhut (meaning "the Lord's Watch") arose in Saxony on the land of a Pietist nobleman named Zinzendorf, a carpenter of Catholic origin named Christian David led German-speaking emigrants there.

The congregation formed in Herrnhut under Zinzendorf, however, was heavily influenced by Zinzendorf's Pietism and his desire to facilitate the growth of a community within the framework of the Saxon Lutheran Church. Among the congregation, a few were insistent on maintaining their identity as a renewed congregation of the *Unitas Fratrum*, to which Zinzendorf agreed. The catechism of the *Unitas Fratrum* and of Comenius did not remain, but the renewed congregation remained faithful to the *Unitas Fratrum* at least as far as their dedication to active participation of laity in congregational life. Characteristic of this congregation were newly composed hymns (rather than retention of the hymns of the *Unitas Fratrum*) and a zeal for mission work, expanding the

3. Říčan 335.

activity of the church across the world.[4] Another aspect of Hussite Reformation that carried through to Zinzendorf was a call for the church to be a bride for Christ the Bridegroom, language and ideology that would become central to Zinzendorf's theology, particularly his theology of sex and sexuality, as will be discussed in the first chapter of this document.[5] Zinzendorf was consecrated a bishop of the *Unitas Fratrum* in 1737, but the community that became the Moravian Church in North America was a synthesis of the old *Unitas Fratrum* and Zinzendorfian Pietism. Due to the large number of Moravians within the renewed *Unitas Fratrum*, the group became known particularly in America as the Moravian Brethren. It is this community that survives today.

The lasting influence of the Hussite movement is clear in what has become the Moravian Church in North America. Though the Moravian Church continues to claim roots in the *Unitas Fratrum* and pride itself on being a global community (so much so that *Unitas Fratrum* remains the official name of the World Wide Unity of the Moravian Church), this project focuses on Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The Protestant minorities who took refuge on the land of Zinzendorf in 1722 "had an awareness of and commitment to [the *Unitas Fratrum*]," but whether the Unity truly continued to exist in Moravia and Bohemia is not evident.[6] Similarities and common threads of thought exist between the

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4. See Říčan 384-85 on the formation of the Herrnhut congregation.

5. The language of Christ as Bridegroom precedes the Hussites and the Reformation and is central to medieval Christianity and earlier reform movements; see Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* 117-35.

6. Atwood 21-22.

old *Unitas Fratrum* and the Moravian Church of Zinzendorf, such as the significance of community and discipline as well as the right of every member of the community to hold office and help guide the life of the Church. What Zinzendorf and his refugees created, rather than truly reinvigorated or recreated, however, was not itself the old *Unitas Fratrum.*[7] Rather, the theology of Zinzendorf spurred a new church that has come to be known as the Moravian Church.

In the historical study of the Moravian Church, the traditional understanding of Zinzendorf's theology is that in the 1740s, "Zinzendorf let his theological imagination roam too far," that he had put forth provocative ideas but "quickly returned to more or less traditional theology and the community repudiated his theological experiments."[8] As a result of this, some of Zinzendorf's most unique theology regarding sex as sacramental and directly representative of union with Christ, which was greatly influential on 18th-century Bethlehem, is brushed aside and forgotten, not expected to influence the life of Moravian community. Any unorthodox view is identified as part of what has become known as the "Sifting Time," a supposedly particularly unsettled and radical time within the history of the Moravian Church during which time the theology of Zinzendorf went to extremes that were are said to have been later rescinded, and much of the theology that influenced 18th-century Bethlehem is thereby dismissed. Dismissal of these theological notions is a mistake for several reasons, not the least of which is that a refusal to take into account *any* individual piece of Zinzendorf's theology hinders connection of the

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7. Atwood 25.

8. *Ibid.* 12.

Moravian Church today to Zinzendorf's core theological ideas. In dismissing such theology, the Church dismisses that which makes it distinct. Also significant is that many of the theological notions associated with the Sifting Time, in fact, remained pervasive throughout the Bethlehem that today's Moravians love to claim as their own.[9]

Therefore, rather than reconciling modern ideas of the Moravian community to sources that contradict notions of what parts of Zinzendorf's theology should be identified with the Sifting Time, the Moravian Church avoids the tensions at hand. Sources such as the *Bethlehem Diary* record individual and congregational use of Zinzendorf's more radical language beyond the period identified as the Sifting Time.[10] Contrary to common belief, Zinzendorf continued to hold and practice some of his "most creative and controversial motifs" long after the end of the supposed Sifting Time.[11] These ideas are part of "a persistent and comprehensive Zinzendorfian piety," not simply the product of one historical period, but fundamental to Zinzendorf's thought.[12] If the interests of the Moravian Church are towards unity, it only seems reasonable to look to

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9. On the Sifting Time, see Peucker, "'Blut' auf unsre grüne Bändchen" and Peucker, "Inspired by Flames of Love."

10. The Bethlehem Diary is a community diary that chronicles important events and everyday occurrences of 18th-century Bethlehem, including active and extended use of theological concepts dismissed as part of the Sifting Time.

11. Atwood 13.

12. *Ibid.* 15.

the Church that grounded itself in what it called a Unity, including the colloquial and occasionally jarring theology that propelled the Moravian Church into the 19th century.

Many of Zinzendorf's theological points relate directly to sexuality, and are therefore directly relevant to the response of Moravians today to issues of human sexuality. Focus on the relevant theology can allow the Church to view human sexuality through a Zinzendorfian lens – a Moravian lens. Zinzendorf's is the lens through which the Church must respond to issues of human sexuality if it seeks to identify as distinctly Moravian. This project brings into focus the aspects of the theology of Zinzendorf that contribute to a Moravian analysis of sexuality, sexual behavior, and particularly same-sex sex. Moravian theology of sexuality exists; this same theology can be read and analyzed in a way that sheds light on Moravian response to human sexuality and same-sex sex today. A reluctance to accept the controversial theology that was part of the incredibly unique community of 18th-century Bethlehem prevents the Moravian Church from considering its notions of sexuality in our discussions today. Theologically Zinzendorfian and thereby Moravian notions must be brought to the conversation if a response is to remain Moravian.

Hope Conference and Renewal Center, a Moravian camp in Hope, New Jersey and the conference and retreat center for the Eastern District of the Moravian Church Northern Province, has among its weeklong conferences each summer a session for young people who have completed their freshman year of high school through age 21. The planning committee for this Senior/Post High School conference, comprised of campers, took on the theme of going "Beyond the Buns" for their 2013 weeklong

conference. These young people, predominantly high school students, observed that Moravians today are very attached to the idea of community, to beeswax candles and lovefeast buns, to brass choirs, and to the elaborate Christmas "putz" presentations of scenes surrounding the birth of Christ. Such aspects of Moravian life seem to be rooted in tradition for the sake of tradition rather than reflection on what makes Moravians truly Moravian.[13] These campers acknowledged their own ignorance of the religious foundations of their community and expressed a desire to be taught. A central theme of this thesis is that what makes Moravian tradition distinct is the theology and tradition of Zinzendorf, on which Bethlehem and the Moravian Church in North America were founded. Historic downtown Bethlehem boasts that the Moravian Book Shop is the world's oldest continually operated book store, that the old Widow's House that houses seminary students reminds us of the effectiveness and community of General Economy Bethlehem, and that the iron Star of Bethlehem, crafted by Bethlehem Steel, shines from South Mountain as a reminder that this city was named for the town where Christ was born. But as intertwined as 18th-century and 21st-century Bethlehem seem, it is important to examine the extent to which the Moravian community is truly informed by its early history.

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13. The Christmas putz is an elaborate retelling of the story of the birth of Christ through narration and music. The gathering of moss as a base and the construction and presentation of putzes are central to the Christmas traditions of many Moravians, particularly Bethlehem congregations.

In 2010 when I attended the Northern Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church held at Moravian College in Bethlehem, the subject of human sexuality came to a vote, specifically a vote on whether to ordain those who meet all requirements and standards for ordination but choose to be in "committed, monogamous, publicly accountable same-sex relationships" rather than remaining celibate.[14] I knew when I agreed to serve as a youth delegate for the Eastern District what my vote would be, and I carried that intention through; the arguments with which I had convinced myself to vote in favor of the proposal were based largely in the language of human rights and my ideas of social justice. I am proud of my eighteen-year-old self for resisting the urge to stand behind a microphone and attempt to use the language of human rights to sway the vote, as this piece of legislation proposed to the synod did come to a vote by the delegates, including one clergy and two laity from each congregation in the Province. While I believe that arguments for human rights and social justice should be fully recognized, I also believe that any argument made with the intention of affecting the Moravian Church should be grounded in the language of Moravian theology, a language over which I had little to no command in 2010. I did stand behind a microphone and state that I believed firmly that my vote represented the youth of the Eastern District and that our reluctance as a Church to get too close to the issues had in recent years pushed personal acquaintances of mine to leave our community. I expected the Moravian clergy and candidates for ordination among us to make the theological arguments. That expectation was not publicly fulfilled.

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14. "Northern Province delegates address ordination rules" 20.

I hope through this project to contribute to theologically driven public discourse on the subject.

It has been my observation that communities focused on unity, including Moravian communities, tend to back away from tensions that appear to threaten the unity of that community. Long before addressing issues of ordination or marriage, the Moravian Church officially recognized homosexuals as children of God (1974).[15] In 2002, a proposal was passed affirming the right to full participation of homosexual people in Moravian congregations.[16] Since that time, arguments founded on potential danger to Moravians in Tanzania if they were to be associated with a Church that appeared to condone homosexual behavior (alongside other arguments against the conversation) have successfully kept the discussion from taking priority.[17] Arguments against the 2010 proposal were largely rooted in common interpretations of scripture as condemning all homosexual behavior, and arguments in favor of the proposal were

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15. Provincial Elders' Conference 1.

16. "Social Issues" 51.

17. The Unity Synod of 2002 placed a moratorium on the discussion of homosexuality that has hindered discussion of the issues by the Moravian Church Northern Province. This in addition to the observation that "there is clearly not a unity of view among Moravians n ordination of non-celibate homosexual men and women" have been cited as reasons to delay discussion and decision. See "Resolutions and Elections 2010" 13-14 for the resolution passed by the 2010 Synod on the matter of homosexuality and ordination.

rooted largely in the language of human rights, if not that of, "I drink, I smoke, I lust: I'm a sinner; why not ordain *those* sinners too?" The third chapter of this thesis will address prominent arguments against same-sex sex including those based on 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 as well as my argument through a theological lens.

Through theologically grounded and focused arguments and conversations, the Moravian Church might experience the reward of pushing through tensions related to sexuality. Only emphasis and focus on the dissonance that prevents genuine unity in belief and purpose can yield true resolution. The 16th-century Protestant Reformation provides a basis and structure for responding to such tensions as a Church. German monk and Catholic priest Martin Luther (1483-1546) is credited with sparking a reformation when he famously nailed his "Ninety-Five Theses" to the door of the church near the castle in the Saxon capital of Wittenberg. The focus was the existence of indulgences; Luther's conclusion was that if the Church would not reform something so blatantly abusive, the authoritative and theological structure of the institution must be flawed.

The subsequent reformations associated with Luther later became known collectively as the Reformation, an effort to return to Christianity in its purest form, upholding the Apostolic Church as the ideal. The Lutheran movement in Germany is now widely accepted as representative of only a part of the greater Reformation, but the movement in Germany was largely successful and heavily affected and affects Protestant denominations today, not unimportantly the Moravian Church. For Peter Marshall, the usefulness of Reformation as a concept lies in formation of identity by means of division

and conflict.[18] The set of conflicts surrounding sexuality is one through which the Moravian Church has the opportunity to redefine its identity, and it must do so within the context of its own history and theology. In this context, it cannot be overemphasized that the reformation instigated by Luther was one taking place from the inside, an effort to reform Catholicism from within, and an effort to restore the Apostolic Church, not to tear it down. Any effort towards reform within the Moravian Church similarly needs to claim a foundation within the tradition.

Protestant reform that follows in the tradition of Luther works by reference to the biblical past as it re-imagines it. Without the community of Jan Hus, which preceded the 16th-century Protestant Reformation associated with Martin Luther, the *Unitas Fratrum* would not have seen Zinzendorf's reformulation and synthesis of a liturgical Lutheran tradition with the identity of those who became the Moravian Church; without attention paid to that identity and tradition, the Moravian Church cannot be distinguishable from the culture within which it contemporarily exists. If "Protestant mythology has reformers 'discovering' the bible, as if it had laid mouldering and forgotten at the back of a cupboard," my goal is to have Moravians today "discover" their own theological history, to consult Zinzendorf in the midst of difficult decisions.[19] Protestant and Catholic reformers alike sought to create a more spiritual Church; they simply pursued separate avenues to accomplish such a task. The avenue of the Moravian Church should be its own history, should be Zinzendorf.

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18. Marshall 9.

19. *Ibid.* 48.

No public argument for or against the 2010 proposal was, as far as I can recall, made on the basis of specifically Moravian theology.[20] Since Moravians are incredibly proud of traditions and community, music and candles, uniqueness, individuality, and survival in a time of failing churches, this lack of focus on Moravian theology is disheartening, to say the least. If the Moravian Church does not hold fast to Moravian theology, what is the Church? If the Church is nothing but a common name, candles, buns, and a loose claim on a particularly elaborate variation on the miniature nativity scene, to what purpose does the Church serve its members within a denomination distinct from those with which the Moravian Church is in full communion?[21] There is significance in claims laid on tradition in that common identity that forms around those claims, but towards what ideals? These questions have led me to pursue a Moravian understanding of marriage, sex, and sexuality.

An argument that will discuss issues of sexuality in the Moravian Church today in terms of "gay and lesbian" and "homosexual" experience and orientation must acknowledge that such use is an anachronism; these terms did not exist for Zinzendorf or

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20. The Resolution defeated in June 2010 refers to previous Resolutions and to the 2002 iteration of the *Book of Order*, but not to scripture or Moravian theology. See "Resolutions and Elections 2010" 62-63 for the defeated proposal.

21. Though the miniature nativity scene did not originate with the Moravians and Saint Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first nativity scene, Moravians lay claim on the Christmas "putz", which involves elaborate and interactive scenes depicting events surrounding the birth of Christ.

for 18th-century Bethlehem. The term "homosexual" cannot be found in writing until the 19th century.[22] Many Christians exist within and without the Moravian church whose identities and sexual orientation do not conform to gender binaries or binaries of sexual orientation. As Keith Stanley notes in *Christian Spirituality and Same-Gender Relationship: A Moravian Perspective*, "By insisting that the issue of homosexuality be confined to the context of a male-female polarity, we compromise our ability to understand the phenomenon itself and our capacity for understanding one another."[23] While binary language - male and female, straight and gay, heterosexual and homosexual - does not encompass the full realm of human sexual experience, this binary language is and has been the language of proposals and discussions within the Moravian Church regarding human sexuality.

Binary language is not the most accurate framework within which to discuss sex and gender; it is, however, the language of the current conversation within the Moravian Church. My argument also centers largely on understandings of sex and marriage in 18th-century Bethlehem, which were very much binary, both on the level of the community and on the level of mystic understanding of masculinity and femininity within Zinzendorf's theology. This binary was not without complexity, as will be demonstrated in the discussion of men and women as intended to be brides of Christ. In fact, the fluidity of this binary allows for reinterpretation of its influence on Moravian community in the 18th century and today. I will make use of gender theory and its relation to matters

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22. Halperin 15.

23. Stanley 72-73.

of human sexuality in responding to binary notions of sex roles within the theology of Zinzendorf. Within the framework of this project, understanding of gender as not necessarily and directly reflective of sex will come to bear on the binary nature of 18th-century Moravian theology of sex. An understanding of gender as social construction can bring to light inconsistencies within 18th-century Moravian theology and its manifestation. Acknowledgement and attempted resolution of these inconsistencies can allow for continuity in the Moravian Church in its notions of sexuality rather than abandonment of its deep theological foundations in the name of progress. Academic argument that breaks down binary gender can be used to read Moravian theology in a way that does not undermine its core ideals.

The Moravian Church identifies its spiritual history as grounded in the guidance of the Holy Spirit; its theological history is grounded in the self-sacrificing example of Christ leading a persecuted people as well as Zinzendorf's theology of religion of the heart, against reason and speculative theology. Within that context, it is important to acknowledge that the Moravian Church of the 18th century rigidly and explicitly codified notions of maleness and femaleness in its living practices and liturgical discourse and focused heavily on stages and stations of life such as marriage, with which sexual behavior was inextricably linked. In today's Moravian Church, maleness and femaleness are not so strictly codified; the Moravian Church Northern Province has a female bishop and a female President of the Provincial Elder's Conference. Without the stringent roles that the 18th-century Church associated with sex, the influence that those roles had over roles played within the context of sexual behavior no longer appears so evidently

relevant. The legislation proposed to the 2014 Northern Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church resolving to ordain those in non-celibate, monogamous, same-sex, covenanted relationships is not as drastic of a break in Moravian theology and Moravian Church history as it may seem.

The theology of Zinzendorf, though it manifested itself in 18th-century General Economy Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in its highly structured and participatory community, did not manifest itself fully; its otherwise egalitarian notions of sex were codified by stringent sex roles and marital status. While the theology of the side wound, through which it is understood that Christ birthed the Church and which therefore represents a female and motherly mode, as will be discussed later in the context of the theology of Zinzendorf, validates the human state of women, Moravian society deferred to men. While all souls were considered brides of Christ, sex roles were stringent and similarly deferred to males as representative of Christ. These sex roles are, perhaps most importantly, based on a cultural understanding of sex and gender that is largely understood in academia today to be socially constructed rather than inherent; we can use Zinzendorf's understanding of *Verstand*, reason used to understand the natural world, to see these stringent sex roles as unnecessary and not necessarily reflective of the nature of humanity. Though 18th-century Bethlehem did not fully embrace the theoretical theology of Zinzendorf, this theology has much to offer to the contemporary debate regarding human sexuality and same-sex sex.

Chapter 1: The Theology of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf

Though the Moravian Church has its roots in the Czech Reformation, the Hussite movement of Bohemia and the *Unitas Fratrum,* the formation of the Moravian Church that made its American home in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania is grounded in the Pietist leanings of Jan Amos Comenius, and it is most constructive to locate the theology of Zinzendorf within German Piety. Though the Church was severely fragmented through the process of Reformation, there was agreement among the resultant groups on the abandonment of the requirement of clerical celibacy. In encouraging clergy to marry, Protestantism both decisively values and controls marriage as a basic component of human society.[24] The esteem in which purity among ministers was held did not ultimately diminish, but was reframed within an assertion of "the validity of sexual expression of mutual love within the covenant of Christian marriage" for both laity and clergy.[25] Many early German Pietists adopted ideas of Luther and of other Reformers surrounding sexuality: "marriage was accepted as being instituted by God and sexuality within marriage was considered free of sin" provided that the sexuality served as an expression of mutual love.[26] Sexuality required an outlet, the only appropriate outlet being marriage.

Pietism in particular was in large part "a reaction to the perceived failure of the Lutheran Church to improve the spiritual life of individuals and the social life of

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24. Marshall 82.

25. Stanley 44-45.

26. Peucker, "In the Blue Cabinet," 8.

Germany." Despite differences among German Pietists, there existed a clear and deliberate focus on making Christianity "a more vital presence in society and in individual lives," more directly pervasive in the life of the community and the experience of the individual.[27] This ideology is not separate from a focus on active strides towards bringing to life the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Philipp Jakob Spener's *Pia Desideria*, often credited with inaugurating the Pietist movement in Germany and being the founder of Lutheran Pietism, "outlined a pragmatic program of church and social reform," and listed what Spener believed to be the ills of the Church of his day.[28] These ills included intellectualism, argumentativeness, and immorality; and among the suggestions for curing these ills were:

> (1) more reading of the Bible individually and in small groups; (2) making the priesthood of all believers effective through small groups within the church; (3) recognition that Christianity is a matter of practice, not of knowledge; (4) avoiding destructive religious controversies; (5) reforming ministerial training in order to teach piety in addition to doctrine; and (6) preaching simple and edifying sermons for the laity.[29]

These ideals greatly affected Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-60).

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27. Atwood 28.

28. *Ibid.* 29.

29. *Ibid.* 29.

Zinzendorf, Imperial Count of the Holy Roman Empire, a man described as "a Person of uncommon Zeal and Piety, & of an Evangelical Spirit," allowed protestant Christians from Moravia, Bohemia, and other locations to take refuge on his expansive property, facilitating just the type of community that Pietism held in such high esteem.[30] Such esteem was contiguous with prior reform movements such as that of the Franciscans that harkened to apostolic community; a small and intentional community of believers reflecting that of the Apostles was being facilitated on the land of Zinzendorf. Just as we look to Zinzendorf to inform the Moravian Church today, Zinzendorf looked to his predecessors within reform tradition. If Spener's sponsorship of Zinzendorf's re-baptism were not enough to imply the influence of Spener's ideology on that of Zinzendorf, this outline of those ideals provides convincing evidence. In the case of Zinzendorf, one of Spener's ideas that seems to have taken hold most fiercely is Christianity as a matter of practice as opposed to knowledge, as exhibited through Zinzendorf's anti-rationalist theology. Zinzendorf's Pietist approach to community also led to the formation of closed societies within which doctrine affected and informed every aspect of daily life, through teaching of piety through simple sermons.

While studying at the University of Wittenberg in Halle, Saxony, Germany, where Luther was a professor at the time of his "Ninety-Five Theses," Zinzendorf solidified his notions of justification by faith as put forth by Luther: God's commandments are

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30. Isaac Watts, quoted in Vogt, "Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf" 207.

impossible to fulfill, and the righteous live by faith that God will accept them anyway.[31] What made Zinzendorf's approach particularly unique was his continued rejection of intellectualism.[32] In response to Peter Marshall's question, "Could common folk, without theological training, understand what Luther was proposing?" Zinzendorf would have responded in the affirmative.[33] A focus on the importance of personal experience to religious understanding became central to Zinzendorf's theology and Moravian Church life.

The Moravian Church that was established by those taking refuge on Zinzendorf's land and that made its American home in Pennsylvania arose as just one part of the major religious revival that was instigated by Pietism. Zinzendorf's unique synthesis of Lutheran liturgy, radical Pietist mysticism, and Moravian communalism was what distinguished the Moravian Church and resulted in the types of communities that Zinzendorf would come to facilitate, intentional communities such as Herrnhut and Bethlehem.[34] Zinzendorf's theology is commonly referred to as "theology of the heart," a description taken from Pierre Poiret, who coined the phrase in his 1690 work, *La théologie du coeur*, which "enjoyed a wide circulation among the German Pietists."[35]

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31. On justification and faith within the context of Lutheran reform, see Marshall 43-46.

32. Atwood 46.

33. Marshall 44.

34. On Zinzendorf as a faithful student of Luther, see Kindel chapter 4.

35. Atwood 40-43.

Poiret was also influenced by Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471). The Pietist tradition to which Zinzendorf committed himself at Halle, a Lutheran Pietist preparatory school, also included the formation of small religious communities (*ecclesiolae*) dedicated to world evangelism that would become so central to communities like Herrnhut and Bethlehem. Such an idea of community, of course, did not originate with Zinzendorf; such intentional and devotional communities formed around the Church in early Christianity. Zinzendorf followed a tradition that initiated with Christ's Apostles.

Zinzendorf's "theology of the heart" offered an anti-rationalist approach to Christianity that acted as an alternative to the "doctrinal precision and moral purity" of contemporary Protestantism.[36] Heart (*Herz*) was for Zinzendorf "not simply the seat of emotion, it is really the center of a person;" it "is the location of the will and desires."[37] Individual human experience of the sacred is central to Zinzendorf's theology; recurring terms such as *Gefühl* (feeling or an intuitive grasp), *Empfindung* (sensation), *Gemüt* (disposition, cast of mind), and *Ergahrung* (experience) cast focus on affection that can be seen in 18th-century Bethlehem as manifesting itself in personal relationship with Christ rather than adherence to structure or standard. Having an understanding of faith that is significant to religion and relationship with Christ means having an understanding that is found through the heart: an individual must experience God to understand God, and that understanding, as will be discussed below and in Chapter 2, is personally relational.

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36. *Ibid*. 6.

37. *Ibid*. 44.

Experience of God is, importantly, not dependent on intellect or the full functionality of mental processes; children and those who are mentally incapacitated are as capable of understanding God and understanding "heart theology" as are those capable of studying theology and its intellectual implications. In his own writings, Zinzendorf puts forth that he treated Jesus as a friend in his childhood: "For many years I associated with him [Jesus] in a childlike manner [and] conversed with him as friends for hours."[38] Zinzendorf's experience of understanding Jesus as a child and having a personal relationship with him reinforced the notion of the legitimacy of the spiritual experiences of children within his theology. Beyond experiencing relationship with God as only the relationship of the Church to Christ, an individual at any stage of life can experience personal relationship with God.

Directly related to Zinzendorf's emphasis on individual experience, sensation, feeling, and the heart, is his rejection of rationalism. The 1697 *Historical and Critical Dictionary* of French philosopher and Protestant Pierre Bayle was the only book other than the Bible that Zinzendorf carried in his travels; for Zinzendorf, the text "raised serious doubts about the very concept of reason."[39] The irrationality of Christianity was reason for Bayle to emphasize faith over reason, heavily influencing the thought of Zinzendorf. In turn, Bayle and Zinzendorf owe a debt for such thought to Kempis, who in his *Imitation of Christ*, stated: "I had rather feel compunction than know how to define

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38. Quoted in Atwood 45.

39. Atwood 52.

it."[40] Zinzendorf responded to these doubts regarding reason with a focus on experience as having greater spiritual value than critical theory and philosophy.

Zinzendorf did consider *Verstand,* practical philosophy, to be useful in helping people to avoid intellectual errors and to be of merit; it is acceptable and encouraged for people of Christ to use their practical reason "to understand what God has given them to understand."[41] Rejection of reason and anti-rationalistic theology did not mean for Zinzendorf or for Moravian communities not to be rational, however, as is evidenced by the stringent organization and economy of early Moravian communities. Knowledge of God is not irrational, but supra-rational. Reason is helpful in understanding philosophy and science, increasing knowledge of the natural world, but not to understanding God. One should engage in practical reasoning while avoiding intellectual conjecture regarding that which one can only know experientially.

In general, where Catholics appealed to the authority of the Church, Protestants appealed to the authority of scripture: Christ was "The Word," to be experienced through scripture. Moravian appeal to the text of the Bible must be made through a Zinzendorfian lens, which does not use human reason, which is by nature faulty, to attempt to truly understand God. The Bible itself is understood by Zinzendorf to be a product of "expression of heart religion" rather than a communication of authoritative dogma.[42] The Bible, then, "does not speak objectively as a uniform and authoritative expression of a

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40. Kempis 2.

41. Atwood 54.

42. *Ibid.* 71.

single viewpoint. Like everything else this side of the eschaton, the Bible is *catoprisches* (in a mirror) and partial;" the prophets themselves "had no clear concept of it in the understanding, but only a heart concept."[43] For Zinzendorf, that the Bible is flawed in its communication of historical detail "only proves that it is true to God's purpose and to human life."[44] Attempting to construct doctrine based solely or too heavily on statements put forth by a flawed text composed by flawed humans cannot result in the type of religious experience to which Zinzendorf aspired. Zinzendorf's religion of the heart was an alternative to "religion within the limits of reason alone."[45]

Reason as intellectual exercise is not, in Zinzendorf's worldview, to be entirely avoided; in the realm of theology, however, reason cannot exercise authority. "To reason over the deity, to draw conclusions from it, to mold it onto concepts, is," for Zinzendorf, "already a criminal act similar either to six blasphemies or to absolute, certifiable lunacy. For God is neither time nor eternity, nor nature, nor anything else that the head can think about nor the mouth express."[46] Based in a critique of University theology in line with Kempis, Zinzendorf was wary of these attempts to confine and define God. Christianity for Zinzendorf is "nothing more and nothing less than the experience of salvation, when the heart understands and accepts that the Creator has died for all people." Rational debate cannot result in transformation of the human heart; that can only be achieved

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43. Zinzendorf, *Gemeinreden*, quoted in Atwood 71-72.

44. *Ibid.* 72.

45. Atwood 53.

46. Quoted in Atwood 54.

through inner union with the Savior. There exists no language based in reason that is capable of attaining knowledge of God. The importance of knowing that rationality cannot lead one to religion is directly related to the importance of Zinzendorf's assertion that religion "can be grasped without rational means, otherwise no one could have a religion except for those with an enlightened head, and the most rational would be the best students of divine matters, but that is not believable and is also contradicted by experience." All are capable of attaining "the religion necessary for blessedness," including the deaf, the blind, and children.[47] Not only was spiritual experience central to Zinzendorf's theology, but practical engagement was central as well.[48]

When Zinzendorf allowed religious refugees to settle on his estate, those settlers founded the community of Herrnhut. In May 1727, Zinzendorf issued the *Herrschaftliche Gebote und Verbote* (Manorial Injunctions and Prohibitions), which were meant to order the civil life of Herrnhut, and to which was attached the *Brüderlicher Verein und Willkür* (the Brotherly Agreement), which addressed the spiritual life of the town.[49] Asserting that the Brotherly Agreement was in line with the *Ratio Disciplinae* of the old Unitas Fratrum, Zinzendorf established Herrnhut as a *Gemeine*, a religious community that was not relegated to congregation and church, but expanded conceptually to entire towns founded "for Christian mission and mutual edification."[50] This importance of community

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47. Zinzendorf, *Socrates*, quoted in Atwood 56.

48. Vogt, "Nicholas" 207.

49. Atwood 59.

50. *Ibid.* 61.

reflected medieval Christianity and Reformation culture. Herrnhut followed Zinzendorf's plan of a religious community and directly reflected his theology.

In 1735, when Moravians first traveled to the colonies, they sailed to Georgia, but experienced tension with surrounding communities based in their refusal on religious grounds to swear an oath of allegiance to King George II, and reluctance to bear arms in self-defense. These initial settlers consequentially took refuge in the tolerant Quaker colony of Pennsylvania, where construction of Bethlehem began in 1741, though it was not named Bethlehem until Zinzendorf visited to assist in the organization of the young community and led the Christmas Eve service that same year. The first major migration of Moravians to Bethlehem consisted of fifty-six congregants and took place in 1742; the group of those assembled was known as the *See-Gemeine* (Sea Congregation).[51]

When members of this newly established Moravian Church community began life in Bethlehem, their litanies reinforced Zinzendorf's theology. The Moravians living in Bethlehem "combined early evangelical sensitivities, communal living, and gender equity with Lutheran doctrine and liturgy" as well as Zinzendorf's radical Pietist spirituality, understanding the human form as validated through the Incarnation of Christ and understanding human relationship as reflective of relationship with Christ.[52] The theology of Zinzendorf heavily influenced religious life, which was inseparable from all of life, and there is no indication in the incredibly detailed records of the early life of the city of

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51. Levering 107; for names and biographies of members of the *See-Gemeine,* see Levering 119-26.

52. Atwood 8.

disagreement over the content; in fact, the residents of Bethlehem are recorded as having been profoundly moved by these litanies.[53] August Gottlieb Spangenberg, who arrived on November 30, 1744 and who held "supreme authority over all the Moravian work in North America, especially in Bethlehem" as "vicar of the bishops and the Chief Elder in America," is known to have preached on the meaning of Zinzendorf's litanies regularly; the same can be said for Peter Böhler, who had been appointed with his wife to accompany the colony to Pennsylvania.[54] The leaders of Bethlehem can therefore be understood as having embraced Zinzendorf's theology, including that of the Trinity, the mystical marriage, and the Spirit as mother. Use of maternal language in reference to the Holy Spirit falls in line with Zinzendorf's conception of human relationship as analogous to relationship with God. Reference to the Holy Spirit as Mother was reflective of grace, affection, comfort, faithfulness, and intimacy.[55]

Caroline Walker Bynum assesses the image of Jesus as mother as emphasized in mystic writings beginning in the twelfth century when use of maternal imagery to discuss male authority figures was developed by twelfth-century cloistered authors. Bernard of Clairvaux used maternal imagery in reference to Jesus, Moses, Peter, and Paul, prelates, general, abbots, and himself, most often related to nurturing and suckling in an effort to supplement authority with love.[56] In many additional ways, male and female were

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53. *Ibid.* 157.

54. *Ibid.* 119.

55. On the Holy Spirit as Mother in Zinzendorf, see Kinkel.

56. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* 115-16.

contrasted in the later Middle Ages "as intellect/body, active/passive, rational/irrational, reason/emotion, self-control/lust, judgment/mercy, and order/disorder."[57] Even in choosing female imagery for themselves, male medieval authors often viewed their chosen "femaleness" as superior to the femaleness of women.[58] The value judgment of males as superior to females, while present in the life of 18th-century Bethlehem, is not present in the theology of Zinzendorf.

The flesh of Christ was in the late Middle Ages representative of what is female, the wound in his side bleeding and lactating as a breast, the Church being born from Christ's side as Eve is born of Adam. Bynum also understands images of Christ and the Holy Spirit as female as reflective of a late medieval devotional tradition characterized by preference for analogy taken from human relationships, a preference that certainly stayed with Zinzendorf and influenced his emphasis on incarnation.[59] While imagery of Christ as a mother nursing did not find as important a place among Moravians, Zinzendorf did teach that the Church was born of the side wound, and maternal imagery remained important to Moravian communities, though not in such explicit terms.

That which remained important for Moravian communities and Zinzendorf's theology regarding imagery of Jesus as mother was less about nursing and suckling than it was about the wound in Christ's side as giving birth and providing a womb to shelter the Church. The northern European phenomenon of blood piety characteristic of the 14th

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57. Bynum, "'… And Woman His Humanity,'" 257.

58. *Ibid.* 269.

59. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* 129.

and 15th centuries consisted largely of German blood pilgrimages and host miracles and exists as an aspect of an emphasis on the humanity of Christ. Rather than a concern with the Eucharist predominating, Moravian piety focused on devotion to the side wound of Christ, understanding that wound as the female sex organ that gave birth to the Church. That an understanding of the flesh of Christ as a female sex organ is prevalent makes evident the focus of the church on sex organs and sexual activity. That theology of Christ as sacrificial is so heavily focused on the side wound is curious; Jesus being pierced in the side with a lance is only mentioned in the Gospel of John, and it is only done after Jesus has already died (John 19:34). Zinzendorf's side-wound theology focused on the sacrifice of Christ, which accomplishes the work of salvation. Salvation, however, is not as central to Zinzendorf's theology as is the human experience in human physical form as reflective of relationship with Christ.

Emphasis on the humanity of Christ allows for pervasive imagery of Christ as bridegroom, language that also originated in the Middle Ages and was used by Luther. Unlike medieval mystics, Moravians viewed sexual unity of husband and wife as reflective of the unity of Christ and the Church. However, Zinzendorf makes a theological claim that all souls are feminine, including those of men, essentially dismantling the notion that men and women are inherently complementary. Traditional mystic imagery of Christ as bridegroom cannot, then, be viewed entirely as homoerotic within Moravian tradition. Men have the ability to experience relationship with Christ as female souls as do women, and men and women can experience identification with Christ through his Incarnation. Though stringently separated in living practice, sex roles are

theologically blurred. As Paul Peucker notes, sexual language was used in Communion for Moravians, understanding that Christ penetrated (*durchgehen, durchleiben*) the individual, resulting in unity; it is my assertion such language must be understood in tandem with the conceptualization of all souls as feminine.[60] This understanding and descriptive language was utilized in the Middle Ages as men described themselves as womanly in their desire to "reject the world, to become the meek who inherit the earth."[61]

Christ was seen in the Middle Ages as friend, brother, mother, and bridegroom; discussion of Christ as bridegroom was particularly pervasive. Central to Zinzendorf's theology is the concept of Christ as bridegroom to both the Church and the individual. In the Middle Ages, the writings of men and women included descriptions of Christ as bridegroom, male writings often assigning female characteristics to Christ. Aaron Fogleman goes so far as to claim in the title of his 2007 book that in the radical Moravian Piety of Zinzendorf, *Jesus is Female,* paralleling the medieval understanding of Bynum's *Jesus as Mothe*r. Both Craig Atwood and Paul Peucker, director and archivist at the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, have lauded the research efforts of Fogleman, acknowledging feminization of Christ within the theology of Zinzendorf, but have concluded that Fogleman's arguments include an overemphasis of attribution of female qualities to Jesus, but a history of devotion to the side wound of Christ as a female sex organ remains.[62] Female characteristics are granted to Christ and femaleness is attributed

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60. Peucker, "Flames of Love," 50.

61. Bynum, "'… And Woman His Humanity,'" 268.

62. Atwood 110 and Peucker, "Flames of Love," 53.

to the souls of males. Though sex roles were stringently separated in Bethlehem, theological messages of Zinzendorf regarding sex emphasize that in Christ sex distinction is not quite so clear.

The legacy of Zinzendorf "consists not simply in his striking and original theological message, but also in the gathering and organizing of a living community around this message;" the community of Bethlehem reflected the theology of Zinzendorf as directly as possible by way of concrete and practical expression and application.[63] The community of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania from its founding was a societal manifestation of the theology of Zinzendorf; "Bethlehem in Pennsylvania was a visible expression of Zinzendorf's imaginative theological vision even though Zinzendorf himself spent little time there."[64] Bethlehem became in the 18th century and would remain the headquarters of Zinzendorf's *Brüdergemeine* in British North America, and as such reflected Zinzendorf's understanding of community life, a community constantly joining in union with Christ. Zinzendorf's theology, centered on experience of the individual, rejection of rationalism, embracing of the sex act within a mutually loving marriage, and a history of understanding the Trinity that makes flexible assignment of sex and sex roles as in the imagery of Holy Spirit as Mother and Christ as Bridegroom, opens the door for interpretation of mutually loving same-sex sex within the Moravian Church as positively contributing to a Moravian community like the ones facilitated by Zinzendorf.

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63. Vogt, "Nicholas," 207.

64. Atwood 115.

Chapter 2: General Economy Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1740 – 1850

In line with Zinzendorf's vision of Moravian settlement and *Gemeine*, Bethlehem operated as a closed society for about one hundred years, and living within the society was contingent on being accepted into the Moravian church and agreeing to live in accordance with the Church's rules. As a strictly Moravian community, there was no separation of sacred and secular. The community of Bethlehem as reflective of Zinzendorf's theology attempted to be Christocentric, not only in the typical understanding of the centrality of Christ, but in Christ's necessary presence in every aspect of Christian life; doctrine, worship, and ethics were "focused on the living reality of Christ in the community."[65] It is for that reason that Zinzendorf's theological understandings so heavily shaped the community.

Even Moravians were examined prior to admission into the Bethlehem community, and ultimate authority lay not with the members of the community, but with Christ through the drawing of the lot.[66] The practice of drawing the lot was a similarly Christocentric aspect of life in the Moravian settlement of Bethlehem. In the event of important decisions to be made, the elders prayed for guidance and drew a slip of paper from the lot box indicating "yes," "no," or "wait," and this indication was accepted as the will of Christ. This will was so deeply accepted that Moravians referred to their system as

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65. Atwood 95.

66. This practice is directly reflective of the apostolic community; see Acts 1:23-26, in which the apostles cast lots to allow for God to determine who will join their ranks.

a "theocracy." Use of the lot was intended "to bring the individual and the community into line with the wishes of Christ and to avoid all self-will."[67] All significant decisions would be made for the good of the community, which would result in the good of the individual, and would ultimately be made by Christ.[68]

Bethlehem was intended to be as nearly self-sufficient a community as possible both for economic purposes and in order to reduce the influence of outsiders on the very tight-knit, intentional community. It was to this end that the General Economy of Bethlehem was formed under and directed by Spangenberg. Some argue that the General Economy was intended to be a temporary organizational structure; however, there were "extreme personal and social tensions" caused when the system of the General Economy was discontinued in 1762. These tensions, as described by Craig Atwood, indicate "that the transition was neither anticipated nor desired by the residents but was in fact legislated from Europe."[69] Zinzendorf's 18th-century Bethlehem, then, can be used as a model for the ideal of the Moravian Church, particularly in North America. The system of General Economy Bethlehem not only directly embodied the theology of Zinzendorf, but pleased the religious community that such theology served to maintain.

Bethlehem worked well and followed the ideals of Zinzendorf as a communal society, and therefore communally expressing Moravian theology. The Brotherly Agreement of 1754, a document developed in Bethlehem that reflected the intentions of

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67. Atwood 8.

68. On the lot, see Sommer.

69. Atwood 119.

the document of the same name issued by Zinzendorf in Herrnhut,[70] reaffirmed Zinzendorf's ideal "that economic and religious matters should be united."[71] To this purpose, the Church had ownership of the land, buildings, and businesses, and members of the community worked for food, clothing, medical care, and shelter. Even raising children was a communal activity, which freed members of the community to engage in missionary and economic activities. Zinzendorf placed great emphasis on the good of the community, grounding communal control of and influence on the lives of individuals in the notion that "the social body and the individual body are intricately connected."[72] The Moravians understood themselves, as a community and as individuals, to be the body of Christ.

The Incarnation and the Choir System

The Brotherly Agreement also referred to "stages of life," which, as we shall see, was a central concept in early Bethlehem: those Moravians were agreeing:

> to raise our children according to his mind; to watch over our youth (sisters as well as brothers) for him until they are adapted to be used by him; to nurse our poor and weak, old and sick, and to show to them the

70. On the 1754 Brotherly Agreement, see Erbe.

71. Atwood 133.

72. *Ibid.* ix.

> proper service faithfully; also to conduct our married lives so that we may give a double concern for that which belongs to the Lord.[73]

The significance of the concern for the way in which Moravians lived their married lives is also a subject to which we will return. For now, let us acknowledge the emphasis of the community on the humanity of Christ and thereby the justification of the humanity of the Church and its members.

Members of the community of Bethlehem were separated based on stages of life into separate living communities (with separate houses), with whom they spent most of their time, including in worship. These stages of life were not meant to denote hierarchy, only difference, including that perceived between men and women. For Zinzendorf, all stages of life were blessed through the human life of Jesus Christ. It is no accident, for Zinzendorf and the Moravians, that though God "could have come into the world as a mature man and accomplished the work of the Atonement," he did not; he was born an infant and grew into maturity, blessing every stage of human life.[74] Though Christ was never elderly, it is understood that since he grew into mature adulthood, the stages of life of the elderly are also blessed; likewise, though Christ was never a woman, Zinzendorf's theology of the side wound accounted for the blessing of the human form of the female, as will be discussed later in this text. No stage of life as separated in General Economy

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73. *Ibid.* 133.

74. *Ibid.* 87.

Bethlehem was without Christ, therefore; each stage, each age, each sex, each marital status, was blessed.

That Christ became human was for Zinzendorf the most important idea in Christianity; the human Christ is "concrete and accessible to the human heart and mind, even the mind of a child."[75] One could easily be in relationship with a human Christ, and relationship with Christ was central to life in Bethlehem. The subjective experience of the individual contemplating the sacrifice of Christ is central to Zinzendorf's theology and formed the heart of life in Bethlehem. All relationships, therefore, must be modeled after the ideal relationship, that between the members of a Church and Christ; Christ forms the center of all relationships. Such an understanding of the centrality of the Incarnation was the theoretical foundation of what was known as the choir system, the stringent separation of members of the community based on stages of life. The choir system was first formed in Herrnhut during the 1720s when, after Zinzendorf had encouraged people to form "voluntary associations for spiritual growth," he noted that the groups had become homogeneous in terms of sex, age, and marital status.[76] By the mid-1740s, Herrnut was divided into choirs, and the community of Bethlehem followed suit.

For other Protestant communities in the 18th century, the family was the building block of the social institution that was the Church; fathers ruled a patriarchal society in which children, as the rest of society, were considered to be intrinsically bad.[77] Not so for

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75. *Ibid.* 78.

76. *Ibid.* 173.

77. Marshall 84.

Zinzendorf; in Bethlehem, the nuclear family was not present, fathers did not rule, and the life of children was intrinsically justified. The religious purpose of choirs was "to help individuals, even children, come to an intimate and exclusive relationship with Christ, and to let that relationship inform their behavior."[78] One of the most fondly remembered aspects of the choir system is that accompanying the progression of women from choir to choir were liturgical ceremonies at which they received colored ribbons (which they wore in public, though there was no comparable uniform for men) to indicate their new status: red for young girls, green for older girls, pink for single women, blue for married women, and white for widows. It is common in Moravian churches today for female infants to be dressed with white ribbons and for girls to wear white ribbons on their heads on the day of their Confirmation.[79] Though stages of life were clearly and visually denoted, those stages did not, again, denote hierarchy or value.

Most children moved into the choir house appropriate to their sex at the onset of puberty. Though they still had regular contact with their families, the focus of their lives was in the choir. In addition to community worship, each choir had its own worship services complete with hymns and litanies designated to their particular choirs based on stages of life. Each choir had "Helpers" whose function was to "provide spiritual direction and supervise the morality and piety of the members."[80] Children were separated into choirs from conception. The pregnant woman's choir and the embryo's

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78. Atwood 181.

79. *Ibid.* 190.

80. *Ibid.* 174-75.

choir often had their worship services at the same time and place (since the pregnant women and the embryos were always together). There was a suckling choir, and as soon as the children were weaned, they were raised by the Single Sisters in the nursery as part of the *Kinder Chor*. In 1751, responsibility for raising children was handed to choir leaders Br. and Sr. Graff, who were called the children's parents.

The purpose of the children's choir was to develop moral purity and obedience to God as well as the *Gemeine*, concerns revealed through the choir hymns, especially after 1750, particular to the children's choir. Zinzendorf understood children to have the ability to experience and thereby understand relationship with God, reflected by the fact that the choir had its own hymns with foci that were beneficial to the community. Beyond early childhood, separate stages of life always included the distinction of sex. It was in the choir system where young men were apprenticed into trades in which they demonstrated skill or which the community needed, rather than simply following their father's trade, emphasizing that the good of the community was often served by the ability of the individual.[81]

Zinzendorf made it clear that a woman is no less justified in any given stage of life than is a man, as Christ as human justified all stages of life:

> A person just grows up with the Savior; he is everything to each person that that person is at that time: one is a child, so he is a child to him; one is a boy, so he is a boy to him; one is a youth, so he is a youth to him; one is a man, so he is a man to

81. On the Choir System, see Atwood 173-78.

> him. For the sisters, it is the same; he is a maidenly heart for them, with a particular tenderness and a special knowledge. And so one grows up with him into human maturity and he is always just so to each.[82]

While Christ's maleness offers an inherent superiority to men, who share Christ's human anatomy, woman's nature is blessed either vicariously through Mary or through Zinzendorf's side-wound theology, it is important to note that the importance of Mary to women as well as the importance of the side wound theology in justifying the bodies of women the way Christ's circumcision justifies the bodies of men is acknowledged. It is in just this way that Zinzendorf's theology did not manifested itself fully in Bethlehem: men retained hierarchical benefits, though justification for that hierarchy is not present in the theology of Zinzendorf. A rereading of Zinzendorf and Moravian tradition has allowed the Church to alter its stance on ordination of women as ministers and can allow the Moravian Church today to do the same in terms of equality in the practice of sex within same-sex couples.

In the theology of Zinzendorf, the side wound of Christ is the organ of spiritual birth, and Zinzendorf directly compares the side wound to the female reproductive organ, speaking of the sisters of the *Gemeine* as having a "clear image in the holy side of Jesus, which was opened on the cross, when he had birthed our souls."[83] This imagery clearly and directly validates the female sex organ in the human female form and places both the

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82. Zinzendorf, *Gemeinreden*, quoted in Atwood 87.

83. Quoted in Atwood 111.

male and the female in the human form of Christ. Focus on the side wound of Christ displays Zinzendorf's emphasis on this flexibility of sex as central to the relationship of Christ to humanity. For Zindendorf, therefore, it is argued, "The circumcision and the side wound together paint Jesus as both the ultimate man and the nourishing mother."[84] It is this breakdown of distinction between male and female in the physical being of Christ that can serve to break down sex roles in Moravian society. That Christ served as a "maidenly heart" to women is evidence of the feminization of Christ, whose sex roles are set forth as flexible, beyond the physical form and related to the soul.

Stringent separation of sexes within the choir system included prescriptive behavior and roles to be carried out within the *Gemeine*. While women were apprenticed into trades, similarly to men, this was done in a way deemed appropriate to their sex, practicing trades such as spinning and sewing. This separation extended to everyday interactions: in taverns, women served only women and men served only men; in worship, men and women sat on opposite sides of the meeting hall (*Saal*); and the corpses of men and women were prepared in separate chambers and buried in separate sections of the cemetery.[85] Even walking paths leading away from the settlement led in opposite directions for men and women.[86] According to Craig Atwood, the threat of uncontrolled sexuality was the reason that community members were so strictly separated; Atwood attributes this to a fear of Zinzendorf's that the intensity of Moravian worship would

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84. Atwood 110.

85. *Ibid.* 183-86.

86. Peucker, "In the Blue Cabinet," 15.

result in sexual expression. All stages of life, including the single life, were sanctified by the Incarnation, and neither the single life nor the married life was viewed as superior, but control of sexuality within both states was incredibly important to the community.[87]

It was likely in the interest of separating men and women and making clear their roles within the community that Zinzendorf had his unique view of the Trinity: a nuclear family of Father God, Mother Spirit, and Christ the Son did not reflect the life of the *Gemeine*, which raised children communally, but reflected the influence of mysticism on the theology of Zinzendorf, which very much manifested itself in Moravian communities. The leaders of individual choirs in parenting reflected the role of their "actual and true Mother," the Holy Spirit; the Spirit who "mothered Christ" becomes the Christian's mother as well.[88] For Zinzendorf, "The idea of the Spirit as mother demonstrates clearly Zinzendorf's application of religion of the heart and his understanding of the Christian community."[89]

Discussion of the Trinity within Zinzendorf is descriptive of the roles played by God within different moments in the lives of humans, no aspect of God above another, but understandings of each aspect reflective of relationship with the Church and with individuals. In General Economy Bethlehem, every diarist refers to the Spirit as the mother and the *Te Matrem* was among the regularly scheduled weekly litanies,

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87. Atwood 186-89.

88. Olson 86.

89. *Ibid.* 70.

particularly associated with the Single Sisters.[90] More curious, however, is that God the Father "had no distinct role in his theology despite Zinzendorf's protestations that the *Brüdergemeine* was the only group to worship the Father properly."[91] Liturgies and litanies were sung to God the Father, but according to Atwood, the litanies themselves do not appear to have had a great impact or meaning in the *Gemeine*. Much more attention was paid to Christ than to God, in even more disparate proportion than in most of Christianity.

Hymns reflective of the spiritual lives of the individual and the community served clear theological purposes in General Economy Bethlehem. The extent to which the theological themes and motifs of Zinzendorf pervade the relevant hymnbooks is indicative of the foci of worship for members of the Gemeine. Zinzendorf's avoidance of systematic theology and polemics resulted in a community in which "the truths of the Christian religion were best communicated in poetry and song."[92] According to Zinzendorf, anyone with a desire "to get acquainted with us and to learn our first principles and progress of grace can acquire that knowledge […] from our hymns."[93] Such an outlook on hymnody was directly related to Zinzendorf's heart theology, as poetry and liturgical language "is a heart language that communicates the most profound

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90. Atwood 154.

91. *Ibid.* 156.

92. *Ibid.* 141.

93. Zinzendorf, quoted in Atwood 141.

truths directly to the heart and the understanding […] Litanies and hymns are the most appropriate way, therefore, to express faith."[94]

If hymnody is indeed any indication of what themes were significant to the community of General Economy Bethlehem, central theological themes included the wounds of Christ, Christ as Bridegroom, and Spirit as Mother.[95] In hymns of the 1740s, at least 31.5% of hymns mention mystical marriage or Christ as Bridegroom.[96] In a 1753 hymnal, 45.8% of hymns mention mystical marriage or Christ as Bridegroom, and there are increased mentions of Spirit as Mother.[97] The hymnody of Bethlehem retained its connections to these key images of Zinzendorf's theology. Christ as Bridegroom is not an image that is lost over time in General Economy Bethlehem; if anything, the presence of such imagery grows more prevalent. These hymns express the centrality of Christ, which outweighs in importance the imagery of God the Father, who is never designated as creator. Nearly a third of the hymns deal with the Incarnation.[98] Craig Atwood has analyzed various hymnals known to have been used in General Economy Bethlehem for

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94. Atwood 71.

95. For music and hymnals used in Bethlehem, see Atwood 141-52.

96. *Ibid.* 144: 31.5% in 1742 Appendix XI, 38.6% in Appendix XI Supplement, 31.5% in 1747 Appendix XII.

97. *Ibid.* 145: 1753 Hymnal Hymns of the Brethren: 45.8% of hymns mention mystical marriage or Christ as Bridegroom; 71.4% of choir hymns, 38.7% of Gemeine hymns.

98. *Ibid.* 146.

mentions of words associated clearly and closely with the more unique theology of Zinzendorf and the life of Moravian Community. Many hymns in these books were specific to choirs, focusing on the need of that specific group within the Gemeine. Women's hymns and hymns for married people "stress the Zinzendorfian idea that humans have been created to sleep in the Creator's arms, with each believer being the bride of Christ."[99] All married people are to view their marriage as symbolic of union with Christ, men as well as women, each a bride of Christ.

Zinzendorf and Sexuality

As an important aspect of economy and mission activity of Bethlehem, marriage existed under communal control, the welfare of the community superceding the emotional aspect of marriage. Zinzendorf married Erdmuth Dorothea von Reuss "under terms of what the Pietists called a *Streiter Ehe* (militant marriage) contracted for the service of Christ rather than romantic love," the understanding of marriage that took hold in the Moravian Church.[100] Great emphasis was placed in the *Gemeine* on all daily activity becoming a part of the Divine Liturgy, "all activities of daily existence […] done only in the context of love for and worship of Christ."[101] One area of life that required nuance in such a framework was marriage.

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99. *Ibid.* 147.

100. *Ibid.* 47.

101. *Ibid.* 63.

Though medieval canon law and sacramental theology held that marriage between two freely consenting partners did not require the validation of the participation of a priest or a blessing in Church, the Reformation saw the policing of marriage as a vital component of an orderly society.[102] Because sexual union as a component of marriage is so valued in medieval Christianity, it survives as the metaphor for union of the soul with Christ, and in the Reformation is the reason it must be so intensely monitored and regulated. Zinzendorf had inherited a tradition that has led directly to marriage being an issue of the Moravian Church as an institution. Although marriages in 18th-century Bethlehem were not all arranged by the leaders of the *Gemeine*, they were all subject to the approval of the *Gemeine*, which was contingent on the economic and religious needs of the community. Typically, the church elders identified a suitable male candidate for marriage and suggested to him a potential bride (contingent on the approval of the Lot). Refusal was possible, but the Lot had great influence.[103]

Since Christ was never married, Zinzendorf's theology required that the blessing of the married state be based on metaphorical and symbolic foundation of the mystical marriage to Christ. Sex organs were not a point of contention for Zinzendorf; Christ having been born into the world with a male organ through a female organ carried with it the truth that sex organs cannot be sinful or shameful. In Zinzendorf's Bethlehem, the body and its sex organs were, in the words of Professor Keith Stanley of Duke

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102. Marshall 83.

103. Peucker, "The Blue Cabinet," 15.

University, "extolled in remarkably direct liturgical terms."[104] Zinzendorf's frank discussions of the human anatomy, sex organs in particular, were reflective of his focus on and fascination with the full humanity of Christ.

The act of sex was, in fact, "viewed as the highest expression of spirituality and worship of God. It was a sacramental expression of the mystical marriage," the same language used for the sex act within marriage as was used for Communion.[105] Sex itself was not, according to Zinzendorf and his *Gemeine*, sinful, and Zinzendorf expressed human desire for relationship with the divine in the physical terms of marriage and human sexuality. Hymns and liturgies specific to the boys' and single men's choirs included emphasis on the importance of circumcision, which for Zinzendorf was a sign of submission to God, in response to which the boys and men would be protected from sexual sin. These hymns would admit sexual temptation, but direct the boys and men to the wounds of Jesus for preservation from sin. [106] The sin in sex was lust, not the act of sex itself. Lust was traditionally considered a sin by which original sin passed from one generation to another, and for most Protestants of the Reformation and even Pietists of Zinzendorf's time, sex within marriage was only sanctified by its purpose of procreation.[107] The response of Zinzendorf, however, was that procreation was not the purpose of sex. Sexuality was meant to express love that reflected love of Christ.[108]

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104. Stanley 69.

105. Atwood 185.

106. *Ibid.* 188-89.

107. Peucker, "In the Blue Cabinet," 12.

In light of Zinzendorf's view of the sex act as inarguably positive and spiritually significant, sexuality was strictly controlled, like many other aspects of Zinzendorf's communities. Even after marriage, when virginity was no longer absolutely required, sex was communally regulated, which is unsurprising for the *Gemeine* of Bethlehem. It is not obvious in records of Bethlehem quite how conjugal relations were handled, but it does seem that these conjugal visits were carefully scheduled and arranged: "It was been worked out for each pair of our dear married folk to have their own day and place for their holy joining; however, the warriors [missionaries and ministers] have the Sabbath for that."[109]

According to Katherine Faull, Professor of German and Humanities at Bucknell University, and among the few to publish extensively on gender in the early Moravian Church, **"**Attempts were made to ensure that the married couples were able to meet in private for sexual relations once a week."[110] "Marital cabinets," rooms specifically designated for conjugal visits between married couples, existed in many Moravian communities. As early as June of 1742, the existence of a marital cabinet is implied in the Bethlehem diary: "For the holy unification of our dear married people a day *and place* was determined for each couple."[111] Couples also wore special robes during intercourse.

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108. Stanley 69.

109. Quoted in Atwood 187.

110. Faull, "The Married Choir Instructions." 72.

111. Peucker, "In the Blue Cabinet," 21.

Married people were expected to remain spiritual virgins by resisting lust. For Zinzendorf, there was a distinction between "sinful lust" and "necessary feeling;" "lust could be detected by a 'fluttering, undeterminate, ravishing, staggering, trembling or pleasant sense' and should be avoided as 'witchcraft of the Devil.'"[112] Lust was the focus for Zinzendorf because sin was "a matter of intention, not action."[113] Marital sex, once the couple had been taken into the cabinet by the elders, began with prayer emphasizing that the act was a liturgical one, focusing the couple's attention on "the divine nature of what they were about to do," and reminding them to "exclude all 'sinful' feelings and thoughts of lust."[114] The couple was to bear Christ in mind for the duration of the sex act, during which, according to Zinzendorf, "the Holy Spirit comes over them, and then a husband is to wife just the same as what the most important brother in the church [Christ] is to his sister [the church] and they are overtaken by the congregational spirit."[115] The sex act is at its core representative of union of Christ to the Church, facilitated by the Holy Spirit; the purpose of sex is a symbolic one of mutual and loving union. During the act, the elders waited outside the cabinet praying, and at the point of climax, the man was expected to utter a few phrases of an appropriate hymn.[116]

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112. *Ibid.* 13.

113. Atwood 190.

114. Peucker, "In the Blue Cabinet," 24.

115. Zinzendorf, quoted in Peucker, "In the Blue Cabinet," 14.

116. Peucker, "In the Blue Cabinet," 26.

In further effort to avoid lust, married people were assigned helpers who would instruct them on sexual matters, though this instruction did not take place until after the wedding ceremony.[117] These helpers explained Zinzendorf's views of marriage and sexuality, and the bride and groom were separately instructed how they would have intercourse, the groom by the choir helper and the bride by the choir helper's wife. Maintained in the Moravian Archives is a set of "Married Choir Instructions," a document for the choir helpers, instructing them on monitoring the life of a married couple, including concerns of trade, behavior towards children, and behavior towards others, as well as instructions on just how to explain the sex act to the bride and the groom. The existence of the document demonstrates that "How sex was to be performed, what terminology was used, when and where sex had to take place, even the very details of the actual intercourse, all this was part of the discourse within Moravian communities."[118] According to the Instructions, it is recommended that married couples "renew their marital union" once a week with the blessing of their helpers.[119]

Though the sex act is not discussed until the thirty-second instruction in the "Married Choir Instructions" document, that the couple "might receive a true blessing" upon becoming one flesh, united in the Holy Spirit, is cited at the "sole purpose of all these previously mentioned efforts."[120] Spangenberg focuses more heavily on procreation

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117. Zinzendorf, quoted in Peucker, "In the Blue Cabinet," 13.

118. *Ibid.* 31.

119. Spangenberg 105.

120. *Ibid.* 101.

than does Zinzendorf, but the more central focus is that the married couple should bear in mind the relationship of Christ to the congregation in relation to the sex act. Married choir helpers are reminded in this document that through their service in such a capacity, "they are serving not only their choir but also the congregation to which they belong," emphasizing once again the communal significance of relationships within a congregation as well as a focus on the life of the community. So communal is the importance of sex within marriage, the married choir helpers as "servants of the Unity of the Brethren" were required to communicate with other married choir helpers (who were all members of the Elders' Conference) about "the condition of their choir and of this or the other brother and sister in it and profit from their insights and experience."[121]

It is important to Peucker that "The 'Instructions for the Choir Helpers of the Married People' do not mention avoiding lust during intercourse. They also seem to stress more that the goal of marriage is to produce children," since both of those points run contrary to Atwood's discussion of Zinzendorf's theology surrounding sexuality and marriage, though these instructions date from 1785 and are "more post-Zinzendorfian in their theology."[122] One particularly interesting facet of these Instructions is, however, that although they are post-Zinzendorfian, they exhibit "an awareness of the legacy of Zinzendorfian theology and metaphorical language that so powerfully dominated the lived faith of Moravians in the first half of the eighteenth century," including Christ as

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121. *Ibid.* 83.

122. Peucker, "In the Blue Cabinet," 17.

the Bridegroom of the Church and the "positive valorization of human sexuality."[123] The act of sex was understood by Zinzendorf to be sacramental and representative of the mystical marriage: "The man served as Christ for the woman, who represented the church."[124]

Indeed, for Zinzendorf, human marriage is both a metaphor for and a result of primary relationship with God and mystical relationship with Christ. Zinzendorf regularly used language such as *Bräutigam* (Bridegroom) and *Mann* (Husband) for Christ, inspiration for which can be found in scripture, including Matt. 9:15, 25:1-12; Luke 5:34; John 3:29; Eph. 5:23-28; and Rev. 18:23.[125] Bernard of Clairvaux uses maternal imagery in his sermon on the Song of Songs to refer to Christ the bridegroom as well as Christ the mother. The mystical marriage in Zinzendorf's theology is like that of many mystics who "applied texts about the bride of Christ not simply to the community of believers but also to the individual Christian."[126] Single women were designated in many liturgies and choir hymns with references to being married to Christ alone, and Moravians believed that single women could "preserve their virginity best by viewing themselves as brides of Christ."[127]

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123. Faull, "The Married Choir Instructions," 74.

124. Atwood 191.

125. *Ibid.* 91.

126. *Ibid.* 92.

127. *Ibid.* 190.

Zinzendorf also maintained that all believers, men and women, were equally brides of Christ, that "the sexual divisions on which human marriage depend are valid only until the *parousia* and have no eternal significance."[128] In fact, for Zinzendorf, "All souls are Sisters. He knows that secret; he has made all souls; the soul is his wife. He has formed no *animos*, no manly souls among human souls only *animas*, [feminine] souls, who are his Bride, [female] Candidates of rest in his arms and of the eternal sleeping room."[129] Though medieval theology, from which Zinzendorf gleaned much of his thought, viewed women as physiologically and spiritually weaker, through the theology of Zinzendorf, it is understood that all souls are feminine upon death, at which point they achieve union with God and are "wedded […] with the Husband of their souls."[130] It can be debated whether the feminizing language of medieval theology encourages applicable respect of women; the feminization of Christ within Zinzendorf's theology does and the feminization of the soul takes that language further and does encourage that respect of what is understood as feminine.

Peucker understands Moravian men as having feminized themselves in order to experience intimate relationship with Christ, following in the feminine imagery of Christ in the Middle Ages, which was initiated and popularized by men.[131] Though for these Moravians sex was rigidly defined in the human form, that men had the ability to

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128. Stanley 70.

129. Zinzendorf quoted in Atwood 93.

130. *Ibid.* 194.

131. Peucker, *"*Flames of Love*,"* 55.

feminize themselves implies flexibility for those same Moravians in their experiences of those distinct sexes. Simultaneously, though sex and sex roles were rigidly defined and understood as binary in the human form, they were flexible in the person of Christ, who was able to relate to men as a masculine figure and to women as a feminine figure. Within the context of culture that understood sex as binary and sex roles as rigidly linked to sex, the fluidity of that performance of sex roles as related to Christ opens possibilities for reinterpretation of those sex roles. There exists an inherent tension between rigid sex roles and the ability of Christ and of men to perform roles assigned to the opposite sex.

The notion of gender "performativity" as coined by Judith Butler in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble* can be applied to and used to reinterpret the practice of Moravian men feminizing themselves in order to be in relationship with Christ. It is Butler's assertion that the gendered body "has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality," meaning that behavior reflective of sex roles is not inherently reflective of sex.[132] In applying such an analysis to the flexibility of sex roles in relationship with Christ, Moravian men can be viewed as performing femininity, though they were male. In Butler's view of gender as performed, and viewing 18th-century Moravian spiritual practice as performance of gender, the sex roles mandated within the sex act can be performed by a Moravian of any sex. It is reasonable to view gender performance as present in individual relationship with Christ in 18th-century Bethlehem, and for that gender performance to break down stringent sex roles in physical and sexual practice of Moravian spirituality.

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132. Butler 173.

In practice in Bethlehem, living the metaphor of the mystical marriage was specific in terms of distinguishing sex, yet the binary sex roles central to practice of Moravian spirituality gave way to feminization for the purpose of intimacy with Christ. Though sex and its expression were clearly distinct, the distinctions were not stable. The centrality of sex roles in Moravian spirituality is not in question: "Throughout the 1750s the Bethlehem Gemeine repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to the mystical marriage. Spangenberg often preached about the Bridegroom, and it was reported that in 1757, 'the Choirs prostrated themselves before their Bridegroom and Husband with tender tears.'"[133] Viewing these sex roles as example of gender performance, however, acknowledges gender as a "structure that regularly conceals its genesis," that genesis being the culture and society in which such roles were practiced.[134] Feminization of males and of Christ can be viewed as gender performativity, which can then be applied to an argument for the Moravian practice of same-sex sex as equally potentially reflective of union with Christ as opposite-sex sex, since gender is neither inherent truth nor inherently reflective of sex.

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133. Atwood 153.

134. Butler 178.

Chapter 3: A Moravian Theology of Sexuality Today

The Moravian Church in North America, particularly its Northern Province, has been grappling directly with issues of sex, gender, and sexuality, for centuries. Though Zinzendorf did ordain women in 18th-century General Economy Bethlehem, the practice was discontinued after his death, according to the Rev. Dr. Mary Matz, for the reason that Moravian leaders "became more concerned about how others would see the Moravian Church."[135] It was not until the 1975 that a woman, Mary Matz, was ordained again in the Moravian Church. Although it took the Moravian Church centuries to reevaluate its stance on the ordination of women, the "issue" of homosexuality followed close behind, and it was during the same decade that the Moravian Church Northern Province began to discuss and affirm homosexuals as children of God in the form of official legislation and documentation. The Northern Province of the Moravian Church recognized and accepted in 1974 that, in accordance with the American Psychiatric Association, "the homosexual is not responsible for his/her particular sexual orientation," asserting that, in light of such an interpretation of scientific evidence, the entire "Christian Church has the responsibility of reexamining its own traditional sexual stance."[136]

Such a readiness to reevaluate sexuality is rooted in an historical commitment of the Moravian Church to oppose discrimination based on "any… barrier," a history that led the 1974 Synod to explicitly declare "that the homosexual is also under God's

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135. Matz.

136. "Social Issues" 55, 1974.

care."[137] Twenty years later, the Moravian Church affirmed its call "to minister where there is societal rejection," regardless of the fact that the "Moravian Church [was] not agreed on the question of the acceptability of homosexual practice."[138] In the same vein, the 1994 Synod affirmed the Moravian Church's "[condemnation of] acts of violence and coercion against persons who are homosexual or are perceived to be homosexual." The 1974 and 1994 resolutions encouraged conversations within "safe, open, loving, and redemptive environment[s," environments open to dialogue about homosexuality.[139]

The Northern Provincial Synods of the twenty-first century have further encouraged "the inclusion of all persons in the community of faith; including those once believed to be sexual outcasts…as set forth in Isaiah 56:1-8."[140] The year 2000 saw the Eastern District of the Northern Province of the Moravian Church call for appointment of a task force on human sexuality (including same-gender issues as blessing gay and lesbian unions and ordination of homosexuals). The result was the proposal of another resolution to the Synod of the Northern Province of 2002, which noted that "the spiritual journey of homosexual Christians is a valid journey of faith, and the same journey… as is

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137. Quoted in "Proposal to the 2014 Synod of the Moravian Church Northern Province," 1.

138. "Social Issues" 51.

139. *Ibid.* 55.

140. Though written to broadly include all "sexual outcasts," this resolution was put forth "RE: Recognition of Homosexual Members of the Moravian Church Northern Province."

the faith journey of all baptized believers." On these grounds, the Synod mandated that "persons who are homosexual can be members of our church" and that they "shall be… allowed to celebrate their lives as individuals and/or couples completely within the bounds of the church." It was also recommended, but not mandated, that all people, regardless of sexual orientation, should be allowed "full participation (membership, activities, and lay leadership) in the congregation."[141] There has been a "liberal uprising" questioning what exactly "celebrating" the lives of a couple means if it does not include marriage, and how participation can be truly full without access to marriage and ordination, but "the Interprovincial Faith and Order Commission, after four years of study and discussion" has yet been "unable to reach a consensus on the acceptability of ordaining homosexual persons."[142]

Confronting Arguments Against Same-Sex Sex

Current arguments against participation, full or otherwise, of homosexual people within particular church communities are largely scriptural. These theological arguments are often based in readings of Paul's letter to the Romans 1:26-27, which reads:

> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men

141. *Ibid.* 51-53.

142. *Ibid.* 2002.

> committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

I do not intend to argue that Paul is not denoting same-sex sex as inherently sinful; Paul is evidently doing so. Any argument centered so clearly on Paul, however, omits particularly Moravian reading and nuance.

Often also cited is 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, which reads: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God."[143] Here it is less evident that Paul means same-sex sex; the term rendered "sexual perverts" is a contested term, though it is argued by Robert Gagnon to refer most likely to homosexual intercourse.[144] If Paul does mean same-sex sex, he identifies it as excessive and exploitative; again, this is not a Moravian reading of scripture, but an interpretation of the intentions of Paul. Not only do these passages "prove resistant to definitive interpretation and application" in that they do not relate to loving, committed, relationships, which Paul did not believe existed between members of the same sex, those making these arguments often resort to a "selectively literal reading of Genesis 1-2 as a prescriptive model for the proper form and purpose of all human union."[145] Scriptural arguments regarding the

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143. *Revised Standard Version of the Bible.*

144. Gagnon 319-26.

145. Stanley 87

demise of Sodom are also often made against modern consensual homosexual relationships. The transition from interpretation of the passage as a matter of same-sex sex to more largely a matter of hospitality has been well recorded and widely accepted, even by authors who argue against homosexuality on scriptural grounds.[146] Whether the story of Sodom can serve effectively to condemn same-sex sex is debated.[147]

Ephesians 5, particularly verses 22 and 23: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior," has likewise "been used repeatedly to justify the notion that as God reaches men by Christ, so Christ reaches women by men; conversely, just as men reach God through Christ, women reach Christ through men (as husbands or priests)."[148] Since Moravian women in 18th-century Bethlehem considered Christ to be their bridegroom, however, it seems, theologically, that any member of the community

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146. Soards 16, Jordan.

147. Gagnon's argument is nuanced: "To the extent that the story does not deal directly with consensual homosexual relationships, it is not an 'ideal' text to guide contemporary Christian sexual ethics. Nevertheless, many go too far when they argue that the story has little or nothing to do with homosexual practice; that, instead, the story is only about inhospitality or rape. As with the story of Ham's incestuous, homosexual rape of Noah, the inherently degrading quality of same-sex intercourse plays a key role in the narrator's intent to elicit feelings of revulsion on the part of the reader/hearer" 71.

148. Stanley 56.

should be able to function directly as the bride of Christ. If the woman is the bride of Christ, it certainly seems that woman does not need man as a mediator.

For Zinzendorf, the Bible as a set of texts combined to form the canon of Scripture was an "historical phenomenon subject to human circumstance and accident; its contents in language and ideas, are likewise conditioned by time and circumstance."[149] In the view of Zinzendorf, Scripture does not contain a "sufficiently consistent and unified body of Revelation to provide the basis for a closed theological system – a quality that, in his view, lends a paradoxical credibility to its core of essential truth."[150] Reasoning through divinely inspired Scripture can be informative, but cannot lead one to discover Divine Truth; that ability is beyond our understanding of human faculties.

Of course, discussion of scripture cannot and should not be dismissed from the Moravian Church or Christian living, but it must be remembered within a Moravian context that Zinzendorf did not view scripture as prescriptive, but as flawed and human, including individual voices speaking from varied vantage points constructed through separate personal histories, divinely inspired though the text may be.[151] Thus for Zinzendorf, "the heart becomes a metaphor not for wayward emotionalism in religion but for an inner organ of perception essential to experiencing a transcendent reality that cannot be reduced to the language of ordinary creedal formulation."[152] Even still, the

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149. *Ibid.* 34.

150. *Ibid.* 35.

151. Atwood 72.

152. Stanley 37.

gospels themselves break down gender binary, as Paul does most clearly in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Keith Stanley makes an interesting point when he states that "the association of homosexuality with the Fall, however inappropriate to the Biblical texts themselves, at least helps to clear the way for understanding homosexuality as a state, like heterosexuality, that becomes sinful when it is misused."[153] Zinzendorf was not opposed to sex, but opposed to lust; expression of loving relationship as reflective of communion with Christ through the sex act was Zinzendorf's ideal. The notion that such a union could take place between two men or two women was not a matter of discussion for Zinzendorf; much like Paul, Zinzendorf would not have even considered such a loving union theologically. He did not dismiss these loving unions; they simply were not understood to exist.

Scholars of gender theory, including Judith Butler, as discussed above, have contested arguments that gender binary is inherent and directly reflective of sex. That Zinzendorf approved of *Verstand* as useful in using science to learn about the natural world not allows inclusion of this academic and theoretical work regarding the natural world in Moravian conversations surrounding sexuality. The stringent separation of sex in General Economy Bethlehem was based in an understanding of the inherent inclinations of men and women, but it is not un-Moravian to reexamine these roles in light of an understanding of gender performativity. The complementarity of men and

153. *Ibid.* 90.

women in the sex act was for Zinzendorf metaphorical, symbolic, and representative of roles. Though the roles of Church and Christ were symbolically significant in a Zinzendorfian theology, studies of gender and sexuality like Butler's have long debated the notion that the roles played in these acts are inherent.[154] Within General Economy 18th-century Bethlehem roles were relegated based on sex, based largely in the influence on Zinzendorf of mysticism, which Zinzendorf understood as reflecting natural truths. Scholarship that understands such truths as misled demand investigation through our own *Verstand*. It is my assertion that Butler's concept of gender performativity can liberate Moravians from the stringent sex roles in the sex act.

To read the history of 18th-century General Economy Bethlehem as an ideal of stringent sex norms and prescriptive community standards is a mistake. The communal societies of Zinzendorf represented a break from the traditional theology surrounding his, a recombination of influences that give rise to a unique theology. Zinzendorf, inspired by Comenius, "departs from the traditions of Baroque pietism by questioning *a priori* concepts of Scripture, while retaining a profound commitment to the figure of Christ as Savior: a 'theology of the cross' similar to Luther's." Zinzendorf's Bethlehem did not dismiss Scripture, but used it "without requiring a narrow, mechanical concept of verbal inspiration to sustain faith."[155]

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154. Mead, *Sex and Temperament;* Rubin, "The Traffic in Women."

155. *Ibid.* 33.

Within the Moravian Church, the issue of homosexuality has always been inextricably linked to the issue of stringent roles of men and women. Women are separated from men in the sex act only insofar as men play the role of Christ for woman, the Church. The 18th-century Moravian understanding is that woman is unable to facilitate her own union with the Savior, and her bridegroom serves as a proxy between herself and her true Bridegroom, Christ; in an otherwise egalitarian theology, this need not be understood as the case. When confronting arguments that regard procreation as the purpose of sex, it is important to recall that Zinzendorf did not see procreation, but loving communion with Christ, as the purpose of sex. Facilitation of loving communion is the purpose of arguing towards for the validity any sexual union that can reflect communion with Christ, regardless of sex and regardless of gender performed.

Additionally, in a church in which contraception is accepted, "the absolute condemnation of same-sex relations of intimacy must rely either on an abstract fundamentalist deployment of a number of very ambiguous biblical texts, or on a problematic and nonscriptural theory about natural complementarity, applied narrowly and crudely to physical differentiation without regard to psychological structures."[156] It is also clear that, despite the lack of emphasis on men and women equally being brides of Christ, Zinzendorf's theology taught this equality. That General Economy Bethlehem did not fully embody the theology of Zinzendorf in this way is no reason for the Moravian Church today to not fully bring such theology to life.

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156. Williams in Hefling, ed. 68 n.7 quoted in Stanley 93.

Those arguing for same-sex marriage and ordination often strive to return the Church to the 18th century, to a time when Zinzendorf ordained women, hailing such action as progressive.[157] Such an interpretation is misguided; while Zinzendorf did believe that Paul's statement in a letter to Corinth that "women should be silent in the churches" (1 Cor. 14:34) was intended specifically for the community of Corinth and therefore was not a driving factor in the organization and leadership of the community of Bethlehem, his purpose in ordaining women was so that each choir, with its sex-specific life and experience, would have a leader, *not* to make a statement about equality. Zinzendorf's successors were reluctant to approve of ordination and consecration of priestesses and deaconesses, and it was therefore discontinued through actions in Synods of 1775 and 1782. According to the Rev. Dr. Mary Matz, who was the first woman ordained within the Moravian Church in America in 1975 and who was consecrated a Presbyter in 1980, the practice of ordaining women was discontinued for fear of what contemporary denominations might think of the Moravian Church.[158] After the 18th century, it was not until 1957 that the General Synod again declared that there is no principle that should keep women from serving as ministers within the Moravian Church.[159] Ordination of women who would minister to other women within Bethlehem and in the mission field was a necessity, and such a motivation for ordination reinforced sex roles rather than breaking them down.

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157. Matz: Zinzendorf himself ordained twenty women as deaconesses in 1745.

158. Matz.

159. Matz.

Zinzendorf ordained women in the 18th century based on an understanding of binary and stringently differentiated sexes. That the Church declared in 1957 that there is no principle that should keep women from serving as ministers, including an inherent difference between women and men, may follow Zinzendorf's theology, but not his community model. The understanding of the Church today is that women are equally capable as men of serving a congregation, as well as serving pastors in a pastoral capacity as bishops. The argument of the Moravian Church has shifted to equal potential between humans and pastors of different sexes. The Moravian Church has, in response to an issue directly related to sex and gender, reevaluated the intent and effect of interpreting Zinzendorf's theology and practice regarding the ordination of women and has since directly encouraged congregations to call women and members of minority groups as pastors.[160] Such a move sets direct precedent for reevaluating issues of ordination, sex, and sexuality, which for the Moravian Church have always been intertwined and directly relevant to the success of the community.

When this binary is broken down, there is no necessity for those of opposite sexes to be the only members of the Moravian community to engage in a sex act evocative of union with Christ. For Zinzendorf, as "the primary purpose of human marriage is not procreation; it is to express the soul's union with the divine," without distinctions between sexes of proximity to Christ, this expression should not require a man and a woman.[161] The ideal for Zinzendorf is that all people have only Christ as husband, but as

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160. "Social Issues," 18-19, 21.

161. Atwood 92.

far as he could see, the world was separated into two sexes with very different roles in the Gemeine. Since we now believe with our uncorrupted reason as respected by Zinzendorf (*Verstand*) that this binary is not absolute or true and that gender roles are specific to separate societies, these roles cannot be necessary. What Zinzendorf could see was two separate sexes. What we can see is a breakdown of that binary and no reason, according to Zinzendorf's theology, to require celibacy of homosexuals.

A requirement of celibacy for homosexuals is an ethic based in speculative reasoning, which itself is profoundly un-Zinzendorfian. In General Economy Bethlehem, "every attempt to develop a code of behavior or even rules for determining ethical decisions was fundamentally unchristian because Christian ethics flow simply from Christian hearts, according to Zinzendorf. Law (*Gesetz*) and heart are contraries."[162] Religion is not, within this tradition, "a matter of convincing intellectual arguments but of conviction, will, and faith."[163]

Further, as argued by Keith Stanley, celibacy, while it "may be a blessed gift, a useful decision, or a result of circumstance," must be undertaken as "means to a particular spiritual goal," not to be undertaken lightly, and not to be imposed upon a group of people who would not necessarily be undertaking the task to serve a spiritual purpose.[164] Zinzendorf himself, as previously discussed, did affirm singleness as a legitimate role in Christ's community, for the good of all in the community, and while it

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162. *Ibid.* 51.

163. *Ibid.* 55.

164. Stanley 97.

could be argued that enforced celibacy of those who identify as homosexual is for the good of the community, it is not individualistic or necessarily spiritually driven. Celibacy also does not "pertain to a special category of sexuality. It is therefore inappropriate, potentially damaging, and a caricature of God's creativity to demand it as a 'norm' for all homosexuals, whether clergy or laity."[165] Marriage is likewise not a relationship into which to enter lightly. According to Zinzendorf, there were "emotions or other circumstances [that] might make marriage a dangerous proposition, and who therefore, for the sake of their salvation, should abstain from such a step."[166] Whatever these circumstances, refusal to allow for same-sex sex has the potential to lead homosexual people into marriage that may be detrimental for both partners.

Other prevalent arguments against homosexuality within the Church are founded in the sex act existing within religious community for the purpose of procreation, which was not Zinzendorf's belief. A frequently made conservative argument is that it is inappropriate for children to be raised in any environment other than a heterosexual, nuclear family. The irrelevance of this argument is clear: 18th-century Bethlehem did not see heterosexual, nuclear families raising children, but the entire community raising children. The children's choir after 1751 was under the leadership of Br. and Sr. Graff, "who were called the children's parents."[167] There were clearly no expectations or claims in General Economy Bethlehem, Zinzendorf's ideal, that a nuclear family by today's

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165. *Ibid.* 97.

166. Zinzendorf quoted in Gollin 110 quoted in Stanley 69-70.

167. Atwood 180.

standards was required to properly raise a child, and there were no qualms about two men being specifically referred to as parents. While I will not make the argument that Br. and Sr. Graff reflected a homosexual couple, parenting was not directly related to the sex act, and was not relegated to a male and a female embarking on the joint effort of raising a child. Children, whose choirs served the purpose of developing "moral purity and obedience to God and the Gemeine," were not separated by sex until puberty, serving as evidence that moral purity is not specific to sex at its core.[168]

One precedent that has been set by Zinzendorf is the theological precedent of radical change, radical guidance of the Holy Spirit. All Christian churches, including the *Unitas Fratrum* "have demonstrated continual and sometimes radically new adaptation of the scriptural core of faith to new ways of thinking, new circumstances, new experiences, and sheer practicality."[169] For Zinzendorf, Christians were the most moral people, as consequence of faith, not of law, "And to such people, says the apostle, no law is given: these people steal less than other people, they whore less than other people, they give false witness less than others, they covet things that are not theirs less than others, and less than all other people."[170] The written law should not have the most force within a religious community, a Christian community, a Moravian community.

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168. *Ibid.* 180.

169. Stanley 3.

170. Zinzendorf, quoted in Atwood 50.

Afterword

As a church claiming to focus on unity, on the good of community, and on the healthy relationship of the individual with God, perhaps we should follow Keith Stanley in choosing 1 Corintians 12.26f as the Pauline scripture on which we should focus, one that reminds Corinth, "If one member suffers, all suffer together."[171] Keith Stanley reminds us: "gay and lesbian Moravian brother and sister Christians *do* suffer from the actions of other Moravian brothers and sisters – and from a failure of the Church itself to react in a more committed and constructive way to their spiritual needs."[172] Stanley also suggests that the question of treatment of homosexuals in the Moravian Church is an issue of redressing an "old imbalance […] based […] on a misunderstanding of Scripture and of human nature."[173] I would argue that this misunderstanding of scripture is a deliberate misuse of scripture that harms others and clouds our vision so that we are unable to recall the compassion and radical spiritual guidance of Zinzendorf.

In many ways, the inability of the Moravian Church to recall the theology of Zinzendorf has been and continues to be the downfall of the Moravian Church. After Zinzendorf's death, "The Moravians became virtually indistinguishable from their neighbors in how they worshipped and worked, prayed and loved, lived and died."[174] Though it was comforting to many as the General Economy disintegrated to turn away

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171. *Revised Standard Version of the Bible.*

172. Stanley 1.

173. *Ibid.* 2.

174. Atwood 227.

from the graphic imagery of Zinzendorf's theology, that turn resulted in a steady drift from what made Moravians what they were. When disregarded as theological notions central to the Sifting Time, Zinzendorf's ideas surrounding sex and sexuality are lost to a Moravian discussion of human sexuality and same-sex sex where they should be studied, understood anew, and applied. According to Craig Atwood, the nineteenth century, with the settling of the Moravian Church in America as a small evangelical denomination, saw "the provocative and creative theology of Zinzendorf" lose its place in a Church that had become conventional.[175] If possible, the Moravian Church must reverse such a loss in the current discussion of same-sex sex.

As far as the Church today is concerned, the matter of homosexuality and same-sex sex must be addressed because the matter exists, because for the general welfare of the Moravian community, which the Church has always held in highest esteem, the Moravian Church must address the spiritual difficulties and battles of a significant number of its membership. As Keith Stanley writes:

> For it is important to keep in mind the observable fact that the homosexual state does not, among a significant number, preclude a longing to be accepted as a member of Christ, a capacity for spiritual discernment and response to His message to the outcast and marginalized, and a determination, in the face of profound and damaging difficulties, to persist in the life of the church while

175. *Ibid.* 227.

> refusing, in all conscience, to relinquish their experience and understanding of their sexual selves.[176]

Sexual selves are not necessarily lustful selves. A disproportionate emphasis is placed on same-sex sex as opposed to the nature of human sexuality on the whole. To again quote Stanley, "no relationship should be placed above or confused with our commitment to Christ; none should be based exclusively on the felt needs of the self or the imperative of social norms," which, as we recall, was *the* leading factor in Zinzendorf's stringent separation of sex.[177] Though in Zinzendorf's worldview sex roles were inherent, the Moravian Church must reevaluate the necessity of that understanding in light of homosexual-identified members of Moravian communities and in light of modern scholarship that calls into question such stringent understandings.

The reasons for which Zinzendorf was so adamant that the sex act was to take place only between man and woman, including his stringent separation of sex based on the understanding that man and woman had specific, inherent, and unchangeable roles within the *Gemeine*, have been largely reinterpreted or abandoned within our societal and cultural context. Yet the stance of the Church, regardless of these shifts, has not changed, but within the sex as remained reflective of stringent sex roles as understood in the 18th century. The matter of sexuality demands to be addressed, and I find no theological

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176. Stanley 73.

177. *Ibid.* 84-85.

ground in Zinzendorf or in the life of General Economy Bethlehem that mutually loving, same-sex sex that is reflective of human union with Christ should be condemned.

Zinzendorf's understanding of reason as *Verstand* allows Moravians to employ gender analysis, following in Judith Butler's understanding of gender performativity, while theology of the heart liberates traditional readings of sexuality. Importantly, Moravians must face issues of homosexuality and same-sex sex from within the tradition of the Moravian Church. Arguments of civil rights and arguments of scripture that are not viewed through a Moravian lens are not helpful if the Moravian Church is to remain unique and distinct in its tradition and theology. The methodological and theological significance of respecting one's traditions by allowing solutions to rise from within them cannot be underestimated. It is time that the Moravian Church face the issue of human sexuality and same-sex sex as Zinzendorf would, to allow the Spirit to guide the Church and to not allow speculative reason to cloud what has been true of the tradition for centuries, that the intention of mutually beneficial love exemplified through sex that evokes union with Christ is not limited to a man and a woman.

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