

The Joyfulness of Death in Eighteenth-Century Moravian Communities¹

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IN 1752 MARIA ELISABETH ENGFER DIED. She was a single woman, but she did not die alone because she was a member of the Moravian community of Bethlehem in Pennsylvania. As she died, she was surrounded by other single women who kept vigil with her and sang hymns during her last hours. Although she was loved by her Moravian sisters, when she finally died, they did not express any grief at her passing. The record states that when Sister Engfer "received the long expected final kiss from her beloved Bridegroom, and her soul flew home to its mother city" her comrades "could scarcely stop singing for affectionate congratulation and yearning gazing into our eternal homeland."² Sister Engfer's joyful death was not unique in the Moravian communities in America. The eighteenth-century Moravians viewed death in celebratory terms as a joyous return to the Savior, the long-expected reward of a faithful life. The joyful death of eighteenth-century Moravians such as Sister Engfer grew out of the unique social structure and theology of the Moravians. As this structure and theology dissolved in the early nineteenth century, their attitude toward death was also transformed.³ In examining this history of the Moravians in

1. This paper developed during doctoral work guided by Prof. James Moorhead at Princeton Theological Seminary. The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Dr. Moorhead.

2. November 28, 1752, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pa. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

3. In the same period when most of America was turning away from expressions of grief and final judgment at the time of death, the funeral liturgies of the Moravians in the middle of the 19th century demonstrate a new focus on grief, pain, and uncertainty about the salvation of the one being buried; James Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Ann Douglas, "Heaven Our Home: Consolation Literature in the Northern United States, 1830-1880," in David Stannard, ed., *Death in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975),

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America we can better appreciate the role which religion and social structure play in an individual or a community's attitude toward human mortality. In order to understand Sister Engfer's joyful death, though, we first need to see it in the context of the Moravian social structure.

The Moravian Gemeinde

Under the guidance of the Lutheran pietist, Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, the Moravians in the middle part of the 18th century developed a new type of religious community called a *Gemeine*. The word itself is difficult to translate into English. It can mean congregation, community, or even church, but to the Moravians it meant all of these at the same time. The *Gemeine* was a religious settlement, a closed community dedicated to the Moravian mission. The Brotherly Agreement that regulated life of the Bethlehem *Gemeine* expresses the purpose of such a community thus:

It should at no time be forgotten that Bethlehem-Nazareth were established for no other purpose than to be able to give a hand to the work of the Savior not only in Pennsylvania but everywhere in America, etc. The intention of the said economy is thus, if one should speak precisely, that we should by all means treat one another with respect and in a God-pleasing manner, 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 proper service faithfully; also to conduct our married lives so that we may give a double concern for that which belongs to the Lord.⁴

The *Gemeine* was a closed community. Only those who agreed to live under the rules of the community and who were approved by the community were allowed to reside there. The boundaries between the *Gemeine* and the world were carefully observed. Places of business that dealt with outsiders (*Fremden*), such as the tavern and mill, were placed on the edge of town. Special church officials, called *Fremdendieneren*, served as tour guides for visitors, carefully controlling their contact with the residents.⁵ Residents who failed to live up to the high

49-69. The different story of the Moravian attitude toward death cannot be explained as "cultural lag." If anything, it was ahead of its time, not behind it.

4. The complete text of the Brotherly Agreement is found in Helmut Erbe, *Bethlehem, Pa.: Eine Herrnhuter-Kolonie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Herrnhut: Gustav Winter, 1920), Anlage III.

5. Daniel Thorp, *The Moravian Community in North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) has carefully studied the attempt of the Moravians at Bethabara, N. C., to control contact with outsiders. They needed some

standards of morality and piety demanded by the Moravians could be forced to move out of the *Gemeine*. This closed system continued until the middle of the nineteenth century, but was merely a shell of its former self by 1820. The decline of the Moravian *Gemeinen* in America began after the Revolutionary War and sharply increased in the early 1800s. When the church gave up all control over the villages in the 1840s and allowed non-members to live there, it was merely acknowledging officially what was already happening in fact.⁶

There were two primary types of Moravian *Gemeine*.⁷ The most common was called an *Ortsgemeine*, or a settlement congregation. The *Ortsgemeine* concept was developed in the village of Herrnhut on Zinzendorf's estate in the 1730s. The most famous *Ortsgemeine* in America was Salem in North Carolina, founded in 1772. The church owned all of the land in an *Ortsgemeine*, and leased it to members who then paid to build their houses. If necessary, the member could sell his house, but since the church owned the land, the church could insure that only an approved member could buy the house. The church also established a number of agencies that regulated the economic activity of the community and helped control what crafts and trades young men were apprenticed to. The purpose of an *Ortsgemeine* was religious; therefore worship dominated life. All aspects of life, even marriage, were subordinated to the community's religious purpose. An *Ortsgemeine* was not strictly a commune since residents earned wages and held private property, but we might consider it a semi-communal society because of the careful communal regulation of all aspects of life, even family life.

Bethlehem in Pennsylvania and Bethabara in North Carolina represent the second type of community, the *Pilgergemeine*, or "pilgrim community." A *Pilgergemeine* existed solely for the support of the church's missionary efforts. It was a true commune in which the church owned all of the land, buildings, and businesses. Residents exchanged

contact with the outside world for economic and missionary purposes, but tried to minimize the impact of outside contact on the community itself.

6. Beverly Prior Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem: From Communal Mission to Family Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989) has explored this process in detail.

7. There were actually four types of congregations in the *Brudergemeine*, two of them diaspora-style (i.e., conventicles) and two closed settlements. The diaspora-style were called *Stadtgemeine* or *Landgemeine*, depending on whether they were located in town or not. The settlements were either *Ortsgemeine* or *Pilgergemeine*. See Smaby, *Transformation*, 25, for a taxonomy of the types of *Gemeinen*. Smaby is in error in note 42, p. 48, however. The date should read 1848. Cf. J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum, 1722-1957* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education of the Moravian Church in America, 1967), 184-85.

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work for food, clothing, medical care, and shelter.⁸ In June 1742 Bethlehem was divided into the *Hausgemeine* and the *Pilgergemeine* proper. This was done in some cases by request, in others by lot, but the boundaries between the two were permeable. As Levering puts it, pilgrims

were to devote themselves to evangelistic work among Indians and white people, adults and children, according to arrangements to be made from time to time. The others were to 'tarry by the stuff' (I Sam. 30:24). They were to develop the material resources, erect buildings, provide sustenance for the "pilgrims," care for their necessities as they went and came; and, at the same time, spiritually keep the fire burning on the home altar⁹

This period of communal mission was called the General Economy, and it lasted until 1762 when Bethlehem began a long transformation into an *Ortsgemeine*. The Bethabara General Economy was dissolved when neighboring Salem was build around the same time.

The most important feature of the *Gemeinen*, whether of the *Orts* or

8. Erbe persuasively argues that the communalism was designed to enhance the missionary activity of the "pilgrims," not serve as an end in itself. Thus it was not a Utopian adventure, but a practical way to meet the needs of an active missionary enterprise. However, in saying this, Erbe downplays the internal drive toward communalism in the life of the *Bru'dergemeinen*. A distinction needs to be made between the full economic communalism of the *Pilgergemeine* and the communal social structure of the *Ortsgemeine*. The principal difference between Bethlehem and the other settlements was the full sharing of a communal economy; however, it is unlikely that that would have been accomplished if it were not for the social communalism already established in Herrnhut and Herrnhag. There is a debate over whether this socialist structure was intended to be a permanent part of the Bethlehem plan or was merely a temporary response to the immediate exigencies of life in the wilderness. Ettwein, one of the later leaders of Bethlehem, asserted that the latter was the case, perhaps in an attempt to justify Bethlehem's current situation. Many historians, such as Hamilton, have accepted this argument; however, Erbe and Smaby have argued quite persuasively that the socialist structure of Bethlehem was intentional and vital to the religious as well as the social life of the community; Gillian Lindt Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 1138—43; Hamilton and Hamilton, *History*, 137; Erbe, *Bethlehem*, 104-07; Smaby, *Transformation*, 32. This relates to the question of the demise of the socialist structure. If Ettwein is correct, then the system was never intended to endure. Jacob John Sessler, *Communal Pietism Among Early American Moravians* (New York: Henry Holt, 1933), 188, on the other hand, argues that it was the corruption of profit motives and the American way of life that led the residents to demand that the system be abolished. Smaby's work demonstrates the extreme personal and social tension caused by the abolition of the old system, tensions which indicate that the transition was neither anticipated nor desired by the residents, but was in fact legislated from Europe; Smaby, *Transformation*, 32-36,83.

9. Joseph Mortimer Levering, *A History of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1741-1892, with Some Accounts of Its Founders and the Early Activity in America* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Times Publishing Co.,m 1903), 129.

Pilger type, was the choir system in which the entire community was divided into close-knit groups according to age, sex, and marital status.¹⁰ In order to gain a clear picture of the choir system, let us trace the choirs that a typical member of the *Brudergemeine* would progress through during her life.¹¹ She would begin life in the infants' choir, and at about age five or six she would be received into the *Klein Madgens Chor* (little girls' choir). At the onset of puberty she would be transferred into the *Groß Madgens Chor* (older girls' choir), and when she turned nineteen she would be received into the *Ledige Schwestern Chor* (Single Sisters' Choir), which was sometimes called the *Jungirau Chor* (Maidens' Choir). This meant that she was at an age appropriate for marriage. If she did ever marry, then she immediately became part of the *Ehe Chor* (Married Choir). If her husband died, she joined the *Widwen Chor* (Widows' Choir). The corresponding male choirs were called *KleinGroß Knabe Chor*, *Junglinge Chor/Lediger Bruder Chor*, and the *Witwer Chor*. This scheme was altered from time to time and from place to place. Sometimes the older and the younger girls, or the older girls and the single women, would be combined into one choir.¹² In every *Gemeine*, the Single Sisters and Single Brothers set up separate residences where they lived in common. The "choir houses" were often an economic commune within the larger community.¹³

This system was designed to assist in the education and spiritual development of the members, but it also broke up traditional kinship loyalties so that each member of the church could serve God and the community wholly. Children were educated in their choir, and the *Gemeine* could force parents to move their children into the choir house.¹⁴ Moreover, at the onset of puberty, boys and girls would move away from home and into their choir house. In the *Gemeinen* of the 18th century, therefore, family life was subordinated to community life. We can hardly speak of traditional family structures. This process was most

10. The word "choir" (*Chor*) has nothing to do with a singing group. This system has naturally attracted a lot of attention from sociologists. Gillin, *Two Worlds*, 67-89, gives a fairly comprehensive account of the development and usefulness of the choir system in both Herrnhut and Bethlehem. This system was used in all *Gemeinen* until the 19th century.

11. See Smaby, *Transformation*, 145ff., and Erbe, *Bethlehem*, 44, for thorough discussions of these stages.

12. October 15, 1748 (para. 2), Bethlehem Diary Moravian Archives.

13. This desire for communal living and economy as the original motive behind the decision of the Single Brothers in Herrnhut to form the first choir house; Elizabeth Watkins Sommer, "Serving Two Masters: Authority, Faith, and Community among the Moravian Brethren in Germany and North Carolina in the 18th Century," (PhD. diss., University of Virginia, 1991) 98.

14. Sommer, "Serving Two Masters," 100-01, 139—40.

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radical in a *Pilgergemeinde*, such as Bethlehem from 1742 to 1762. All persons lived with their choirs in Bethlehem. Married men lived together in one dormitory while their wives lived in another. Nursing infants lived with their mothers, but almost as soon as they were weaned they were moved into the children's nursery and raised communally.¹⁵ The choir, rather than the family, was the primary social grouping for Moravians in the eighteenth century, particularly in Bethlehem. One indication of this is that individuals were buried with their choir, not their family. This weakening of the family bond strengthened the communal sense of the Moravians and probably lessened the sense of grief at the time of death. Moravians in the 18th century, like Sister Engfer, usually died in the company of their choirs. Dying in an 18th-century Moravian *Gemeine* was a public ritual in which the one dying presided over his or her own demise. Even a six-year old like Anna Schaub could participate in her dying liturgy.

In the afternoon the children began to sing, and indeed a proper Going-Home liturgy. When she [Anna Schaub] heard them, she joined her voice with them and gave some verses of her own. When she became so weak that she could no longer sing, she still moved her lips. . . . When her eyes were broken, she called out, "Aye, my dear Husband!"¹⁶

The descriptions of death scenes in the American records agree with the official description of Moravian rituals in the 1757 *Zeremonienbuchlein*. According to that text, the purpose of such communal devotion to the dying was not only "to carry their soul back to their Savior" but also so the person could take courage from the presence of his or her brothers and sisters in case they experienced disturbing deliria.¹⁷ The choir was thus a built-in support system to strengthen the *Zeremonienbuchlein*.¹⁸ According to that text, the purpose of such communal devotion to the dying was not only "to faith of the person dying. Often the dying person would also have a vision or words of comfort for those left behind. This frequently involved the idea of union with Christ and continued communion with members of one's own choir. The death delirium of Jonathan Becks is a vivid example of this:

Toward evening the fever took the upper hand and he fantasized very nicely.... He said, "Oh look there, there I see the dear Savior sitting. He

15. *Erbe, Bethlehem*, 38.

16. January 20, 1761, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

17. *Kurze, zuverlässige Nachricht von der, unter dem Namen der Böhmisch-Mährischen Brüder bekanten, Kirche Unitas Fratrum* (Barby: 1757), hereafter cited as *Zeremonienbuchlein*, reprinted in Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, *Ergänzungsbande zu den Hauptschriften* (ZE), edited by Erich Beyreuther and Gerhard Meyer (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965), 6:56-58.

18. *Zeremonienbuchlein*, 56.

looks amazingly beautiful and friendly. Christel [Christian Renatus] is sitting next to him, and he is looking at me and saying that I will journey over. I will be there as well. I see also Sven Roseen, who is already there. My old master is also there. Oh how tenderly Kapp is as he kisses the feet of the dear Savior. Now I will also come in the same way.¹⁹

The community helped assure Becks that his death would be a blessed return to God and a reunion with other members of his choir. Becks, in turn, told the community they were correct. The main function of the choir system was to ensure the salvation of members of the *Gemeine*. Each choir had "Helpers" whose function was to supervise the piety of the members. Each person in the community had to "speak" with their choir leader before taking Holy Communion. Slackening of piety and lack of discipline could be quickly dealt with and the wayward member restored to grace. If no change in behavior or attitude was evident, the person could be excluded from the community. This also had implications for the Moravian view of death since the community leadership knew each person intimately and could be confident that all residents of a *Gemeine* were believers destined for heaven. Unlike most churches of the period, the Moravian funeral rites made no mention of judgment or the possibility of damnation.²⁰

The Moravians could not be sure of the salvation of *Fremden*. The records make a noteworthy distinction between the death of a member of the church and that of an outsider. Whereas the former generally "pass peacefully into the arms of the Savior," the latter simply die. On Jan. 2, 1777 a Moravian minister held funeral services for a woman "of the Baptist persuasion" who died unbaptized. Unlike Moravian funerals which stressed the eternal joy of the departed, there was no statement at all about this woman's eternal fate. She was left to God's judgment. At a similar funeral the Bethabara minister "made a short talk, urging them not to harden their hearts but to take advantage of the time of grace while for each of them it was still today."²¹ This anxiety contrasts sharply with the theme of joyous celebration in Moravian funerals. While the Moravians do not seem to have automatically consigned those outside the community to certain damnation upon death, they clearly were not confident of the salvation of outsiders. Within the *Gemeine*, though, salvation was assured. This confidence

19. June 27, 1759, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

20. David Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

21. Adelaide L. Fries, Kenneth G. Hamilton, Douglas L. Rights, and Minnie J. Smith, trans. and eds., *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina* (Raleigh, N. C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1927-1964) 3:1100, 1138, 1198.

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contrast with Moravian funeral services of the nineteenth century after the demise of the closed communities.²²

The choir system and closed communities of the Moravians contributed to the joyful aspect of dying. It provided strong personal support for the dying individual and those who were left behind. Moreover, the community could bury a brother or sister in full confidence that they were going to heaven. However, to fully understand the joyfulness of death in the Moravian communities, we need to examine the belief systems and worship practices of the Moravians as well.

Death as Bliss

Nikolaus von Zinzendorf was the strongest influence on the belief-system of the Moravians in America.²³ In his *Kinder Reden* of 1757 Zinzendorf told the children's choir in Herrnhut that it is better to die than to live since in death all troubles and anxieties end in the presence of the Savior. It is a special grace to die young because that way one avoids the pain and sickness of life. He reported with pleasure that a child was crying on his birthday because he had not died in the previous year and gone home to the Savior.²⁴ Moravian leaders in America shared these views of Zinzendorf. The preacher Peter Bohler told the residents of Bethlehem that death was "the greatest festival to expect on earth."²⁵ When one of the Single Sisters in Bethlehem died in 1759 it was reported with pleasure that all of the other single women longed to be the next to die.²⁶ Even children shared this sentiment. The Bethlehem Diary records with approval that when the child Julianna Fritschin heard that the small pox was in Bethlehem, she rejoiced and

22. This is clearly seen in the suggestion "that near the opening of the [funeral] Litany there be inserted a plain statement, in the words of the scripture, or otherwise, as to who are included among the 'blessed' dead"-*Journal of the Provincial Synod (Preparatory to the General Synod, 1869) of the Northern District of the American Province of the Moravian Church of the United States* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Moravian Publication Office, 1868), 103.

23. This is examined in detail in my dissertation, "Blood, Sex, and Death: Life and Liturgy in Zinzendorf's Bethlehem," (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1995).

24. N. L. von Zinzendorf, *Kinder Reden*, reprinted in *Erganzungsbande zu den Hauptschriften*, ed. by Erich Beyreuther and Gerhard Meyer (Hildesheim: George Olms, 1965), 6: 18, 97-98, 149.

25. *Das fahren zur Gemeine, ware das allergroste Fest, das eine Menschen-Seele auf dem Erdboden zu erwarten habe... sey der Tag unsers Heimgehen aus der Hu'tte der aller*; September 25, 1760, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

26. August 13-14, 1759, Single Sisters Diary, Moravian Archives.

said, "Oh, if I should get it soon then I believe that the Savior will take me to himself."²⁷

The Moravians were not teaching some type of suicide theology, nor developing a cult of the dead. This positive view of death was simply the consequence of Zinzendorf's Christocentric heart theology. According to Zinzendorf, the soul's greatest longing is to be united with her God and Savior, to sleep in the arms of her Creator. This "mystical marriage" with Christ was a centerpiece of Moravian devotion. It can be experienced to some degree in this life, particularly in the holy communion when the believer eats the body and drinks the blood of Christ, but death is the final consummation when the soul unites eternally with Christ. This union with Christ in heaven is the goal of life. Therefore, the true believer has "a desire to depart and to be with Christ," a phrase often repeated in Moravian litanies. For the believer, death is easier than birth since in death the soul journeys to its true home. It is a passage out of this dying world, *thanatos*, and into true life. Thus it should be a joyful experience. Zinzendorf compares the joy of conversion to the joy of the final hour, the "blessed hour" when "the liturgist and the *Gemeine*, the Mother and Child [Holy Spirit and Church], Head and Heart are no longer separated, but live together."²⁸ As such death is not to be feared but fervently longed for.

Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg was the leader of the Moravians in America for most of the 1740's and 50's. In 1778 he codified and systematized the church's teaching in *Idea Fidei Fratrum*.²⁹ There he asserts that although unconverted persons still experience the punishment of death, the Savior has made death a blessing for those who have faith, turn from sin, and are forgiven. "Therefore the death of those, who believe in Jesus, and obtain an interest in his death, is no longer to be looked upon as a punishment, but as a preparation and ordinance of God, for our consumption and entrance, into perpetual happiness."³⁰

27. January 10, 1760, Bethlehelem Diary, Moravian Archives. She got her wish and soon died. Nearly twenty years later, in the girls' school in Salem, it was also noted that Betsy Bagge "has often wept because she was the only little girl who did not have small pox" - Frances Griffin, *Less Time for Meddling: A History of Salem Academy and Salem College* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: John Blair, 1979), 25.

28. Zinzendorf, *Wunden Reden*, reprinted in *Hauptschriften in Sechs Banden*, ed. by Erich Beyreuther and Gerhard Meyer (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1962, hereafter cited as ZH), 3: 80; *Gemeine Reden*, ZH 4: 292; and *Kinder Reden*, 361ff., 405.

29. A. G. Spangenberg, *Idea Fidei Fratrum: An Exposition of Christian Doctrine as Taught in the Protestant Church of the United Brethren or Unitas Fratrum*, trans. Benjamin LaTrobe, 2nd ed. (London: Settlements and Chapels of the Congregations of the Brethren of Great Britain and Ireland, 1790), republished by the Board of Christian Education of the Southern Province of the Moravian Church in America, 1959.

30. Spangenberg, *Idea*, 458-59.

The death of a believer is simply a consummation of a process begun when the heart first received the Savior's love. "This life is eternal; and we are not to wait for it, until we come to Heaven, but have it already in this world. Wherefore, to those who believe, that which is termed death, is no death, but genuine, true, and everlasting life."³¹

The death toll in Moravian villages could be severe, but death itself was never presented as terrifying.³² Unlike the Puritans and other Christian groups throughout history, Moravian preachers did not portray the horrors of hell or the corruption of the grave as a way to frighten people into faith. Death was not described as fearful but as "going to sleep" or "going-home to the Lord" (*Heimgang zum Herrn*)³³ Moreover, the metaphysical agent of death was not the Angel of Death, nor the Grim Reaper of popular piety, nor even the inscrutable, sovereign Father God of Calvinism. It was the Savior himself who "plucked flowers from the garden" of the *Gemeine*³⁴ The same figure the Moravians worshipped was the Bridegroom who gave the final kiss of death as the consummation of his love.

Spangenberg's understanding of death as bliss was challenged in

31. Spangenberg, *Idea*, 459-60.

32. Smaby, *Transformation*, 76-83, shows that, from 1744 to 1763, 49% of the children in Bethlehem died before age five. This high rate declined rapidly, so that at the turn of the century it was down to 13%. This may somewhat challenge Stannard's argument that the Puritan obsession with death and emotional distance of parents to children in the 17th and 18th centuries was related to the high death rate of the colonists, particularly among the children. Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death*, 53-57, offers evidence that only two-thirds of the children of a New England family would survive to adulthood, arguing that this contributed to the Puritan fixation on death; however, this mortality rate is considerably lower compared to the mortality rate for Moravian children in Bethlehem from 1744 to 1763 when 66% of the children died before age twenty, most under the age of one (Smaby, *Transformation*, 79). The mortality rate of Moravian children was higher than that of Puritan children, yet their deaths were not treated with the same dread; therefore, mere mortality figures do not determine societal attitudes. Stannard is more convincing when he argues that it was the parents' attitude toward children, particularly their children's souls, which affected their view of the death of the child. Unconverted children would go to hell, thus death was not necessarily a release into bliss, but could lead to eternal punishment for one's own child (Stannard, 58-71).

33. Cf. Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death*; Phillipe Aries, *The Hour of Death*, trans. by Helen Weaver (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1981).

34. "In the afternoon, our Girls institution also had a beautiful lovefeast, in gratitude that the Savior had again chosen, after six years, to pluck a little flower from their bed, and held thereat a most lovely homegoing liturgy" - October 4, 1758, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives; cf. August 11, 1760, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives, and *Records* 1: 212. This view of Christ as the agent of death stands in contrast with much of Western history and anticipates the modern conception of Jesus taking away the dead, "a kind of Santa Claus whom adults use to tell children about death" - Aries, *Hour of Death*, 106-18, 576.

the summer of 1759 when an epidemic hit the burgeoning settlement of Bethabara in North Carolina, which Spangenberg had founded. Twelve persons died out of a village of only about eighty-five. During one of the funeral sermons, though, Spangenberg "reminded us that our Savior, through His death, had taken away the power of death, and that the departure of a child of God was no longer a dreadful thing, but only a sweet falling asleep."³⁵ Despite the fact that fourteen percent of the population died in a few weeks, Spangenberg and the diarist did not lose their belief in the blessedness of death.

In addition to viewing death as a consummation of the believer's marriage with Christ, the Moravians also described it as an entering into the body of Christ through the spear wound in his side. This was an image of complete union with the Savior through the atoning wounds which had made salvation possible. The side wound acted as a magnet drawing souls home. It was the mother city of the Christian and the location of final happiness:

During the English sermon during the 11th hour, the noble soul of our faithful deacon and dear Brother, Brownfield, abandoned its wearied body and flew with a look of longing toward the magnet of the wounds of Jesus, into its mother city. He passed away during the words of benediction, "At the End of all Need" and "Now you Side hole, you have carried him home."³⁶

This devotion to the wounds of Christ was a central feature of Moravian worship in the 18th century, particularly during the period of Bethlehem's General Economy.³⁷ The wounds were a reminder of Christ's atoning death that had purchased salvation for all who believed. The side wound was also the organ of spiritual rebirth and the portal to heaven. It was not unusual that Caspar Boeckel enjoyed hymns such as "My wounds of Jesus, Yes mine!" as he was dying; nor that "he faded away nicely and happily with the words, 'At the end of all need.' "³⁸ As such, the wounds were a frequent source of comfort. The Bethlehem Diary is full of references to being "rocked into our Sabbath's rest with our juicy litany of the wounds."³⁹

By continually looking at the wounded and broken body of their Savior, the Moravians could transfer the horrors of death to a transcen-

35. *Records*, 1:212.

36. April 23, 1752, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives. During his first synod upon his return to Bethlehem in 1751, Spangenberg read the funeral ode Zinzendorf had written for Julianna Nitschmann, "Side Wound upon yourself" - December 11/22, 1751, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

37. This is expanded in great detail in my dissertation, chapter 9.

38. August 9, 1758, Beilage, 131-32, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

39. July 24/August 4, 1747, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

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dent realm where it was God, through the Savior, who faced the terror of the grave and emerged victorious.⁴⁰ Thus the very graphic nature of 18th century "blood and wounds" hymns and liturgies which so shocked and disgusted later generations was in fact closely connected with the atmosphere of hope and celebration evident in the dying rituals. Death was neither denied nor sanitized as in modern Western society but was transcended through the suffering of the eternal God. By continually gazing at the anguish of the God-Man, not only during Lent, but throughout the year, Moravians could endure the anguish of dying with joy and confidence. Therefore, the Moravians' positive evaluation of death stemmed from a form of "scapegoating." Death was once horrible but is no longer since the Pascal Lamb took on himself all of the horrors of death and dying.⁴¹ Since these "blood and wounds" hymns and litanies were sung weekly, sometimes daily, in the *Gemeinen*, the Moravians were already prepared for the moment of their own agony in death. According to Moravian theology, death should be an eagerly awaited and blessed event. It was the final consummation, the completion of ones pilgrimage in the wilderness. This attitude was woven into the ritual life of the community and is particularly notable in the dying and funeral rituals of the *Gemeine*. Here we see social structure and theology combining with ritual to create the joyful death.

Dying in a Moravian Gemeinde

The process of dying was different in a Moravian *Gemeine* than in the world at large because death occurred in the presence of the choir, not just the family.⁴² It was a communal event. The choir leader or

40. In fact, Zinzendorf asserted that it was wrong to wish to be assumed without death, like Mary had been. Jesus had made the grave a sleeping chapel and those buried were his comrades. It was better to die and be buried like Jesus than to go straight to heaven like Mary - Zinzendorf, *Gemein Reden* 20: 294ff.

41. Zinzendorf, *Gemein Reden*, 28.

42. Spangenberg's account of his first wife's death is a good description of deathbed parting. Some ambivalence is expressed between the longing for one's companion and the greater desire "to depart and be with Christ." He wrote: "Her heart was therefore indescribably happy because she had quickly fastened to the hope that the blessed hour of her liberation, for which she had long desired with tears, would now come. When I told her that the Savior would probably take her to himself this time, she was so very thankful for the good news and through that was full of comfort and courage. Her suffering was worse than I have ever found in a sick person, but although she cried because of them, her heart was full of joy and the certain conviction: I will soon see the one whom my soul loves." Her last words were that the Moravians in Pennsylvania would be under the Lords' care, but she also expressed love for her husband. "She showed me in the name of the Savior and the *Gemeine* with the laying on of hands at her

spouse would usually take charge of the death-scene by leading those present in singing Moravian hymns. The hymns used were regularly sung in Moravian worship and most persons knew them by heart. Frequently the dying chose their favorite hymns, but almost invariably these focused on the suffering and death of Jesus. This was natural not only since people's minds were on death but also because these hymns were the center of the community's cultus. In every worship act the *Gemeine* was reminded of the details of Jesus' death and the salvific effect of it. Among the verses which the Single Sister Catharina Leibertin sang with her sisters as she died was "In my Husband's Death and Pain, there is my element". She died during the words "Deep into the dear Side!"⁴³ When it became evident that death was imminent, those gathered at the bedside would join in a standard litany which connected the death of the believer with the death of Jesus. The litany included such stanzas as the following from *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*:

When my mouth grows pale in his arms and lap, so shall the myrrh of the corpse, which flowed out of the side, give the final anointing to the dying members; that I will journey to the *Gemeine*. My flesh will live again.⁴⁴

It was considered especially good if the person died during the words "Open arms, Receive him/her!" or "Pale lips, kiss him/her on the heart."⁴⁵

The details of Jesus' slow dying and agony were a comfort to those

end, she wept lovingly with me and kissed my hand." Quoted in Jeremias Risler, *Leben August Gottlieb Spangenberg's, Bischofs der evangelischen Bruderkirche* (Barby: Die Brudergemeine, 1794), 253ff. This contrasts sharply with modern America's approach to death as described in Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963) and Geoffrey Gorer, "The Pornography of Death," *Encounter* 5 (1955): 49-52, also reprinted as an appendix to his book, *Death, Grief, and Mourning* (New York: Doubleday, 1965).

43. May 22, 1760, 529-31, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

44. "Wenn mein mund wird erleichen In seinem Arm und schooB, So soil die Myrrh der Leichen, Die aus der Seite floB, Dem sterbenden gebeine Die letzte olung geb'n; Dann fahr ich sur Gemeine Mein fleisch wird wieder leb'n," in *Das Litaneyen-Buchlein nach der bey den Brudern hauptsachlich gewdhnlichen Singe-Weise von neuen revidirt, und in dieser bequemen Form ausgegeben von dem Cantore Fratrum Ordinario*, 4th ed. (Barby: 1757), 20. This differs slightly from the translation in the English Litany Book of 1759 which reads: "And when my Mouth grows pallid In Jesu's Lap and Arms, The Corpse's Myrrh so valid, Which in his heart's Blood swarms, Embalm my Body dying; No other Salve at All! Myself to Salem flying, Shall once that Flesh recall" in the *Litany-book, According to the Manner of Singing At present mostly in Use among the BRETHREN, Again revised, and in this convenient Form set forth by the Brethren's CANTOR*, trans. from the 4th German edition (London: 1759), 18.

45. November 28, 1752, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

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suffering because they believed that Christ's physical suffering in death blessed their own death. Even Jesus' corpse was an object of devotion in many hymns and liturgies, especially in the middle of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ Dying persons in Bethlehem often requested the "corpse hymns" of Christian Rénatus von Zinzendorf (Christel) to be sung so that the memory of Jesus' own dying, death, and burial would encourage them as they faced a similar process. As Sarah Reinke died, "the late Christel's corpse liturgies, which were sung for her, were her comfort through the night, with which she joined in many a time. [S]he ... went to sleep gently into Jesus' arm and bosom..."⁴⁷ Deaths were immediately announced to the entire Gemeinde through brass music. The musicians would play a tune to announce a death and a separate melody was then played to signify to which choir the person belonged.⁴⁸ In this way, the entire congregation shared in the moment of death. Peter Bohler explained this practice for the Bethlehem *Gemeine* thus:

The first melody, of *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, signifies that the Bridegroom [Christ] has kissed home someone from our midst. Thereby one thinks, "Now someone has died." The second melody indicates from which choir. And the third, which is also the melody of *O Haupt* brings each person to himself, and reminds him of the blessed moment when he will also have the great grace, and thereby one sings in his soul, "When my mouth grows pale."⁴⁹

Bohler's interpretation is confirmed by the 1757 *Litaney Buchlein* where the congregation was instructed to change the words of verse 11 of *O Haupt* to refer to the person who had just died.⁵⁰ It is likely that persons sang the appropriate words when they heard the familiar tunes. At the next worship service, the death was formally announced to the community with a liturgical piece inserted into the Litany. The usual phrase was: "His Eyes, his Mouth, his Side, His Body crucify'd,

46. According to Aries, this was the time when many of the elite in Europe were becoming fascinated by cadavers, especially those of strangers (Aries, *Hour of Our Death*, 252-74). There may be a connection between this European-wide fascination and the Moravian description of the corpse of Christ. Or this fascination may be a remnant of the medieval macabre. Either way, it is significant that the Moravian interest in the physical aspect of dying and decomposing are reserved for the body of Jesus, not mortal individuals.

47. August 31, 1758, 139-42, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives. Such references could be greatly multiplied.

48. See *Records*, 3:1435-53, for a discussion of this practice and the texts of many of the choir verses; cf. *Liturgie Hymns of the United Brethren* (London: 1793), 154ff.

49. February 7, 1758, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

50. *Das Litaneyen-Buchlein*, 4th ed., 227ff.

Whereon we lean unshaken, {Name of person} to see is taken;" and the congregation would respond: "Where he/she now thankfully kisses The hands and feet of Jesus."⁵¹ This ritual reaffirmed the blessedness of death as the final consummation of the mystical marriage. It also affirms an on-going communion with one who had died.

According to the *Zeremonienbuchlein*., the corpse was washed, dressed simply and gracefully (*einfaltig und zierlich angekleiden*), and laid in a coffin. A member of the community, not of the family, was assigned this task. In the evening the coffin was placed in the community's "corpse house" (*Leichen-Gewolbgen*). Then, "through a lamp which shines through the window, the community is shown that a corpse is entrusted therein, and it is then diligently visited and looked upon communally."⁵² Every community was expected to build a corpse house. It appears that bodies were kept in the *Gemein Haus* (the church) until the funeral if the corpse-house was not completed in time. The corpse-house can be compared to a modern funeral home in that it removed the body from the home; however, it did not remove death from the community. The building was often placed on the square, and the light shining in the window served as a constant reminder that a member of the church lay in state. The central location shows that there was no concern either for ritual or medical pollution from the corpse as is found in many cultures, including modern America.⁵³ Placing the corpse in this building may have been parallel to the practice of double-burial in that it provided a time for observation of "social death" before the final interment. Member of the community could visit the body and begin the adjustment to life in community without one of the members.⁵⁴ The practice of visiting the body also helped

51. *The Litany-book*, 55. "Sein Augen, semen Mund, den Leib für uns verwundet, da wir so vest auf trauen, ist N.N. gangen schauen, [Gem.] Und innig herzlich friissen die Maal an Hand und Fussen (*Litaneyen Buchlein*, 61). Notice that the German edition emphasizes the nail wounds in the hand and feet. This entire passage was dropped from the Litany in the 1790's. Cf., Graf Heinrich Casimir Gottlieb von Lynar, *Nachricht von dent Ursprung und Fortgange, und hauptsachlich von der gegenwartigen Verfassung der Bruder-Unitat*, 2nd rev. ed. (Halle: Johann Jacob Curt, 1781), 125.

52. "Durch eine Lampe, die durch das Fenster scheint, der Gemeinde angezeigt, dap eine Leiche daselbst verwahret werde; die denn gemeinglich fleipig besucht und betrachtet wird" in *Zeremonienbuchlein*, 57, cf. *Records* 2: 773.

53. See Afies, *Hour of Our Dead*, 479-96, for a discussion of the arguments for the removal of corpses from residential areas and the change in funeral practices which resulted. This idea of pollution also contributed to the rural cemetery movement; Stanley French, "The Cemetery as Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the 'Rural Cemetery' Movement," in Stannard, *Death in America*, 69-91.

54. Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry, *Death and the Regeneration of Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1-44; "Introduction," esp. 3, 24, 34.

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create a memory of the departed. Although displays of grief were discouraged by the Moravians, it is likely that this liminal period afforded an opportunity for personal and communal grief.

Funerals were major community events, and the 18th century funeral rites agree with Zinzendorf and Spangenberg that death is no longer death for members of the *Gemeine*. The funeral liturgies boldly assert that the individual being buried "desired to depart and to be with Christ which is far better." Furthermore, the liturgy proclaims that death does not divide the community. The minister would then give an address at the funeral which included the *Lebenslauf*, or memoir, of the departed. This was a short account of the person's life which was often written by the person him or herself. The *Lebenslauf* personalized the death and was given by a religious figure who knew the departed intimately.⁵⁵ This practice helped create a lasting memory of the departed and also assured all members of the *Gemeine* that they were valued individually within the communal structure. Even children had *Lebenslaufen*. The *Lebenslauf* also served as the final witness of a person's faith and allowed the entire community to share in the experience of the person's death. As time progressed, fewer and fewer persons actually composed their own *Lebenslauf*. Smaby shows that in the earlier period of Bethlehem (1744-1764) a third of the memoirs had direct input from the individual, but by 1844, only 6% did.⁵⁶ Since the *Lebenslauf* was written in anticipation of one's own death, the decline in this practice may indicate an increasing discomfort with one's own mortality. In many churches the practice of the *Lebenslauf* died out completely and was replaced by a generic funeral sermon.

After the address, the community proceeded to the cemetery with the corpse. The cemetery was known as the *Gottes Acker* since bodies were sown in God's field for bearing fruit in the resurrection.⁵⁷ The most unusual feature of the God's Acre is that the dead were not buried by family groupings, as in modern Western society, nor were there ever common graves or charnel houses. Graves were never re-used, unlike the burial sites in colonial New England. Instead, from the very beginning of the Moravian settlements, persons were buried in indi-

55. In some respects the *Lebenslauf* resembles wills in the late Middle Ages by which individuals asserted a certain personal identity in their deaths; however, the *Lebenslauf* did not concern one's final requests. It was a statement of faith intended for the community, not a bestowal of property (Aries, *Hour of Our Dead*, 188-96).

56. Lynar, *Nachricht*, 1125; Smaby, *Transformation*, 130.

57. The first Single Sister to be buried in Bethlehem was Elizabeth Brazier. Her corpse was described as "the first corn from the young women for the God's field." She was also the first to experience "the grace of returning [home to God];" April 3, 1750, Single Sisters' Diary, Moravian Archives.

vidual graves grouped according to their choir. This pattern clearly indicates the Moravian focus on individual identity and dignity, but at the same time is strong evidence that the choirs, not families, were the primary social unit of Moravian communities.⁵⁸ Other than stones with the name and date and place of birth and death, marks of distinction among the graves were forbidden; therefore, the graves of the wealthy and prominent in life are indistinguishable from those of the poor and lowly.⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, this democratic aspect of Moravian life eventually declined. The 1855 synod had to urge congregations to preserve "uniformity and simplicity in epitaphs as well as in the gravestones themselves."⁶⁰

The precise order of the procession to cemetery varied, but men and women were always kept separate. It appears that at times women even served as the pall bearers for members of their own choir. The women generally dressed in white, just like the saints before the altar of God in the book of Revelation. According to the *Zeremonienbuchlein*, during the procession the community played and sang "lively and frisky music" (*mit Musik lieblich und munter*)⁶¹ After a brief burial liturgy, the body was interred with the words: "Keep us with the entire perfected congregation (Church Triumphant), especially with our brother {or sister} N.N. in eternal fellowship, and let us rest in the same manner with them in your wounds!"⁶²

58. It is frequently asserted that the burial by choir was simply a sign that the family was not to be preserved in heaven; however, if that were true, then burial would have simply been sequential according to the time of burial. Men and women would have been buried one next to another as they died. Instead, the Moravians went to lengths to separate persons according to choir.

59. *Zeremonienbuchlein*, 57. One should be cautious of extending this view to equality during life. As Gollin shows, despite the breakdown of many social barriers, nobles were still nobles in Herrnhut (Gollin, *Two Worlds*, 132-33).

60. *Journal of the Provincial Synod of the United Brethren's Church in the Northern Section of the United States of N. A.* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Moravian Church, 1855), 38.

61. *Zeremonienbuchlein*, 57. This should not be confused with a New Orleans "jazz funeral." The music was German chorales known for their use of minor keys.

62. "und nach den Worten: Bewahre uns mit der ganzen vollendeten Gemeinde, insonderheit mit unserm Bruder (oder Schwester) N. N. in ewiger Gemeinschaft, und lass uns dermaleins mit ihr ausruhen bey deinen Wunden!" This is essentially the ritual prescribed in the revised liturgy book of 1778. "Zuvorderst wird auf dem Saale, nach den Gesang einiger Verse, oder auch eines in Musik gesetzten und hieher passenden biblischen Textes eine kurze Rede gehalten, und der Lebenslauf des Entschlafenen gelesen: nachheren versammelt sich die Gemeinde um die auf dem Platz vor dem Saal stehende Leiche, da dann eine von folgenden Abtheilungen der Verse gesungen werden kann." *Gesangbuch, zum Gebrauch der evangelischen Brudergemeinen* (Barby: 1778), 220. "Wounds" were changed in 1789 to "presence" as Moravian devotion moved away from its Zinzendorfian roots.

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Virtually these same words were used each year at Easter in the eighteenth century. Each Easter, the congregation gathered to visit the graves of their brothers and sisters.⁶³ There they confessed their faith in the eschatological resurrection and read the names of members of the congregation who had died in the previous year, using words taken from the funeral liturgy:

I believe, that our brethren N.N. [name] and our sisters N.N. are gone to the church above, and entered into the joy of their Lord; the body was buried here.

We poor sinners pray Thee to hear us, O dear Lord and God;

And keep us in everlasting fellowship with the church triumphant; especially also with those servants and handmaids of the whole church, whom Thou hast called home within this year, as N.N. and to let us once rest with them at Thy wounds.⁶⁴

Each person who had died in the community was named at Easter, and the community reaffirmed that death does not separate the *Gemeine*. This naming of the dead at Easter was so important that in 1777 in Salem, since "no members of our congregation has gone home since last Easter, . . . the names of twelve brothers and nine sisters were mentioned whose going home to the Lord we had found recorded in the *Nachrichten*."⁶⁵ This reading of the names of the dead and praying for on-going communion with them is a form of the ancient church practice of reading the Diptychs on which names of the dead were recorded. Zinzendorf acknowledged this connection, saying, "the Diptychs belong to the ritual of a congregation of God, [because] therein lies a connection with the invisible [World] . . ."⁶⁶ In this way, Moravians were assured that they would not be forgotten in death. Interestingly, the Moravians also believed that the individuals they knew and loved were acting as their intercessors in heaven. The prayers of the dead are just as valid as those of the living. In fact,

The more who depart out of a choir to go to our Savior, so much the better it is for that choir, the more blessed it is, so many more Helpers that choir gets, so many reminders who charm the Savior, and remind him of a day, or of a

63. *Zeremonienbüchlein*, 58.

64. *A Collection of Hymns chiefly extracted from the Larger Hymn-Book of the Brethren's Congregations* (London: The Brethren's Chapel, 1769), 306-07.

65. *Records* 3:1146. The *Nachrichten* was an international news source for the Moravians. This also illuminates the international fellowship of the Moravians.

66. Zinzendorf, *Einundzwanzig Diskurse über die Augspurgische Konfession* (1748), ZH, 6:325.

person, such as the Single Brothers' festival, that he may well be very near then with his sweet presence.⁶⁷

Easter, then, was a yearly affirmation, not only of the unique resurrection of Christ and a general resurrection of the Church but also of the eternal life of specific members of the community.⁶⁸ This same idea was repeated weekly in the *Gemein Litaney* which included petitions for the dead and a prayer to be kept in fellowship with them.⁶⁹ Numerous other liturgies and discourses made similar requests. Most striking in this regard are the Bride's Song and the Epithalamium which were used to commemorate saints old and new. A worship service in Bethlehem in 1756 illustrates this praying for the dead: "the lilies of the valley'-the bodies of our beautiful ones in the grave-were our lovely subject, which we celebrated in song with a transported feeling."⁷⁰ As the Moravian *Gemeinen* dissolved, this sense of community extending beyond the grave also dissolved. In fact, the church's attitude toward death changed dramatically as the Moravians moved out of intimate communities and into the impersonal world of nineteenth century America. In 1876 the funeral rite was completely revised.⁷¹ Gone is the joyfulness of earlier services. In its place are expressions of anxiety and grief, such as

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. The days of years are threescore and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.⁷²

and "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." The 1876 ritual stresses (1) the brevity and uncertainty of life; (2) the mercy of God on those who grieve; and (3) the general resurrection. The earlier belief in the desirability of death is completely absent. Gone also are statements expressing faith in the specific resurrection of a person being buried and the assertion that the deceased "had a desire to depart." The church appears to have been admitting that it could no longer be certain that the departed brother

67. Zinzendorf, *Einundzwanzig Diskurse*, 6: 327.

68. April 18, 1756, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

69. 1759 English *Litany-book*, 55. "Bewahre uns mit der gantzen vollendeten Gemeine in ewiger gemeinschaft, Und laß uns dereinst von unserer arbeit zusammen ausruhen an deinen Wunden" - *Das Litaneyen-Buchlein*, 61.

70. March 21, 1756, Bethlehem Diary, Moravian Archives.

71. *The Liturgy and Hymns of the American Province of the Unitas Fratrum or the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Moravian Publication Office, 1876), 31-34.

72. *Ibid.*, 32.

did indeed "desire to depart and to be with Christ," or if anyone did for that matter. Once the *Gemeinen* ceased to function and the church turned away from the theology of Zinzendorf, death was no longer something to be longed for and celebrated as a marriage with Christ. In the nineteenth century death became a new source of anxiety grief, and uncertainty. Just as the Moravians by 1876 lived private lives, they also died private deaths and suffered private grief.

Conclusion

The 18th century Moravian *Gemeinen* were closely-bound religious communities that sanctified all of life, including death. Moravians lived in community, worked in community, worshipped in community, and died in community. Once a person was accepted as a member of the *Gemeine*, he or she remained part of the *Gemeine* even after death. Individuals were incorporated into the *Gemeine* through the choir system which was designed to build intimacy, devotion, and community. This sense of community extended beyond the grave because Moravians believed in the reality of heavenly bliss with Christ. According to the theology and devotion of the Moravians, death should be embraced as the final union with Christ whose death had made their salvation possible. These two factors, the communal system and Zinzendorf's theology, helped make death a joyful experience. The rituals of the community reaffirmed the community's theology and helped insure that death would be joyful. Death was more than a part of life in a Moravian *Gemeine*. It was something to celebrate because it was an entrance into true life.