Moravians at Shecomeco, N.Y. (1740-1746) : a case study of the missionary theory and practice of the Unitas Fratrum by Sigrid Kaesemans.

Sigrid Kasesmans

Lehigh University

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AUTHOR:
Kaesemans, Sigrid

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Moravians at Shecomeco, N.Y. (1740-1746)
A Case Study of the Missionary Theory and Practice
of the Unitas Fratrum
by
Sigrid Kaesemans

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\[ \text{Mar 15, 1992} \]
Date

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Professor in charge

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Chairman of Department
Eighteenth-century visitors to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, often expressed their gratefulness for the hospitality they found there. Even though today very little is left of the city's Moravian origins, I was lucky enough to experience a similarly warm welcome.

I mainly wish to thank Professor J. Dowling for introducing me to Lehigh University; Professor M. Baylor for his friendly and insightful advice; and Professor C. Daniels for the many stimulating hours we spent discussing American colonial history and for the continuing encouragement she gave me. I wish to thank all the members of the history department for making the years I spent here an unforgettable intellectual and personal experience.
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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the missionary work of the Evangelical Church of the United Brethren (Unitas Fratrum or Moravian Church) among the Indians of North America during the latter half of the eighteenth century. As a case study, we looked at the Brethren's first mission village at Shecomeco, New York (1740-1746), which up to now has received no detailed attention. In order to transcend the local character of this topic, it is introduced by discussing the spiritual background of the Moravian Church, more specifically the missionary theology of Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf.

The primary sources we used to reconstruct the mission at Shecomeco are preserved in the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. We mainly read its "Masterdiary" and the minutes of its Heidenconferenzen. A.G. Spangenberg's study of the Moravian missions (1782) helped us with the interpretation. For Zinzendorf's missionary theology, we used secondary literature as well as some of his published writings.

The Moravian missionary method was in many ways different from that of their contemporaries. In Pietist fashion, they refused to use any form of coercion into belief, and they emphasized an emotional over an intellectual understanding of the gospel. Their goal was the establishment of an autonomous Indian church that would no longer need white missionaries.
INTRODUCTION

The Evangelical Church of the United Brethren (Unitas Fratrum) or the Moravian Church, as it is more commonly called, is a relatively neglected topic of historical research. For anyone who is somewhat familiar with the extensive amount of source material in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, as well as in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and in Herrnhut, Germany, this is quite surprising. The minute record keeping of the Brethren is a dream for any historian, as is the care with which these sources have been preserved. Letters, statutes, accounts, diaries both private and official, minutes of conferences,... most of them in the difficult "German Script", wait to be studied.

As is the case with most denominations, the Moravian Church brought forth its own historians who look at "their" history from within, often with an openly sympathizing tone. Many of these studies are primarily biographical and factual and seldom take into account the cultural and spiritual development of eighteenth-century Europe, thereby failing to fully explain the nature of the Unitas Fratrum. On the other hand, works that concentrate on precisely that European background generally do not pay much attention to the Brethren's history.

This thesis is an attempt at mending some of the gaps in
the historiography. We were primarily interested in the Moravians' missionary work among the Indians of North America during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Our study is centered around the Brethren's first mission village at Shecomeco, New York (1740-1746), which up to now has received no detailed attention. Using it as a case study, we hope to give some insight into the Brethren's missionary approach. Topics we mainly concentrate on are their rather original way of preaching the gospel and of inducing the Indians to a new way of life. The natives' reactions, both negative and positive are discussed next, as well as the material organization of Christian Shecomeco and the rhythm of its everyday life.

In an effort to transcend the local character of this topic, it is introduced by a discussion of the spiritual background of the Moravian Church. While its history can be traced back to the Hussite movement of the fifteenth century, in the eighteenth century it was fundamentally influenced by the German Pietist movement through Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf, the church's spiritual leader and maecenas. First, we briefly set out the history of the Unitas Fratrum, second, we discuss Zinzendorf's main religious ideas, and more specifically his missionary theology. Only if one fully realizes his influence on the church, we believe, can an attempt be made to interpretatively describe it and its missionary endeavors.
The sources we used to reconstruct the mission at Shecomeco are mainly its "Masterdiary", the official day-by-day account of the Brethren's doings, as well as the minutes of the Heidenconferenzen, meetings they held among themselves or with some of the converts and during which organizational decisions were made. Documents like this were not only meant to serve as an aide de mémoire for the local missionaries. Copies of at least some of them were sent to Herrnhut and Bethlehem to inform the communities there of the progress of the Word, to allow them some control over the Brethren's work, and to serve as spiritual encouragement. We read the documents in the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem. A variant of a small part of the diary that was sent to Herrnhut, probably written by a different author, has been published. We completed these materials with the eighteenth-century history of the Moravian missions, by Georg Heinrich Loskiel.

In the interpretation of these sources we were helped by an eighteenth-century study of the Brethren's missionary approach written by the leading Moravian bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg, and published in 1782.

We received insight into the missionary theology of Zinzendorf through secondary literature, and through some excellent source collections published in the latter half of this century.
A. A short history of the Moravian Church.\textsuperscript{1}

When the Moravian Brethren set foot on the American continent shortly before the middle of the eighteenth century, they brought with them a heritage of almost three centuries.

The Moravian Church claims direct descent from the Jednota Bratřská, or Unity of the Brethren, organized at Kunwald, Bohemia, in 1457. They were followers of John Huss, the Czech reformer burned at the stake in 1415. Whereas the Hussite Bohemian Church had reached doctrinal agreement with Rome at the Council of Basel in 1433, the Jednota Bratřská formally seceded from the Church and installed its own ministry and episcopacy. They dedicated themselves to strict scriptural teaching and an apostolic way of life; they stressed purity of morals and conduct as well as an emotionally experienced faith over doctrinal uniqueness.

The nationalistic flavor to this reform movement undoubtedly helps explain its success: at the beginning of the seventeenth century, about half of the Protestants in Bohemia and Moravia belonged to the Unity of the Brethren.

With the outbreak of the Thirty Years War and the defeat of the Bohemian Protestants at the Battle of White Mountain in

\textsuperscript{1} Compiled out of: "Moravian Church"; "Brüderunität/Brüdergemeine"; Gollin, Moravians in two worlds, 9-24, Rupp-Eisenreich, "Les Frères Moraves", 127-134.
1620, however, the majority of the Brethren were absorbed into the Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed Churches. The remnant, even though forced underground, adhered to Huss' doctrine and managed to survive largely through the efforts of its bishop, John Amos Comenius (1592-1672). He publicized their history and doctrines in his *Ratio Disciplinæ* and collected funds for the support of the "Hidden Seed", as the clandestine members of the *Jednota Bratrská* were called. In 1722, a carpenter by the name of Christian David revived the principles of the Brethren and was partially successful in reorganizing them. Unwanted in their homeland, they left and settled on the estate of Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf in Saxony where they formed a community called "Herrnhut", meaning "under the Lord's watch".

From this time on, the Moravian Church, as its popular name came to be, underwent significant changes. Zinzendorf, who was much influenced by Pietist spirituality, warmly welcomed the Brethren, and, for that matter, other religious dissenters as well. He became more and more enthusiastic about the steadily growing settlement and hoped to make it a grand society founded on experiential religion and practical piety, promoting spirituality and brotherhood without regard for doctrine. Very soon, he became the group's spiritual leader and exerted a major influence on what officially became known as the "Renewed Unitas Fratrum". Although in accordance with his ecumenical spirituality he initially did not intend
to establish it as a distinct church, he was forced to do so in order to acquire official recognition from the state. The Augsburg Confession was adopted as a summary of the Brethren's belief.

The Herrnhut community took on not only an ecumenical, but also a strongly missionary character. The Moravians believed that truly to live the life of Christ, one had to proclaim it. In 1732, their first missionaries left for Saint-Thomas in the West Indies to work among the slaves; the next year some went to Greenland to assist a Lutheran pastor in his work among the heathen there. In 1734, for a mixture of religious, political and economic reasons, a group of Herrnhuters set out for the American continent, where they established a community in Savannah, Georgia. This was abandoned shortly afterwards, mostly because their outspoken pacifist position aroused suspicion on the part of both the Spanish and the English. In 1740 they settled in Philadelphia, and within a short time they were able to found Nazareth and Bethlehem. By 1776, there were over 2,500 Moravians in Pennsylvania alone. Since they never identified their form of Christianity with an established state church, however, they never exerted great influence in any given region.
B. Zinzendorf, pietist theologian.

In order to fully understand the nature of the Renewed Moravian Church, it is essential to set forth briefly Count Zinzendorf's main religious ideas. We call it his "theology" with some reservation, since in true Pietist fashion he was wary of structures and systems of thought. "As soon as truth becomes a system, one does not possess it," he once wrote.\(^1\) Neither his thoughts nor his terminology were very precise or organized. A number of ideas recur over and again, however, and deserve particular attention here for the influence they had on Moravian spirituality. It is undoubtedly much more accurate to see the Unitas Fratrum of the eighteenth century as a heir of German Pietism rather than of the Hussite tradition \textit{tout court}.\(^2\) Zinzendorf's missionary ideas, finally, can only be understood within the context of his spirituality as a whole.\(^3\)

The Count grew up in a Lutheran environment that was

\(^1\) Stoeffler, \textit{German Pietism}, 143.

\(^2\) A fairly substantial amount of the historiography of the Unitas Fratrum is written by Moravians. Many of these studies are rather amateurish, more a result of nostalgia than of historical scholarship. Characteristically, many of these authors either neglect the "European" history of the Unitas Fratrum or tend to "forget" its pietist background and instead put all emphasis on the more heroic Hussite heritage.

\(^3\) Standard works about Pietism are: Stoeffler, \textit{Evangelical Pietism}; Id, \textit{German Pietism}; Beyreuther, \textit{Geschichte}. For Zinzendorf's theology, we used Stoeffler, \textit{German Pietism}, 131-165; Beyreuther, \textit{Geschichte}, 177-227; Id, "Mission und Kirche"; Hahn, "Theologie".
strongly inspired by Pietism. His godfather was Philip Spener (1635-1705) and he was a student of August Herman Francke (1663-1727) at Halle, so that from his childhood on, he was in close contact with its two leading figures. The Pietist movement originated out of the need for an authentic experience of God by each individual Christian and was not limited to one specific denomination. Religious life had to be a life of love for God and man; the church a community of God's people, transcending all organizational boundaries. Traditional structures of established orthodoxy were denounced as well as the tendency to capture religious truths in what Pietists considered to be lifeless, purely theoretical "scholastical" systems. Instead of busying itself with speculative questions, the ministry should be sensitized and trained to respond to the needs and problems of their time. In the same way, faith should not be a complacent formalism, but an inner identification with God; it should be a total break with one's "old life" and a total commitment to a new life in Christ.

It was this emphasis on the individual's immediate, emotional relationship with God through a feeling of unreserved love that permeated Zinzendorf's theology. As Stoeffler has pointed out, he considered it the task of theology to conceptualize and to formulate biblical revelation in a way that evokes an authentic experience of God's love.¹

¹German Pietism, 144-145.
This affective identification with Christ, this "religion of the heart", became the cornerstone of Moravian spirituality and actually united the Brethren more than did a common confession.

Zinzendorf's understanding of Christ was quite original, although not always very much appreciated by other theologians. Christ is the Son of God, but at the same time and perhaps even more, he is so total a revelation of the Father that he becomes a Speziall-Gott, God in his totality.\(^1\) Or, as Gollin puts it, since the divine is so endlessly beyond human understanding, the only way man can hope to understand God is through Christ.\(^2\) This is why the devotion for "the Lamb" and for his death and suffering takes such a central place in Moravian spirituality.

The Count's "religion of the heart" and his christology introduce us to three other interrelated motifs. His de-emphasis of doctrine in favor of emotion led him to relativize the differences between various denominations and indeed to adopt an outspokenly ecumenical position. He believed that every religious group had its own contribution to make, and that, to paraphrase Stoeffler, they all had only temporary power and were no more than shadows of the real Church, the

\(^1\) Stoeffler, German Pietism, 146.

\(^2\) Moravians in two Worlds, 23.
body of Christ.\(^1\) During his travels in the New World, especially in Pennsylvania, for example, Zinzendorf was clearly more interested in establishing unity between the various churches there than in the missions among the Indians, even though his ecumenical and his missionary ideals were very much interrelated, as we will show.

Second, Zinzendorf's persuasion that all denominational differences were subordinate to the belief in Christ they all shared led him to the diaspora idea. In an effort to kindle every Christian's joyful relationship with Christ, he sent out Moravians to live among people of other churches, or even to become part of them. Since he originally had no intention of establishing the Unitas Fratrum as a separate faith, this double membership was no problem for him. He was himself both an ordained minister in the Lutheran Church and a Moravian bishop.\(^2\)

Third, this desire to awaken the joy of faith in everybody and the profound dislike for every form of passive, quietistic religiosity very naturally led him to the concept of mission. Christ died for everyone, and following his command: "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Gospel to

\(^1\) Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 152.

\(^2\) The diaspora idea was an application of Spener's "ecclesiola in ecclesia", or little churches, that would act as a leaven to revive the church of that day. Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 139.
all creation,\textsuperscript{1} his message should be available to all who would listen, at home or abroad; red, black or white. It is remarkable how soon after the establishment of the Renewed Unitas Fratrum the Moravians started sending missionaries to almost all parts of the world.

It is true that Zinzendorf was in some trouble with political authorities as well as with Lutheran orthodoxy because not only the Brethren but all kinds of religious dissenters found refuge on his estate and because on more than one point his theology was somewhat "suspect." It is true also that the community in Herrnhut was outgrowing its available space and economic resources. Since the Unitas Fratrum was very small at that time, however, and since it had neither the support of an established church nor of any political ruler, it does not seem possible to attribute this missionary zeal entirely to a search for "Lebensraum."\textsuperscript{2}

The Danish Lutheran mission inspired Zinzendorf to actually start a Moravian equivalent. The Danish royal Court was strongly influenced by A.H. Francke and the Pietist center at Halle. While overall, "orthodox" Protestantism in Germany was not concerned about missions abroad, Francke believed that

\textsuperscript{1} Mark, 16:15; similar texts in Matth. 28:19-20 and in John 15:16.

\textsuperscript{2} This topic still awaits research. Some information concerning the economic aspects of the Moravian missions can be found in Müller, \textit{200 Jahre}, 313-332. He does not dwell upon the question to what extent economical reasons might have compelled the Brethren to establish foreign missions, however.
foreign missions were an important task of the church, as the expression of a true living faith. He actually conducted training classes at Halle for prospective missionaries. In 1706 the first ones, Heinrich Plüschau and Bartholomeus Ziegenbalg, with whom Zinzendorf would later share a dinner table when he was a student at Halle, were sent to Trankebar in India.\(^1\) As Zinzendorf wrote: "We did not take the Jesuit or the Franciscan missions as an example. But when we saw that people preached the Gospel in our own German language, and that the heathen were willing to accept it, then we thought: if our equals can do this, we can do it ourselves."\(^2\)

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\(^1\) About Pietism and mission: Beyreuther, "Die Bedeutung"; Althaus, "Spener's Bedeutung". About Francke's missionary ideas in particular: Stoeffler, _German Pietism_, 35-36; Beyreuther, _Geschichte_, 164-168. See also Beyreuther, "Ziegenbalg".

\(^2\) Hahn and Reichel, _Zinzendorf u. die Herrnhuter Brüder_, 352; our translation.
C. Zinzendorf's missionary theology.

On the seventh day the Bethlehem Diary was kept,¹ part of the entry was: "This afternoon the first Congregation Council. Bro Ludwig [Count Zinzendorf] proposed: That it should be considered necessary for our church to observe the Sabbath in this country... because it would have to be instituted among the Indian converts, if it should be established more fully that the Indians of this region are the ten tribes of Israel. For the same reason we would also be obliged to introduce circumcision among them, for they ought to readopt their former regulations completely."

Europeans discussed the nature and the origins of the Native Americans from the very moment they came into contact with them. That they were the descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel was only one of the explanations given, one that for different religious groups served both as an impetus and as a justification for their missionary work.²

It is a little surprising, though, to find this idea in Zinzendorf's writings. As we will explain, the concept of winning entire peoples for Christ is not reconcilable with his

¹ Hamilton, Bethlehem Diary, 15-16. The date reads as: "Sunday June 13/24 1742". The double entry is due to the use of both the Julian and the Gregorian calendar.

² A very interesting book on this subject is Lemaire, De Indiaan in ons Bewustzijn.
missionary theology. Also, other important Moravian writers of roughly the same period, such as Spangenberg, Zeisberger, Heckewelder or Loskiel do not express this or a similar expectation.¹

Maybe we should not take Zinzendorf too literally, for as said before, he did not always use a very precise language. Rather, this quote seems to reveal one of the cornerstones of his opinion about --specifically Moravian-- missions. Whether or not he sincerely believed in the Indians' biblical heritage, the idea that seems to be implied is that they have a primordial desire for and knowledge of God. Therefore, he instructed the missionaries to look for Erstlinge, for the "First Fruits" in whose hearts the Holy Spirit awakened a desire for Christ.

The Count borrowed this idea from Francke: all people fundamentally desire to achieve what he called in scholastic terms the Summum Bonum, which in man's search for it turns out to be God, the Supreme Good. Every human being, gentile as well as Jew, at least potentially seeks him, and since everyone has an innate sense of the Deity, a Sensum Numinis,² he is to some degree prepared to recognize and to receive him. Man can not get to know God on his own, though: he has to reveal himself out of his own will. The missionary is in this

¹ Spangenberg, Von der Arbeit; Zeisberger, History; Heckewelder, History; Loskiel, History.

² Hagen, Old Landmarks, 115.
process no more than an instrument of the Holy Spirit. Through his preaching, the "pious heathen" can actually recognize the Summum Bonum they are looking for. This idea was so important for the Brethren that, at least initially, they required evidence of this particular sign of grace as the impetus to actually start a mission.

In 1731, Zinzendorf and some other Brethren were present at the crowning of the King of Denmark, Christian VI, in Copenhagen. There they met his "Kamermohr" Anton, a Christian who had previously been a slave on Saint Thomas. According to C.G.A. Oldendorp, the eighteenth-century historian of the Moravian mission in the West Indies, Anton told them "that from the time he was in Saint Thomas, he had felt the desire for a divine revelation and that he had prayed to God to give him the light that would lead him to the doctrine the Christians talked about." After that he told the Moravians about the sadness of the slaves' life, and mostly about his sister, who had the desire to know God, but who had neither the time nor the occasion for this. "She often asks God to send someone to show her the way that leads to salvation." Anton then expressed his sincere belief that she and many other slaves would very eagerly be converted to Christianity.¹

It was Zinzendorf's opinion not only that the First Fruits initiated a mission, but also that the Brethren needed only to concentrate on them. He did not have any grandiose plans for bringing "the nations" to Christ. On the contrary, he spoke out very strongly against mass conversions, since he was persuaded that this would only continue the denominational differences that existed in Europe. These were not only bad as such but also caused a lot of confusion among the heathen, he believed.\(^1\) In conformity with Pietist persuasion, moreover, "belief" could never be enforced, but had to originate out of one's deepest emotions. Anything else could lead only to a merely outward observance of rites and not to real belief, something he often reproached other religious groups, not the least the Catholic Church. "If only one were to be found, then they should preach the Gospel to him, for God must give the heathen ears to hear the Gospel, and hearts to receive it, otherwise all their labor upon them would be in vain".\(^2\)

Ultimately, the First Fruits doctrine also had an eschatological dimension. The work of the Brethren was but a preparation for Christ's work of conversion. To compel people into baptism would be an unjust and meaningless anticipation.

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\(^1\) Spangenberg, *Von der Arbeit*, 61 emphasizes this point.

\(^2\) Zinz. wrote this in his instructions for Rauch, then leaving for New York. Loskiel, *History*, II, 7.
The Moravians' trust in Christ as their guide and inspirer also helps to explain their light-heartedness about the specific profile a prospective missionary had to possess. It is remarkable that during the first few years, there was literally no discussion on this point. All that was required was soundness of character and a strong faith. Ordination was not required since the Brethren strongly held to the idea of "the priesthood of all believers". It should not come as a surprise then, that the first "Heidenboten" were intellectuals as well as workmen, young and old, married and single, sometimes even widows.

Although Zinzendorf was the inspirational genius behind the various forms the Moravians' active religious life took, he remained a theoretician after all. He had very outspoken ideas of what a mission should be like, and he showed an enormous zeal in writing to his Brethren and Sisters in the missions, giving them encouragement and spiritual advice.

When reading his instructions and letters, however, it is

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1 On the eschatological dimension of mission in Pietist thought, see Beyreuther, Geschichte, 43, 54, 95-97 and Müller, 200 Jahre, 270. On the same in Zinzendorf's theology, see Beyreuther, Geschichte, 218-219.

2 Müller, 200 Jahre, 279, 280, 291.

3 A selection and critical edition of the most important of these sources can be found in N.L. von Zinzendorf, Texte zur Mission and in Uttendorfer, Die wichtigste Missioninstruktionen.
quite obvious that he paid very little attention to the concrete practicalities of a mission. Theologically, he knew when it should be established, whom they had to concentrate on, and what had to be preached. On the other hand, how to approach the heathen, how to organize a settlement, or how to deal with native resistance, for example, are things that do not appear in his writings. As Müller very interestingly explains, Zinzendorf not only didn't have much experience "in the field," he also considered a very strict missionary method to be incompatible with the idea of Christ as the leading missionary. Christ was the one who sent out people; he showed them the way step by step, inspired them when they addressed the heathen, and ensured the success of their work. Only his grace, and not human instructions could bring success.¹

To get a clear image of the methods the Moravians used to convert people, it is thus necessary to turn to other documents. Most appropriate are the diaries and conference-minutes of the different missions themselves, and their correspondence with the "headquarters" of the Church, in the case of North America, Bethlehem. The difficulty here is the exact opposite of the one in the Zinzendorf documents: instead of too much, these sources contain too little interpretation of what happened on a day-to-day basis. In addition, the Unitas Fratrum did not have a well-defined method from the outset. Attempted approaches proved useful or not, and only

¹ Müller, 200 Jahre, 297.
over time did the missions take on a specific character.

We are saved the effort of going through all the existing records to follow this evolution, though, thanks to a very interesting work by bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg, entitled: *Von der Arbeit der Evangelischen Brüder unter den Heiden* (1782). It proved essential for the interpretation of the sources we read.

Spangenberg (1704-1792) is generally recognized as one of the leading Moravians of the eighteenth century, and as someone who had a major influence on the organization of the Church of the Brethren. He came in contact with the Unitas Fratrum in 1727, and very soon after that he started playing an important role in the church as bishop, theologian, defender of Moravian spirituality and actual leader of the settlements on the American Continent. He lacked the Count's charismatic originality, but gave proof of superior organizational capacities. His importance could not be better illustrated than by the fact that after Zinzendorf's death in 1760, he took over his position as the leader of the Church. While Zinzendorf's missionary theology was dispersed over his various writings, Spangenberg, characteristically, provided us with the named work in which both theological missionary aspirations and practical instructions are clearly developed. ¹

¹ There is very little literature about Spangenberg and his role in the Unitas Fratrum. His biography by Reichel, *Spangenberg* is long outdated; Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 165 is a good though very concise overview.
While up to now we outlined the theological framework within which Zinzendarf interpreted "mission", we will now step "into the field" with the Brethren and ask the question how they reconciled these ideas with the reality they encountered. With the mission at Shecomeco as a case study, we will not only try to indicate what their method was like, but also to what extent they complemented or corrected the Count's ideals.
CHAPTER II. THE MISSION AT SHECOMECO, A CASE STUDY.

A. Preaching to the heathen.

On July 16, 1740, Christian Henry Rauch arrived in New York "to preach the blood and wounds of Jesus to the heathen".\(^1\) His mission at Shecomeco, New York, marked the beginning of the Moravians' work among the Indians of North America. The Brethren had previously made contact with the Creek nation, but this stopped when they had to leave their settlement in Georgia and moved to Pennsylvania. Spangenberg, who had led them there, had made the acquaintance of Conrad Weiser (1696-1760), justice of the peace and official interpreter for the government of Pennsylvania. Weiser told him the following event. One evening, when he was wet, hungry and demoralized after a tiring trip in pouring rain, he met two Indians of the Iroquois nation who "bid him [to] take courage, adding, that what a man suffered in his body, cleansed his soul from sin..." The bishop was amazed at this sign of spiritual grace, and "the Brethren ... became desirous of finding an opportunity to instruct these blind, yet thinking heathen, in the only true way, by which man may be cleansed from sin."\(^2\) Soon after, Rauch was sent out to see if there was a possibility of working among these Indians.

\(^1\) Masterdiary, Dec. 31/20 1739.

\(^2\) Loskiel, History, II, 5.
The account of Rauch's first weeks on the new continent sounds like an exemplum.¹ When he set foot on the shore after a long trip from Germany, via Holland and England, he was fremd in der fremden Welt.² He did not know anyone in New York City, he knew nothing of the people to whom he would preach the Gospel, and he did not know where he would find them. Thanks to Christ's benevolence, however, he met Brother Martin [Mack], der Lehrer der Mohren, who had worked in the West Indies. Soon after he also heard of some Indians who were in New York at that time. When Rauch first called on them, they were too drunk to talk to and, ironically enough, this condition was also fairly typical. The next day he visited them again and asked them "if they would not like a teacher among them to lead them out of the their blindness and the captivity of sin". One of them, named Job, who spoke some Dutch, answered him that he often felt the desire for something better in his heart. He could not help himself, but if someone would come to him and his friends and teach them, they could be saved from their poverty and maliciousness. Shabash, one of his companions, agreed with him. Rauch thus found his Erstlinge, sinners and drunkards but people who desired to know Christ. We may suppose, obviously, that they already had had ample occasion to hear about the Christian

¹We quote or paraphrase out of the Masterdiary, July 16 to August 1740. The translations are ours.

²Müller, 200 Jahre, 207.
message, although the Moravians did not interpret it that way. Shortly after this encounter Rauch left New York for Shecomeco.

Equally typical, finally, was the reaction of a white settler when Rauch asked him for directions and explained the reason for his trip. He was told that he would never be able to convert "the savages": "They are like living devils and have a very bad character (eine böse Natur), and they don't understand any language". Rauch however answered him that since the Savior had shed his blood for everyone, the Indians were as able to receive him in their hearts as anyone else. He then continued to his destination. Shecomeco was a Mahican village on the New York-Connecticut border, in the Berkshire region, and did not have a missionary yet.

Once there Rauch experienced how difficult it was to lead the Indians on the narrow path to salvation. Initially, he had a lot of problems with his "poor heathen".¹ The first day the Indians carefully listened to his preaching, but already the next morning, they openly made fun of him, vilified him and refused to give up their heavy drinking. Even Shabash, who had invited him to Shecomeco, "was set against brother Rauch by some people who accused him of preaching a false doctrine

¹ The Masterdiary only hints at this period of difficulties. More information was found in Müller, 200 Jahre, 208. This book is based on an immense amount of research, and is an excellent reference work for the Moravian missions in all parts of the world. Müller only used the Herrnhut archives, however, not the ones in America.
(mit einem Geschrei von falscher Lehre), and for a long time he did not come near him".\(^1\) Rauch patiently and regularly visited Shecomeco and slowly started having some success.\(^2\) In February 1742, the first three Indians were baptized, and they received the names Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Moravians believed that the reason Rauch's preaching was successful --and especially why it was much more so than that of ministers of other denominations, as they saw it-- was because of the particular way he brought the Good News.

It took the Unitas Fratrum some time to decide how they could most effectively share their deep-felt devotion for Christ with other people. Their first missionary attempts followed the method of other Protestant groups, but soon they came up with their own approach. Since they believed that the essence of true religion was not the intellectual understanding of matters of faith, but rather the experience of a loving relationship with Christ the Redeemer, the message that had to be brought to the heathen had to be an emotional one, one that spoke to the heart rather than to the mind. Zinzendorf repeatedly emphasized that it was wrong to preach

\(^1\) Masterdiary, Sept. 1740.

\(^2\) In January 1741, he wrote to the community in Herrnhut: "Zwei Heiden Tschoop und Shabash sind herzlich. Der Heiland arbeitet mit Macht in ihnen. Das geschlachtete Lamm wird ihnen täglich wichtig. Es wird bald ihr alles sein. Rede ich mit ihnen vom Heiland, so rollen ihnen die Tränen am Backen runter". Müller, 200 Jahre, 208.
about dogmatic issues to the heathen, not necessarily because they would not be able to understand it, but because they were not essential to a true faith.

"I can never wonder enough at the blindness and ignorance of those people who are supposed to handle the divine word and convert men...who think that if they have them memorize the catechism or get a book of sermons into their heads or, at the most, present all sorts of well-reasoned demonstrations concerning the divine truths and knowledge into their heads, that this is the sovereign means to their conversion."¹ Instead of starting one's sermons from the creation and proceeding to the Old and finally the New Testament, one should immediately talk about Christ.²

In preaching, the primary emphasis was to be laid on Christ's death and on the redeeming power of his blood and wounds.³ On one occasion, the Indian Job, whom Rauch had first met and who was now called Johannes, testified to the Moravian style of preaching. He noted that before his conversion, various preachers had visited his people. One came and started out to prove that there was a God. The Indians said: "Well, and dost

¹ Zinzendorf, Nine public Lectures, 35.
² Spangenberg, Von der Arbeit, 34-37.
³ This symbolism quickly degenerated into an overly sweet and somewhat morbid emotionalism. Spangenberg, in his Idea Fidei Fratrum toned down some of the more startling sentimentalities in Moravian religiosity: Stoeffler, German Pietism, 165.
thou think we are ignorant of that? now go again whence thou camest." A second preacher came and told them that they should not steal, drink or lie. To him they said, "Fool that thou art, dost thou think that we do not know that? Go and learn it thyself, and teach the people thou belongest to not to do those things. For who are the greater drunkards, or thieves, or liars, than thine own people?" Finally the Moravian Christian Henry Rauch came, went into Johannes' hut, sat down and began to speak. "The contents of this discourse to me were nearly these: I come to thee in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth. He acquaints thee, that he would gladly save thee, and rescue thee from the miserable state in which thou liest. To this end he became a man, hath given his life for mankind, and shed his blood for them, etc." Johannes could not get the missionary's words out of his mind. Indeed, "I dreamed of the blood which Christ had shed for us." He concluded his testimony by saying, "I tell you, therefore, Brethren, preach to the heathen, Christ, and his blood, and his death, if ye would wish to produce a blessing among them."  

The Moravians ascribed their success to the missionaries' demeanor as well. They had to show a firmness of character and belief, but at the same time conduct themselves in a very

1 Spangenberg, Account, 62-63. Quoted in Schatttschneider, Souls for the Lamb, 161-162. The German text can be found in Von der Arbeit, 68-70.

27
modest way. The Brethren were to walk, pray and sing among themselves or "in the presence of the savages". "Moderate and never unrequested conversation" with the "heathen" was recommended with the warning that explanations should only be given "if called for" and always "adapted to their comprehension". Preaching the gospel could only be effective after God awakened the process of conversion in the Indians' hearts, anyway, so coercion was out of the question. The missionaries were to maintain a low profile, "to show a happy and ready spirit...to put yourself in a respected position among them with your spiritual power...".

This low profile was emphasized even more by the fact that the Brethren had to provide for their own support since the community in Herrnhut did not pay them any wages. When Rauch was told by a white settler that he would never be able to convert "the savages", he was also warned that they would never share their provisions with him. He replied that he could earn a living with his hands, and that he knew something about "Medizin". Actually, he stayed with a certain Mr. Rau(h), where in exchange for teaching his children to read and write he received food and lodging. After he had moved to Shecomeco, Rauch and the other Brethren who had joined him

1 Schattschneider, Souls for the Lamb, 98, quotes Zinzendorf.

2 Schattschneider, Souls for the Lamb, 110, quotes Zinzendorf.

3 Masterdiary, August 1740.
by then, tilled their own land. This was also meant to set an example for the Indians and to assure them that the Moravians were not looking for land or material gain.
B. Indian Converts.

Slowly, Rauch and the few Brethren and Sisters who would later join him established a Christian community in Shecomeco. The process seems to have been a steady one, with a growing number of converts, although it did not happen without problems. Some Indians refused their message completely, such as a young man from Waichgatwáck, the neighboring village, with which the Brethren had established contact. When he was asked "if he wanted to give his heart to the Savior", he replied that he had tried it during one winter, but that now he had changed his mind again and that he wanted "to love the world".\(^1\) Others, who were converts, had to cope with the sometimes very outspoken hostility of family members who did not accept the new teachings. The diary and conference minutes contain several entries about Tamar, for example, a woman from one of the neighboring villages. Since she had been baptized, she was very often beaten by her husband. "He accused her of going to Shecomeco to whore"\(^2\) Later on, when this mistreatment continued, she expressed the wish to separate from him, but the Brethren admonished her that she should ask the Saviour for patience.\(^3\) The last entry concerning her

\(^{1}\) Masterdiary, July 3, 1743.

\(^{2}\) "das sie nach Shecomeco huren ginge". Conference Minutes, Aug. 20, 1743.

\(^{3}\) Conference Minutes, Sept. 5, 1743.
mentions that she had again been beaten severely, but that this time she had told her husband: "Even if you kill me, I will not abandon the Lord".\(^1\) A successful conversion indeed!

Even more striking and much more numerous than these examples of external animosity are the entries about the converts' inward struggle. It is not easy to estimate precisely the impact of the Brethren's teachings. The dilapidation of Indian culture and society after two centuries of white occupation may have made at least some of them more receptive to the fundamentally consoling message of salvation through Christ. The greater material security they found within the mission community as well as the protection from exploitation by white settlers also must have played a role in this process.

One of the most touching illustrations of the turbulent but deep conversion some Indians went through, concerns "Jonathan". "Jonathan was again very moved and cried from happiness for the grace that had befallen such a great sinner as himself".\(^2\) Somewhat later, he came to see the missionary and cried because "he did not have a sweet feeling in his heart, maybe the Savior was angry at him or had left him altogether".\(^3\) This alternation of beatitude and sadness or doubt is a constant theme. On several nights, Jonathan was

\(^1\) Conference Minutes, Sept. 19, 1743.
\(^2\) Masterdiary, Nov. 2, 1742.
\(^3\) Masterdiary, Nov. 15, 1742.
heard preaching fervently to other Indians; on others, he cried from affliction. Later on, he would frequently accompany the missionaries on their trips and the various tasks that were bestowed on him show their trust. In an anonymous and undated letter from Shecomeco, one of the Brethren wrote: "My well-beloved brother Mack and myself have just had a long and close conversation with our Indian brother Jonathan. He is as tame and affectionate as a lamb. We were filled with astonishment when he told us, how he had felt ever since his baptism. We were amazed at the great change which has taken place in him."\(^1\)

One of these "great changes" has been recorded as follows.\(^2\) Before his conversion, Jonathan was very "greedy" (begierig), and when he was hunting, he only thought about killing something. Now, so the text goes, he thinks of Christ's wounds, and if he can not catch anything, he does not get upset. On one occasion, he and a white man both shot the same deer. "To his own disadvantage" (zu seiner eigen Beschämung), Jonathan gave him the deer. The white man, saying "you must be a Christian" gave him half of it, which Jonathan in turn gave to the missionary. We do not cite this text implying that sharing is a Christian monopoly, but because, indeed, the Moravians saw it that way.

\(^1\) Hagen, *Old Landmarks*, 209.

\(^2\) Masterdiary, Nov. 9 and 13, 1742.
The incident is of little significance as such, although it suggests something about the new ethical code the Christian message implied. Various forms of behavior that were accepted in Indian society were particularly problematic for the Brethren, most specifically marital infidelity and polygamy. Zinzendorf gave explicit instructions in this regard, although their applicability did not always prove to be great. In an effort not to confuse culturally acquired ways of living with the essentials of the Christian faith, he instructed the missionaries "not to measure souls according to the Herrnhut yardstick" (Herrnhuter Elle), that is, not to assess the converts' lives according to social and cultural forms customary in Europe. Tattoes were to be forbidden because they were related to paganism, and infidelity towards one's spouse was taught to be a sin, but indigenous ways of dressing were tolerated. On the question of polygamy, Zinzendorf took a rather ambiguous stand. Since he could not find an explicit interdiction against it in the Bible, he argued that it was not necessary for polygamous heathen to give up their wives when they were to be baptized. The custom had to be discouraged, however, and unwed converts could only have one wife.¹

Zinzendorf's theory of the Herrnhut yardstick has been interpreted as a sign of open mindedness, of respect for

¹ Schattschneider, Souls for the Lamb, 116-117; Müller, 200 Jahre, 308.
indigenous culture. A less romantic interpretation seems more likely. On Saint Thomas, the first mission experience of the Moravians, the systematic application of European cultural patterns had sometimes resulted in a negative reaction from the heathen slaves.\(^1\) Realizing the importance of marriage customs, Zinzendorf might have opted for a less strict position. When the actual organization of Christian Shecomeco is considered, moreover, it is obvious that in most respects it was modelled on Herrnhut.

\(^1\) Müller, *200 Jahre*, 301-302.
C. The Organization of Christian Shecomeco.

Shortly after the baptism of the first Indians in 1742, Rauch asked the community at Herrnhut to send some other missionaries, "for the fire is burning now, and the savages (die Wilden) love us". Soon, he got the assistance of two unmarried Brethren and two married couples, and from then on, not only in Shecomeco, but also in the neighboring villages Waichquatnák, Potatic and Pachgatgok more and more Indians were willing to accept Christ.

With the new faith came a new way of living. Neither the rhythm of everyday life, nor the visual material organization of the community bore much resemblance to the Indians' ancestral lifestyle. Although Zinzendorf told the missionaries "not externally to rule over the heathen in the slightest but to put yourself in a respected position among them with your spiritual power; according to the external, however, to lower yourselves as much as possible"², nevertheless the Brethren were clearly in charge of the village.

In its material appearance, Shecomeco changed. It had a church and a school building; a little out of the town, Indians from a neighboring village had built a winter house,

1 Müller, 200 Jahre, 212.
2 Quoted in Schattschneider, Souls for the Lamb, 110.
so that they could be closer to the Brethren. Ideally, a Moravian missionary settlement was laid out in uniform lots, with the church, the school, and the Brethren's houses placed in the center. The Christian Indians were taught to construct their houses of squared logs, with windows, chimneys and shingled roofs. The fields around the village were tilled in European fashion, and the agriculture the Indians already practiced was systematized and expanded. Converts were buried in a separate cemetery.

All material signs that reminded the Indians of paganism were removed; body paint, tattoos and elaborate hairdress were forbidden. The missionaries visited "their" Indians' houses, talked extensively with them both personally and during the Heidenconferenzen, gave spiritual advice, mediated in familial disputes and imposed discipline upon their flock. On several occasions, an individual was admonished privately or publicly, and now and then it happened that someone was expelled from the community. Only upon visible repentance, one could be

1 Hamilton, "Cultural Contributions", 8. Since Shecomeco was already an existing village before the missionaries arrived and since it was so short-lived, it was never laid out this way.

2 It is remarkable that in the sources we read, there is not a single mention of Indian religion. Other researchers at the Moravian Archives told me they virtually never came across it, either. Loskiel, Heckewelder and Zeisberger devote a lot of attention to it, however, in their respective "Histories".

3 This meant an exclusion from the community's religious ceremonies, not a social exclusion.
accepted again. Parents of schoolchildren had to agree to support any disciplinary measures the teacher saw fit, a stipulation that was made so explicitly that it suggests they did not always conform to it.\(^1\)

To ensure that this organization and discipline was maintained, the Brethren drew up statutes: "Several statutes were also adopted, to be observed by all who desire to live in our settlement. The object of these rules is that Christ should be honored in this community, and that those who are not yet willing to come to Him, should at least behave like human beings. We did not want to have any beasts among us."\(^2\)

In contrast to what Stoeffler writes, the Moravians apparently did share their contemporaries' ideas that the world would be made a better place by imposing Western culture upon the "heathen".\(^3\) An ideal settlement had to be ordentlich, a term that not only means "orderliness", but that also implies Christianization and civilization.

The rhythm of everyday life was determined by numerous religious activities.\(^4\) The congregation met twice a day, early in the morning and in the evening after work, to sing

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\(^1\) Conference Minutes, Nov. 21, 1742.

\(^2\) Hagen, *Old Landmarks*, 200.

\(^3\) *German Pietism*, 159.

\(^4\) Spangenberg, *Von der Arbeit*, 120-122 gives a detailed description of each of them.
and pray, and to hear one of the Brethren preach about the scriptural text that was chosen for that day. Apart from those, there were the so-called "love feasts" (Agapan) for the whole community or for smaller groups of people during which they ate, sang and prayed together. Every fourth Sunday a "prayer day" (Bettag) was held, on which everybody was advised to be present. On these occasions, sermons were held, baptisms administered, and "all the community's concerns recommended to the Lord".¹

The degree of participation in these activities was determined by the spiritual progress one had made. Spangenberg distinguished six different groups of people who in some way or the other belonged to the Christian congregation. There were the ones who were unbaptized but nevertheless came to some of the meetings and listened to the Brethren's sermons; the candidates for baptism; the baptized; the baptized who had relapsed into paganism; the candidates for communion; and the communicants. Each of those groups had their own meetings, and were to be approached by the missionaries in a different way.²

As the above suggests, the sacraments were the cornerstones of the community and the missionaries were instructed not to be too fast in administering them,

¹ "Alles Anliegen der Gemeine dem Herrn in der Litanei zu Füssen gelegt", Spangenberg, Von der Arbeit, 123.
² Von der Arbeit, 122-123.
especially baptism. Zinzendorf considered it to be "a great maxim, to be as sparing with baptism as possible"\(^1\): only if it was very clear that the Holy Spirit was working in someone's heart, could he be accepted within the church. On the other hand, once someone had come to love Christ, and realized his own depravity and the possibility of salvation through Christ, there was nothing else to be observed before he could be baptized. Other denominations often had higher requirements, such as the ability to read and write and a detailed knowledge of the Bible. And indeed, when reading the minutes of the Heidenconferenzen at Shecomeco, one gets the impression that Rauch and the other missionaries were quite relaxed about administering this sacrament. It had to be asked for one week in advance, during which time the Brethren and Sisters talked with the Indians and gave them spiritual help. In the conference minutes of August 8, 1742, five baptismal candidates spoke out in a way that illustrates the Brethren's approach: "Isaac's wife said that for a short time she had been thinking about baptism: and she had felt it (und sie hat es gefühlt). Abraham's wife said she needs nothing except for the Savior, and she desires nothing but him; and she, poor sinner, was very happy; Kaupasch had been thinking about baptism for about a week;..." Shortly after, they were all christened. Each of them received a new name, as the symbol

\(^1\)Quoted in translation in Schatttschneider, Souls for the Lamb, 81.
of his or her new life in Christ. Newborn children were baptized only if their parents were Christians.¹

A Moravian mission could also be divided along lines other than sacramental. During the first few decades, Moravians lived not with members of their own families but in "choirs" composed of people of the same age, gender and marital status, even though they did not discourage marriage. This form of social organization was inspired by the idea that it would be economically beneficial; even more important was the conviction that it would make it possible to focus on their religious mission in an almost monastic fashion.² Evidently, a system such as this one required a considerable number of converts and a high degree of control by the missionaries over the Indians' lives. Shecomeco was too short-lived to see the development of this kind of organization. In general, missions that were patterned along the choir system were quite exceptional and even in the "white" settlements in Germany and North America, the system was gradually abolished from 1765 on.

The previous remarks should not leave the impression that

¹ On Moravian regulations for baptism, see Spangenberg, Von der Arbeit, 110-112.

² On Moravian social organization, see Erbe, Bethlehem; Smaby, The Transformation; and most importantly Gollin, Moravians in two Worlds.
the Indians were totally passive subjects. To a great degree, they participated in the material and spiritual life of the community. The Brethren realized that they needed native "helpers" to gain acceptance for themselves and their message, as well as for very practical matters such as translations or material help. It may be mentioned here that to a great extent they also valued the work of the missionaries' wives. Only Sisters preached to or talked with Indian women, and they taught the little Indian girls in school, while the Brethren taught the boys. Just as women could best be approached by other women, it was believed that Indians would be most responsive to the Christian message if it was brought to them by converts from their own people. 1

Before they were even baptized, the First Fruits of Shecomeco were heard preaching to a group of Delaware Indians. 2 On August 10, 1742, these converts were given specific functions. Johannes became the official translator (prediger or lehrer); Abraham an elder; Jacob was responsible for maintaining discipline during meetings (Ermahner); and Isaac became Diener, who welcomed any guests and took care of them. The sources regularly mention Indians giving a love feast for their friends, preaching (instead of the

1 Spangenberg, Von der Arbeit, 115-119, on Indian converts and Moravian Sisters as "helpers" in the mission.

2 Masterdiary, Febr. 1742; Loskiel, History, II, 21, mentions that they preached after they were baptized, not before.
missionaries), or conducting significant parts of a religious ceremony.

Repeatedly, the Indians themselves testified that they were happy with their new way of living. On several occasions, they compared themselves to the Indians of the nearby mission of Westenhuc, where "the missionary only talks to the Indians on Sundays, but takes no further care of them", "and does not talk about the Blood and Wounds of Jesus".¹

¹ Masterdiary, Dec. 23, 1743; other mentions ibid., July 7, 1743; Aug. 21, 1743. The minister was John van Geldern and repeatedly tried to win the "Moravian" Indians for his own mission. His denominational affiliation is unclear; in the "Diary of the first Moravian missionaries", Hagen, Old Landmarks, 200, it is mentioned: "Their minister [of the Indians in Westenhuc] is a dissenter".
By 1745 the Moravians had fully established missions in Greenland, Africa, Asia and North America. The size and the organization of these communities were very different from the small scale approach Zinzendorf had envisioned with his First Fruits concept. In an attempt to keep the reality in accord with the theory, the church officially abolished this idea in 1764, shortly after the Count's death.\footnote{Schattschneider, \textit{Souls for the Lamb}, 90.}

The future of the mission on the American continent would be an extremely troubled one. Already in 1743, the Brethren in Shecomeco started having problems with the government of New York, which ultimately resulted in the removal of the Christian community there in 1746. A number of white settlers were very hostile towards the Moravians because they interfered with their claims on the Indians' lands and because it was much more difficult to cheat the more disciplined Christian Indians. The Moravians' rather vague, ill-defined denominational profile made them even more suspect, as did their outspoken pacifist position. The immediate cause for their expulsion from Shecomeco was the Brethren's refusal to swear an oath of allegiance to the English king, something that gave fuel to suspicions that they were pro-French.
The community from Shecomeco went to Bethlehem for a while, and then started anew in Gnadenhütten (Tents of Grace), where Christian Indians from various other tribes also found shelter. During the Seven Years War this settlement was laid in ashes, and after protracted trials it located at Friedenshütten, or Wyalusing, on the Susquehanna in 1765. From there, they spread to Goschgoschünk on the Allegheny River and to Languntoutenünk on the Beaver River. In 1772, they migrated to the Tuscarawas Valley in eastern Ohio, only to be uprooted again by war in 1781. A long and tragic period followed, during which the Moravian Indians were driven from one place of temporary refuge to another. Finally, in 1792, they found a new home in Fairfield, Ontario, Canada. Five years later, despite the somber memories of the massacre of ninety-six of their people at Gnadenhütten in 1782, some of the refugees returned to their homes in the Tuscarawas Valley. In the nineteenth century stations were also established in Indiana, Kansas and Nebraska.  

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CONCLUSION

Between June 1772 and October 1773, the Reverend David McClure made a trip from New Hampshire to the Delaware Indian towns on the Muskingum River in northeastern Ohio in a failed attempt to make converts. On September 7, 1772, he and his company reached Kuskuskies, a neat Moravian village with houses along a single street and a log church. He was very impressed with the Moravians and concluded that they had adopted "the best mode of Christianizing the Indians. They go among them without noise or parade, and by their friendly behavior conciliate their good will. They join them in the chase, and freely distribute to the helpless and gradually instill into the minds of individuals, the principles of religion. They then invite those who are disposed to hearken to them, to retire to some convenient place, at a distance from the wild Indians, and assist them to build a village, and teach them to plant and sow, and to carry on some coarse manufactures."¹

Reverend McClure observed the Moravian mission very well. The Brethren were forced to work on a very small scale by want of support from an established church. This made them very vulnerable to attacks both from political authorities and from individual white settlers. They compensated for this, however, with an extraordinary charisma, stressing example

¹ Quoted in Axtell, Invasion within, 265.
over structure, persuasion over competition, love over duty.¹

Like their European contemporaries, they were persuaded of the fundamental superiority of Western culture, but in contrast to many other Protestant missionaries, they did not impose "civilization" upon the American Indians "from above". In a way that was similar to the approach of the Jesuits in French Canada, the Brethren lived the natives' way of life, and they attempted to make converts only by example, not by force.

What the Reverend McClure might not have realized is that the Brethren's missionary ideal was more than just "christianizing the Indians" by "going among them". Their ultimate goal was the establishment of an autonomous indigenous church, one that would no longer need the help of white Christians and that would "in all respects resemble an Apostolical Church".² If one recalls the pietist aspirations for a pure faith, unburdened by structures and dogma, and Zinzendorf's hope and intention of realizing this through the Unitas Fratrum, it is apparent that this same ideal lay at the basis of the Brethren's missionary work. It had become clear to them that it would not be possible to undo the denominational differences and disputes in Europe, but the New World still held unbound promises. The Indian church would be

¹ We borrowed this phrase from Axtell, Invasion within, 179.

² Out of an anonymous and undated letter from Shecomeco; in Hagen, Old Landmarks, 209.
as unblemished as that of the early Christians, while it had to endure the same persecution. Only an autonomous indigenous church could realize the Moravians' Christian ideal, and only when it was realized would the world be ready for the return of Christ, the real missionary, and for his final work of conversion.

As this case study of Shecomeco has shown, the Brethren's approach was entirely based on this objective. Voluntary conversions were the cornerstone of their work, they paid particular attention to the spiritual growth of each individual and they gave the converts an active role in the spiritual and material life of the mission. The Brethren's ideals were incompatible with that of the white settlers around them, however, and finally resulted in their removal. On a continent where native culture was overrun by ambitions of power and wealth, there was no place for an autonomous Indian church, and there never would be.
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APPENDIX: "Method for the Conversion of the Heathen"

In his letters and instructions to Moravian missionaries, Zinzendorf repeatedly set out "Methods" like this one. They vary according to the person and the place to which they were directed, in length, preciseness and content. The text we reproduce here is among the shorter and more organised ones. The German text can be found in N.L. von Zinzendorf, Texte zur Mission, 86; the translation was made by Schattschneider, Souls for the Lamb, 206-207.

1. Walk and prayer of the witnesses among themselves.
2. Singing and prayer in the presence of the savages.
3. The Lamb of God.
4. Who is He? Response: He was slain as a sacrifice for us.
5. Our general depravity.
6. Our redemption.
7. The Lamb of God was other than an ordinary man.
8. Prayer for the heathen.
9. Confession in prayer that he has created the world.
10. Explanations adapted to their comprehension.
11. Moderate and never unrequested conversation.
12. Dwell on the evil heart of man.
13. Spiritual and physical death.
14. The resurrection-call out of hell and out of the earth.
15. The heart's desire for Gospel truth and its unbelief.
16. Desire is changed into love.
17. Love is sustained by hope.
18. The sacraments.
19. Baptism in the name of the Father, etc.
20. Explanation, if called for.
21. The Son has created, redeemed, and sanctified all. That at the name of Jesus, etc.
22. Looking for the revelation of the Trinity to the heart and mind by the Holy Spirit.
23. Prayer to Jesus as the Lamb, our Lord, everlasting God, everlasting Father, etc.
24. The Trinity spoken of as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit.
25. The Divine Person, through whom one relates to the rest of the Trinity, on whom all things depend and to whom all things tend and who is always in the world, is Jesus, the Lamb, the Savior.
VITA

Sigrid Kaesemans was born in Geel, Belgium, on May 26, 1968. Her parents are Frans Kaesemans and Maria Caers. She received the degree of "Licentiaat" in History from the University of Louvain (KUL), Leuven, Belgium, with Magna cum Laude. (September 1990)

She was a teaching assistant at Lehigh University from Fall 1990 to Spring 1992.

She is a member of Phi Beta Delta, Beta Pi chapter.
END OF TITLE