

Pilgrim Community

Moravian Missions Around the World in the 18'th Century

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(Excerpts from *Behold the Lamb* Chapters 11-17. See On-line bookshop for the complete work.)

Go

“Go and dance! Go, look at the girls! Go to the tavern, for once, and be normal!”

Five serious young men looked at the village Burgomaster and said nothing. What could they say? Deep in Roman Catholic Moravia in 1724, deeply convicted to follow Christ, they could not obey the man, even though he meant his advice well—and even though he was Johann Töltschig’s father (Johann being one of the five).

The boys saw nothing but conflict, more threats, and danger ahead. When Johann’s father forbade them under pain of severe punishment to meet again, they knew they had only one option. At ten o’clock the following evening David Nitschmann and Melchior Zeisberger—like the Töltschigs of German Waldensian background—joined Johann to flee. Hastily made plans worked. Once out of earshot they knelt to sing the old Unity hymn, “Blessed be the day when I must roam, far from my country, friends, and home,” and struck out for Leszno in Poland.

On the way to Poland they stopped to see the Moravian refugees at Herrnhut, in Germany. The sight that met their eyes disappointed them. The grain looked poor. Large families lived in makeshift houses. But when a group gathered to lay the cornerstone for a school and orphanage (they happened to arrive at Herrnhut on May 12, 1724), their disillusionment turned into amazement and joy.

Brother Ludwig prayed at the laying of the cornerstone. “Dear Lord, if what we are doing is at all useful to you, bless it. But if this is nothing but the product of our own schemes and actions, destroy it at once. Do not let us go on with anything but what you have in mind.”

Inspired with such humility before Christ, and such a surrender of plans and wills, the three young men decided to travel no further. They stayed at Herrnhut and after the awakening of 1727, Johann was one of the first to hear the call of Christ to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

With Wenzel Neisser and David Nitschman, Johann set out for England in 1728. Carrying little with them but a burning desire to preach Christ, and to share with others the blessings they had received, the young men ran out of money in the Netherlands and one of them nearly got sold as a bond servant to the East Indies. But Christ came to their rescue. Money appeared, and at the home of a Dutch merchant in London they met two seekers, John and Charles Wesley.

No Choice But To Go

While Johann Töltzschig visited seekers in England and Ireland, and other believers travelled through Poland to Latvia and Russia, to Denmark, Switzerland, and beyond, all of Herrnhut prepared itself for the road. German authorities had turned hostile. Disturbed by Herrnhut's rapid growth, they exiled Brother Ludwig in 1736 and took measures against the refugees around him.

Far to the west, in the valley of the Wetter River—the “Wetterau” between Frankfurt am Main and the Taunus highlands—an indebted nobleman, the Count of Ysenburg-Wächtersbach came to their aid. His fields destroyed by a long history of war and neglect, lay in weeds. His castle, the Ronneburg, stood in disrepair. No matter what the Moravians believed, the count welcomed them onto his estate with an eye on their willingness to work and technical skills.

The first refugees from Herrnhut entered the old Ronneburg with sinking hearts. Animals had slept in the place. No door or window closed properly. No stairs were safe to use. Rats scampered off into dark cobwebby corners, and a strange collection of tramps, drunkards and gypsies slept among garbage on the grounds. But the love of Christ soon transformed the cheerless place. Working with their children and visitors from far and near, the Moravians cleaned and repaired the castle and planted the fields around it. They began a free school for the children of the area and gave their ragged neighbours clothes. The Lord blessed their work and as fast as pilgrims went out to preach Christ, new seekers came to join the community.

Not long after their arrival in the Wetterau, the Count of Ysenburg-Meerholz let the believers move into the much homier and better cared for castle of Marienborn, nearby. But the movement grew so fast that all buildings on the grounds filled up and by 1738 the third heir of the Ysenburg family, the Count of Ysenburg-Büdingen, gave them land on which to build a new community however they desired.

Widening Horizons

Working with boundless zeal and joy, the brothers and sisters built the choir houses, the Saal, and the circle of barns and outbuildings that became the new community of Herrnhag (the Lord's refuge). Contacts with seekers in Poland, Hungary, the Baltic states, and throughout Germany and Scandinavia brought a stream of new residents until several thousand lived under careful management there. Its fields and workshops, tended to by many willing hands, prospered. Within a few years the brothers could loan money

to their landlord counts, and more became available all the time to send Pilgrims out with the Word.

Peter Böhler, a young German believer sailed to England the year of Herrnhag's founding. No sooner could he communicate in English than he found himself speaking to crowds of one to four thousand people, sometimes as many as twenty times a week. In spite of the persecution of wealthy and powerful people, the brothers founded new communities they named Grace Hill (*Gnadenberg*) and Lamb's Hill (*Lammsberg*, renamed Fulneck) in Yorkshire, and Ockbrook in Derby. Johann Töltzschig moved on to Ireland and many seekers found Christ and one another there.

Protestant leaders resented the Moravians' arrival in England. They distrusted their communal order, their refusal to bear arms, and above all their "blood fanaticism." Under growing pressure the English government passed a law forcing all young men attending Moravian meetings into military service, while at Swindon in Wiltshire an angry crowd drenched the English convert, John Cennick, with water from a fire engine. At Stratton they sprayed him with blood saved up from the butcher, and angry cries of, "Lamb, Lamb," followed Moravian Pilgrims wherever they went. But by 1749, King George II granted them the privilege (like the Quakers) not to swear oaths or bear arms.

For several years a Moravian community—Pilgeruh, the "Pilgrims' Rest"—existed in the north German province of Schleswig. Some from Herrnhut settled in the Hanseatic city of Reval (now Tallin, Estonia), and in the Netherlands on the estate of Heerendyk in the barony of Ysselstein. After a number of years they moved from there into an old castle at Zeist. Wherever they travelled, or wherever they found lodging for a time, they kept their transience clearly in mind. Brothers and sisters, especially those of the Pilgergemeine, moved continually further until twenty-five years after Johann Töltzschig left for England they had reached more than a million people around the world with the Gospel—in forty-three languages. Even then, a hymn-writer at Herrnhut wrote:

Unknown land, barren wilderness! God's hand will yet be praised in you! So many dark places where the torches of faith have long burned out . . . Unknown land, infinite is the seed that shall yet come out of you! In you the pious shall be seen, a holy city. You who still sit in darkness, dirty with false teaching . . . Infinite shall be the seed of God's grace in you!

Wonderful light! Light you have never heard of in your unconverted state, shall break in upon you like shining rays of the sun. Dark swamps of disease it shall penetrate, dancing in joyfully, opening your face for the first time. Oh wonderful light! . . . The long hidden secret of God's promise to Abraham is about to be revealed as many become his seed. The world with all its heathen is about to be filled with the glory of God's grace.¹

Into All The World

¹ *Gesangbuch*, 710

Having tasted the joy of leaving all things for Christ, no amount of opposition could stop the Moravians from going “out into all the world” in the 1730s. The Order of the Mustard Seed revived, and in preparation for service abroad, young believers began to study languages, medicine, geography, and the Bible, with zeal. A number of them took classes at the University of Jena, but with Brother Ludwig’s caution always in mind: “You must not be blinded by reason and order, as if people first had to learn to believe in God, and after that in Christ. That is wrong, because they already know God exists. They must be instructed about the Son for there is salvation in no other.”

During this time Ludwig von Zinzendorf and David Nitschman travelled to Copenhagen in Denmark. There, in the home of a Danish nobleman, they met Anton Ulrich, a black slave from the West Indian island of St. Thomas.

The brothers listened spellbound to Anton telling of slave transport to the New World, of their wretchedness on plantations there, and of how he used to sit on the shore of St. Thomas, longing to know God. “Should you cross the ocean,” Anton assured them, “you would find many slaves in the same condition. Perhaps you would even find my sister Anna and tell her about God like you have told me.”

After baptising Anton at Copenhagen, Ludwig—profoundly moved by his story—wanted David Nitschmann to set out at once for the West Indies. But things did not fall into place so quickly. Anton travelled back to Herrnhut with them instead, where he spoke to the whole congregation on July 21, 1731. In halting Danish, with gestures and stories that struck the believers to the heart, he described slavery. “But to speak to my people would be difficult,” he told them. “To reach them you would most likely have to become slaves yourselves.”

That night, after the meeting, Johann Leonhard Dober, a young potter who had come to Herrnhut from Silesia tossed and turned in bed. He shed many tears. The thought of innumerable black people, living and dying in bondage, without hope and without God in the world, kept him awake until morning. All day long he cried inwardly to Christ. Then he met on the Hutberg, the following evening, with other believers to pray, and discovered the same thing had happened to his friend, Tobias Leupold.

On their way back from the prayer meeting the young men passed Brother Ludwig’s house. Through the open window they heard him saying to a guest, “You know, among our young people the Lord has messengers to St. Thomas, Greenland, Lapland, and who knows what other countries!”

Filled with joy on hearing this, both Leonhard and Tobias hurried home to write letters telling the congregation of their willingness to go to the West Indies. In Leonhard’s words:

I can tell you that my intention has never been just to travel abroad for a while. What I desire is to dedicate myself more firmly to our Saviour. Ever since the Count [Brother Ludwig] has returned from Denmark and spoken of the condition of the

slaves, I have not been able to forget them. So I decided that if another brother would like to accompany me, I would give myself over to slavery in order to tell them as much as I have learned about our Saviour. I am ready to do this because I firmly believe that the Word of the Cross is able to rescue souls even in degraded conditions. I also thought that even if I would not be of use to anyone in particular, I could test my obedience to our Saviour through this, but my main reason for going would be because there are still souls in the islands that cannot believe because they have not heard.

Martin Linner, leader of the young men's choir, did not like the idea of Leonhard leaving Herrnhut. He was a valuable youth, both for his working skills and his godly example among the rest. But after a year of waiting before the Lord the congregation allowed Leonhard to draw lots concerning his future. The slip of paper he pulled out said: "Let the boy go, the Lord is with him." Not Tobias Leupold, however, but David Nitschmann received the call to go with him.

Sent Off

After a farewell service (during which the congregation sang more than a hundred hymns by memory) and spending their last night at home in prayer, Leonhard and David left Herrnhut at three in the morning on August 21, 1732. Brother Ludwig accompanied them to the edge of the village. They knelt on the road and prayed together. Ludwig laid his hands on their heads and gave them a solemn charge: "Do everything in the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Then, with one ducat each, and a few extra clothes in a bag, they set off on foot for the other side of the world.

Whoever they met told the young men to turn around and go back. "What you want to do is unthinkable," Danish authorities told them when they reached Copenhagen in September. "You cannot become slaves. The only way for you to reach the New World is to join the army."

To preach the gospel to black slaves not only seemed bizarre to Danish Protestants (the country had turned Lutheran in the Reformation). It ran directly counter to their beliefs. Many of them still suspected God made white people and the devil those of other colours. To buy and sell blacks seemed logical to them. But to tell them of Christ and offer them eternal salvation—never! Even Anton, whom the brothers met in Copenhagen, changed his mind and begged them not to go.

The brothers said little and prayed much.

The Lord Christ opened the doors.

After all captains in port had flatly refused to take them to America, a Danish princess, Charlotte Amalie, learned of the young men's desire and took their side. She sent them money and a Dutch Bible. (Neither Leonhard nor David could read Dutch, but it was the language best known on St. Thomas.) With the money the men bought carpenter tools and a captain hired them to make a closet on his ship. Seeing their willingness and careful work, he recommended them to a friend and they found passage to the New World at last.

Accursed Paradise

With dread and excitement the young men first saw the palm-fringed shore of St. Thomas on December 13, 1732.

Recently purchased from France, together with St. Croix and St. John, this most prosperous island of the West Indies already supplied all of Denmark with sugar and tobacco. Dutch Reformed families, owners of its 150 plantations, lived in airy palaces surrounded by mud and cane thatched huts of black slaves whom they firmly believed “predestined to perdition.” Every month, new shiploads of naked wretches from Africa—cannons trained on hatches where they lay in darkness below deck in their own filth—arrived at St. Thomas’s harbour. Those who turned deathly sick en route their dealers tossed overboard, to save on water. Those who survived, they led, skin and bones, eyes glazed with terror, onto the wharves of St. Thomas, to place at the mercy of “Christian” landlords who promptly broke them in to work.

Under the vigilant eye of Dominie Jan Borm, Reformed pastor of the island, strict Calvinist rule kept all in their places—slaves subject to masters, and masters subject to God and the church as they understood it. Blacks enjoyed few liberties and no luxuries. Living without furniture on dirt floors, dressed (if at all) in loincloths, they ate with their hands and slept on the ground. Small pox, lockjaw, and leprosy killed many.

Outnumbered six to one by their black slaves, white Christians lived in perpetual fear of revolt. St. Thomas law required the cutting off of slave’s hands lifted against their masters. First time run-aways had one foot cut off. Subsequent attempts resulted in cutting off the second foot, then one leg after the other. Floggings occurred every week—five hundred lashes (permitted by law) being equal to the death sentence. Masters cured the wounds of minor floggings by having them washed with salt and Spanish pepper.

St. Thomas law required the prompt execution of slaves planning revolt—masters to be paid by the government for every slave decapitated or hanged. The same Protestant law fined people fifty pounds of tobacco for working on the Lord’s Day (Sunday), and obligated all whites to attend church.

Order, greed, and terror in the name of God—the two brothers from Herrnhut felt it enveloping them at once, and wondered what place they would find in it.

First Fruits

A Dutch planter, Lorenzen, hired Leonhard and David to finish a new house he had built and gave them a place to sleep. Then, on first opportunity they set out with a letter from Anton to look for his brother and sister.

In a plantation on the south side of the island the young men found them. Not only was Anna amazed to hear from her brother in Europe. She listened open-mouthed to Leonhard’s kind words of the Saviour. She called more of her family and friends together and even though they could barely understand his mixture of German and Dutch (the

slaves spoke a Dutch creole) they heard Christ's promise of good news for the poor and broke out in excited clapping of hands.

Leonhard and David spoke slowly. They used the simplest words they knew to tell the slaves about Christ, the Son of God, and his blood and wounds. Their message—with the Spirit's direction—fell on open hearts. Anna, her husband Gerd, and Anton's brother Abraham gave their lives in childlike trust to the Lamb. "If I could have the whole world," Anna told the brothers soon afterward, "and if that kept me away from the Saviour I would not even bother considering it."

On another occasion, when Leonhard asked her how things went, she said: "Quite well, thank God! For although the day's work did not give me time to say my prayers, my heart has never stopped calling the Saviour. I thank God for mercifully allowing me to be with him while in the company of others."

Opposition

Life on St. Thomas gave Leonhard and David no time to exult in their first victories on the island. Many slaves, after their curiosity wore off, made fun of them and opposed their message. "Why should we do what is right, while you white people do otherwise?" they asked. Nearly all black people stole, lied and got drunk, and as one of the brothers reported, "Chastity is a virtue of which they are completely unaware."

When Anna refused to celebrate a pagan festival, Gerd became angry with her. Suspicion and disunity arose between them and Abraham. Gerd got drunk and earned a flogging from the governor. David left for Europe on April 17'th and Leonhard turned deathly sick. On July 11'th a hurricane struck St. Thomas, then the island (that has no ground water or wells) turned totally dry. Many slaves began to die of hunger and thirst.

Leonhard, skilled in making pottery since his childhood, set up a kiln and tried to make pots and jugs. But the clay did not fire well. Even his kiln collapsed and on most days he was too sick to stand, let alone work.

Both white and black people on the island made fun of Leonhard's projects. Then, in November, a slave revolt on the island of St. John brought panic and disorder to St. Thomas. White authorities reacted with yet more cruel tortures and executions of slaves. But from here and there, souls in need found their way to Leonhard's hammock where he lay with a burning fever and listened to his words of instruction.

Once he had partially recovered, the governor of St. Thomas hired Leonhard to do his bookwork. But he soon saw that this put him out of touch with the island's black population. So he resigned, and even though forced through poverty to live on bread and water, he returned to doing odd jobs and carpentry. Adriaan Beverhout, the owner of a small cotton plantation gave him work, and another slave, Heinrich, found Christ.

Greater Plans

While Leonhard and his small circle of friends overcame one obstacle after another in St. Thomas, the entire community at Herrnhut, harrassed by the German government, discussed the possibility of moving to the West Indies. A Danish landowner invited them to settle on the abandoned island of St. Croix, so after much prayer and careful preparation, the Wenzel and David Weber and Timotheus Fiedler families left for the New World in 1733. With them travelled Tobias Leupold, David Nitschmann, Matthäus Schindler, Matthäus Miksch (a school teacher), Kaspar Oelsner and Martin Schenk who left their wives in Germany for the time being, and the single brothers, George Weber, Johann Böhm, Matthäus Kremser, and Christian Neisser.

The group, largely formed of refugees from the old Unity settlements in Moravia, included a mason, a carpenter, a wheel maker, a tailor, and several farmers. Travelling though Stettin (Szczecin) in Pomerania, where they helped to build an orphanage while waiting on a ship, they sailed on the *Einigkeit* from Copenhagen on November 12, 1733.

Cramped into a compartment below deck, too low in which to stand, five yards long and five and a half yards wide, the entire group from Herrnhut faced their first trials together. No sooner did the *Einigkeit* enter the North Sea than a storm drove them up against the coast of Norway. For several days and nights the ship skirted disaster until it anchored safely in a fjord near Tremmesund. There they set up camp in caves along the shore until spring came. Suffering extreme cold the women spun and the men carved wooden utensils until, several unsuccessful attempts behind them, they returned to sea on March 11, 1734.

Five days later, Wenzel Weber's wife, Elisabeth, gave birth to a baby they called Anna. Another storm, more terrible than the first rose from the sea and the little ship pitched so dangerously that water barrels below deck burst from their lashings and rolled from side to side, threatening to crush the passengers. Only after 21 days did the stars come out again. Then they entered the tropics. The wind stopped. The believers' windowless compartment (in which a lamp had to burn all day) grew "hot as a Russian bath house," water became scarce, only salted meat remained, and two of the brothers, Matthäus Schindler and Kaspar Oelsner had scurvy. Crew members began to die, and in their sick and crowded state, the travellers' patience one with another grew thin.

On June 11, 1734, the *Einigkeit* arrived at St. Thomas. Tobias Leupold, with two others, set out at once to find Leonhard Dober on the Beverhout plantation. The only detraction from their joy at meeting one another was the news that the believers in Herrnhut had chosen Leonhard to lead the young brothers' choir and he had to return to Europe.

A month after their arrival at St. Thomas Johann Böhms died, followed by Timotheus Fiedler's wife and David Weber.

St. Croix

Deeply grieved by the misery of the slaves, the brothers and sisters from Herrnhut decided to buy as many as they could and treat them like equals—hopefully leading them to Christ and training them for work as messengers to their own people. With this in mind

they bought twelve adult slaves to accompany those who would settle in St. Croix, and a seven-year-old Loango boy to send back to Europe with Leonhard Dober.

On the short trip to St. Croix, little Anna Weber died and they buried her on arrival. For thirty-eight years the island had lain uninhabited. Pigs and cattle, long turned wild, foraged among abandoned farms of the former French colony. Thorny scrub had grown up “so thick one could barely find a place to sit down.” But with a great desire to build an outpost for truth the brothers set up camp and the sisters began to work over open fires, cooking food and washing clothes.

With the help of the twelve Africans the believers on St. Croix cut back the brush to plant the seeds they had brought from Europe—lettuce, parsley, and cabbages—with West Indian cassava and yams. But the heat and bugs overwhelmed them. Rain water, carefully collected, did not reach, and when they drank from brackish streams they turned sick. By the time the rainy season began, their first two-room house, with walls of reeds, still had no roof.

Christian Neisser died on September 4, followed within a month by David Weber’s widow, then Matthäus Kremser, Elisabeth Weber and Matthäus Miksch within two weeks time. By January, 1735, when Tobias Leupold died, only seven survived, too sick to care what happened to them.

New Courage and Hope

In the meantime, back at Herrnhut, the “awakening to the blood” inspired new volunteers, Kaspar Güttner, Martin Barthol, Matthäus Freundlich, and a doctor, Gottlieb Kretschner, to join the believers in the West Indies. They left Europe in the spring with Anna Nitschmann, Elizabeth Oelsner, Maria Francke, and Judith Leopold (wives of men who had gone before), three of whom were already widows and did not know it. Completing the group were Johann Gold with his wife, and the widow Anna Berger.

The new group landed on St. Croix at the end of May. Words could not describe the shock they felt on meeting the survivors. But wasting no time in lamentation, they tended to the sick and with great love pointed all to Christ, his blood and wounds. Lack of water and all hardship notwithstanding, such joy in the Spirit broke out among them that first eight, then all twelve of the Africans from St. Thomas humbled themselves and “allowed the Lamb to wash them in his blood.”

A month after their joyful arrival all the newcomers lay sick. Anna Nitschmann died first, followed by Kaspar Güttner, Elisabeth Oelsner and Martin Barthol. The doctor, Gottlieb Kretschner died in September, Martin Francke and Anna Berger in October. Old David Nitschmann, Martin Schenck’s widow, and George Weber found passage back to Europe. So did Judith, Tobias Leupold’s young widow, and Martin Francke’s widow. But their ship, presumably taken by pirates or lost in a storm was never heard from again. Even worse, Timotheus Fiedler who stayed on St. Thomas, lost his faith and became a plantation administrator. That left only Matthäus Freundlich, the shoemaker, and in December he also moved back to the island of St. Thomas.

An Open Door

On March 13, 1736, Friedrich Martin, a young tailor who had come to Herrnhut from Silesia, landed on St. Thomas with Johann Andreas Bönike. Once again their meeting with Matthäus Freundlich brought more tears than words. But within days of their arrival, the newcomers had come to know many slaves and determined to meet every last one on the island.

On his way to a meeting he had planned on a Lord's day before the end of March, Friedrich Martin met a boy on the road. "Would you like to know your Saviour, the Lamb of God that took on himself the sins of the whole world?" Friedrich asked him. The boy looked startled. But in sudden miraculous understanding he said clearly in Dutch creole: "With great pleasure," and handed Friedrich two live chickens. It was all he owned.

Others began to come, some walking long distances, to attend meetings for worship and instruction. Then, on September 10, 1736, Brother Josef came. He found the brothers, surrounded by eager disciples, holding an evening prayer meeting under a cane roof.

Brother Josef sensed Christ's presence at once, and further meetings, held on the Carsten plantation at Mosquito Bay, drew hundreds of seekers. The boy who had given the chickens became the first to receive baptism. He took the Christian name of Andreas. With him Brother Josef baptised two other young men, Petrus and Nathanael, and a great company took part in a love feast following.

But Brother Josef, for as deeply as he became attached to the new believers on St. Thomas, could not stand the climate. When the time came for him to leave, he lay sick unto death. The brothers helped him onto a ship for the island of St. Christopher. Stopping in at St. Eustatius, he saw a ship for New York and in his distress, made a transfer the Lord seemed to have arranged.

The captain who took Brother Josef aboard had lived as a child in an Anglican home on Staaten Island. His mother had taught him about God and prayed with him every night. But she died when he was twelve and in his despair he ran off to sea. There, for eight years he led a wicked life. Three times pirates caught him. One time he swam from a captured ship to safety in another. When he finally returned home he found his father had died too and he left for the sea again.

Now, when Brother Josef spoke to him about his soul, he repented with many tears and found Christ.

New Believers, New Trials

After Brother Josef left St. Thomas the awakening among the slaves kept on spreading. It spread much faster than anyone expected, and certainly faster than any white people on the island liked.

White Protestant "Christians" who owned the slaves felt convicted. Many of them (their governors and preachers included) lived in shameless debauchery. "How can you black

devils live up the Gospel,” they asked, “when even we white people, to whom it was given, cannot do it?” Other masters, proud of their Christianity and of the fair treatment they gave their slaves (for whom they assumed the role of protective “father figures”) felt encroached upon by Friedrich and Matthäus’s work. “Our slaves are happy,” they insisted. “They have it much better with us than they did in Africa. So why come and stir up discontent?”

Some masters flogged their slaves for attending Moravian meetings. Nearly all took their books away if they caught them learning to read—one master making it a practice to set the books on fire and swat them in his slaves’ faces. “That,” he said, “is how my *Neger* will learn to read.”

Black sisters, no longer allowing themselves to be violated at will by their masters, suffered particular trials. Some, stripped of their clothes, suffered merciless floggings. One, locked into a dungeon had hot sealing wax dripped onto her head until her body was scorched. “But if we have suffered in the past for being bad,” one sister asked, “why should we be unwilling now to suffer for doing good.”

When an elderly believer turned sick his master denied him water. His wife tried to bring him some but he struck her across the head with the broadside of his sword, and when the brother died he did not allow anyone to bury him, but let him rot away in his hut.

Mobs of drunken white men regularly broke up meetings (like in the story in Chapter One). They beat Friedrich Martin severely. But no believers suffered more than those deliberately sold to other West Indian islands to separate them from Christian fellowship. Concerning these trials, Christian Georg Oldendorp, a brother from Herrnhut who lived on St. Thomas fifty years later, wrote:

Their longing for Jesus Christ and his mercy was strongest when they had to suffer and bear great distress on account of him. When their masters forbade them to attend meetings in which the brothers were to teach them the gospel, they did not fail to visit the brothers in private. They also made up for lost instruction by getting together in small groups on their own plantations to strengthen one another. Hidden in the scrub forest, many found safe places where they could gather to pray and open their hearts one to another. There they learned what Jesus meant when he said that where two or three come together in his name, he will be among them. Black brothers and sisters have assured me that during those hard times they felt such love for the Saviour and enjoyed such grace in their hearts that they gladly suffered any imaginable tortures for his sake.

Grace and Growth

Not only white people harassed the new believers on St. Thomas. Hostile fellow slaves burned Petrus’ house, with his precious New Testament. A black woman with a knife attacked a sister on her way home from meeting and those steeped in witchcraft tried to cast spells.

While trying to keep everyone encouraged and looking the right direction, Friedrich Martin found himself deteriorating rapidly. Always sick, plagued with thirst and dysentery, he became so weak he could no longer walk straight. His mind began to go blank for hours at a time and he found it increasingly difficult to remember what he did, where he had been, or where he went. Matthäus Freundlich felt sick too. Then, to make matters worse, Johann Andreas Bönike turned against them, lost the faith, and lightning struck him dead one night on the road to Mosquito Bay.

Walking skeletons themselves, Friedrich and Matthäus could think of nothing else to do but take in the abandoned children they found starving during the drought of 1737. They hired Rebecca, a free mulatto woman, to take care of them, and on May 4, of the following year, Matthäus, for the sake of decency, married her. Friedrich, who had been ordained a minister of the Unity of Brothers through a letter sent from London, England, performed the ceremony and they began their life together with nine adopted children. On the same day Friedrich married two black believers, Zacharius and Susanna.

After Friedrich's ordination he chose four sincere young men to be his helpers: Andreas (the boy with the chickens), Petrus, Johannes, and Christoph, all of whom had proven their loyalty to Christ and whom the believers loved and respected. A month later, Andreas and Johannes's white master sold them to a plantation on St. John. Pleas for consideration fell on deaf ears so weeping, but not in despair, they left in chains for their new place of bondage.

All setbacks notwithstanding, crowds of seekers that gathered in the evenings to learn of Christ grew ever larger. In their poverty the slaves worked hard to buy the candles needed by those who read the Scriptures. Out of unbleached linen they also managed to make decent clothing for those who would be baptised—the women in ample dresses with capes, and white head coverings tied with strings under their chins, the men in white shirts and trousers.

Every convert, after baptism, chose a "spiritual companion" with whom to meet at least once a week. Spiritual companions shared their joys and trials and encouraged one another. Beyond this, and in spite of difficulties because of their slavery, the believers formed choirs, took part in the hourly watch (day and night prayer vigils), and shared in material ways as much as possible.

Friedrich and Matthäus instructed the new believers in morality and how to live as Christian families—concepts unknown to them, both in Africa and the New World. Christian weddings, celebrated with beautiful hymns, prayers, and great joy, took place. The brothers followed them up with regular visits and advice on child training. But the planters ridiculed their efforts. "Marrying cattle," they called it, and insisted that black people have no family feelings like whites. They made it a point to separate Christian couples one from another, to find other mates for them, and to sell off their children.

The congregation on St. Thomas celebrated frequent love feasts and communion services, everyone bringing what little food they could—fish, crabs, or vegetables—to share one

with another. Before every communion the brothers held a question and answer period. They interviewed all participants privately and the better they came to know one another the more they marvelled at what Christ had done.

Not only did the congregation include both island blacks (creoles), and “salt heads” (slaves brought from Africa). It included people of many different tribes and customs. Only the first two baptisms on St. Thomas already brought members of the Mandinga, Mangree, Fante, Atja, Kassenti, Tjamba, Amina, Watje, and Loango tribes into the Gemeine. But subjected in love to Christ, they learned to make decisions together and function as one body. Christian Oldendorp wrote:

As soon as they returned from exhausting work in the fields, they gathered, falling on their knees, to pray and sing. There loved one another like members of one family to such a degree that whenever something happened to disturb the harmony of the group, they fell on their knees at once and asked the Saviour for pardon and grace. They also kept the practice of hourly intercession. . . . Even while working they took turns praying to God and asking for his intercession every hour of the day. Without clocks they kept to their hours at night by looking at the stars and by the crowing of the cocks. In this way, one slave awakened the one whose turn came next to pray.

In a letter to the brothers and sisters at Herrnhut, Petrus wrote:

God’s grace that I have received into my heart fills me with joy. I have left what is bad and learned to love Jesus Christ who died for us. Now we pray to the Lord in this place together: “Dear Lord, have mercy on us! Bless us and teach us how to know you so that no evil may remain among us. Help us to do what is right so that pride, covetousness, and immorality may no longer find place among us.

Challenges

Only by walking closely with Christ could the brothers of the new church on St. Thomas meet every situation that arose. Newly converted slaves lived among constant temptations to drink cane liquor, to commit immoral acts, or take part in African religious rites. Many of them had several “wives” and children from all. But they promised, on entering the brotherhood, not to take more. And if they wished to separate from all wives but one, the brotherhood encouraged them. Marriage partners separating for other reasons lost their place in the congregation.

From the beginning, the brothers made the seriousness of taking part in communion clear. When they found calabashes decorated with ribbons, bird feathers, and sea shells (magic tokens) in an old sister’s house, they suspended her membership and admonished her to repent. Those found stealing one from another, or from their masters, also lost their membership, as did any who took part in acts of rebellion. A few, like Nathanael, one of the first baptised who turned apostate, had to be requested not to attend services anymore for the disturbances they caused.

The goal of the brothers in St. Thomas was to overcome the evil of slavery by good, not by force. But this required much patience. Christian Oldendorp wrote:

No matter how much joy the progress of the black congregation gave the brothers, the backsliding and unbelief of some of its members brought them much sadness as well. Because the slaves lived among temptations of all kinds, it is surprising that not more of them fell into sin. Those who did were always outnumbered by those transformed through Jesus' teachings. Still it was necessary for the brothers to admonish and keep back from communion those who did not live according to the gospel. These, they remembered with compassion and joyously welcomed back if they grew tired of their own ways and returned to Jesus Christ, the merciful high priest, and the community of his believers.

With great joy the brothers from Herrnhut watched the new believers learning to read. But newly discovered knowledge threatened, at times, to get in the way of Christ. Christian Oldendorp wrote:

Because many converted slaves did not know themselves well enough, they fell into the common error of trying to become better and more pious without first having found grace and forgiveness of sins in Jesus' blood. They simply accepted Christianity in its external forms, that is, in diligent learning, in singing and praying.

Georg Weber, one of the first Moravians on St. Croix wrote:

It would not be hard to start a Christian sect [cult] among these black people. They excell in copying external forms of religious practice without experiencing real changes of heart. Because of this many of their good resolutions do not last long. Sin resumes its rule over them, and soon after their conversion they are as deeply immersed in the pleasures of the flesh and other evil practices as before.

Only after "daily presenting Christ to them as a friend of sinners, and by persuading them that the salvation of souls can be found nowhere else but in the wounds of the Lamb" did the fire of love fall on the believers at St. Thomas and fill them with power.

The Mountain of Trumpets

As often as they had opportunity, the brothers and sisters at Herrnhut sent encouraging letters to the ones on St. Thomas. An even greater blessing came with the arrival of Johann Christoph Schönewerk and his wife in 1738,* but the heat and tropical disease overcame them. He died soon after arrival and she died three days later. By this time, with help from home, the brothers had managed to buy several of the baptised slaves and a small cotton plantation, twenty-seven German acres, on the central and highest part of the island.

Such rejoicing broke out among the black believers at the purchase of the land that a meeting for praise lasted all night and until the sun came up the following morning. Now they had a place to gather undisturbed. Hundreds came for every meeting, the sick carried in on shoulders and one-legged former runaways hobbling in on canes (one brother had lost two legs in punishment and could only crawl). Even blind and deaf people came,

sensing the spirit of worship there. The congregation chose eight more leaders and baptisms became continually more frequent.

Because they used trumpets to announce meetings there, the believers named their new community on the hill the *Posaunenberg* (Mountain of Trumpets), but its days of peace and rejoicing were numbered.

Trouble For The New Church

Led by their pastor, Jan Borm, the white people of St. Thomas determined to get rid of Moravian influence on their plantations, once and for all. The case they picked for their excuse was Matthäus and Rebecca Freundlich's marriage.

"Since when is it lawful for a white man to marry a black woman?" angry islanders (many of whom had mulatto children from numerous concubines) asked. "What is more, who authorised Friedrich Martin to marry them?"

In the midst of the turmoil surrounding this charge, Nathanael, whom the black congregation had excommunicated, arrived in a drunken state at Dominie Jan Borm's house and asked for rebaptism. The Reformed pastor asked him many questions before triumphantly reporting to the governor of St. Thomas the "wretched and miserable condition of the supposed converts of the Herrnhut brothers."

As if this were not enough, a tropical storm struck the island. The house where Timotheus Fiedler (another apostate brother) lived, suffered damage and those who came to help found valuable stolen goods in his possession. Dominie Jan Borm and the St. Thomas government needed nothing more. "These Moravians are thieves and hypocrites!" they stormed. "Not only do they come to pervert our slaves. They commit acts of perversion themselves. To jail with the accursed Herrnhuters!"

Dragged before the St. Thomas court, Friedrich Martin, Matthäus and Rebekka Freundlich, found themselves faced with the option of swearing they had nothing to do with the theft or going directly to jail. Because they could not swear (and the governor knew they wouldn't) they landed in a putrid cell, hot like an oven during the day, nothing to sleep on at night, at once.

Great crowds of black people risked punishment to come to the barred window of their cell to listen to Friedrich's words of encouragement. Friedrich and Matthäus made buttons in jail, and Rebecca had her sewing with her. Their example of peaceful nonresistance deeply inspired the believers, now numbering 750 souls on 51 plantations, under the able leadership of the black brothers Christoph and Mingo.

Mighty to Save, Strong to Deliver

With the German brothers in jail, Dominie Jan Borm and the Protestant officials on his side wasted no time in doing what they could to bring the black congregation to ruin. The pastor had black believers brought before the court, one by one. In particular he interrogated the leaders, throwing complicated theological questions at them to see how

they would respond. On top of that he asked them to explain which faith is more Biblical, the Lutheran or the Reformed, and whether they thought black people would some day rule whites.

“We know nothing about religion,” the black Christians answered him, “except that the Lamb of God has died and taken our sins away. We do not know whether blacks will ever rule whites, but we know that after death we will stand before Christ where all men are equal.”

“See, they know nothing,” Pastor Borm rejoiced. “Those Herrnhut prophets are baptising untaught savages!”

Pastor Borm sent one of his helpers, a Protestant minister, to jail to marry Matthäus and Rebekka, but they refused his services. “We are already married,” they told him. For this the court sentenced them as a public nuisance, living in unlawful immorality, and ordered Matthäus to pay a hundred *Reichsthaler* within 24 hours. Rebekka, who had been baptised by her white father into the Reformed Church, was formally excommunicated and ordered to be sold again as a slave, the proceeds of her sale going to Protestant charities (the St. Thomas hospital fund).

Friedrich Martin, charged with baptising and holding communion illegally, as well as performing church functions that belong only to legally ordained ministers, was to be held for punishment and exile. But the sun had not gone down on the day of these distressing court decisions when the trade winds carried an unexpected ship into St. Thomas’s harbour.

People from Germany—and it soon became apparent, very important people—stepped onto the hurriedly cleared wharf. The governor, hiding his frustration as well as possible, could do nothing but formally welcome Nicholas Ludwig, Graf von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf, with two Moravian couples, Georg and Elisabeth Weber, Valentin and Veronika Löhans, to St. Thomas.

St. Thomas authorities were surprised and confused. They knew that Ludwig came directly from Herrnhut. But they also knew he enjoyed the favour of the Danish court and that in rank he stood, as a count of the Holy Roman Empire, far above any one of them. So when Brother Ludwig cheerfully asked for Friedrich, Matthäus and Rebekka’s release, they gave it promptly and said no more about it.

The Lord had delivered them.

Triumphs Of a New Church

Brother Ludwig and the two couples from Herrnhut had a hard time believing their eyes. The growth of the Saviour’s Gemein on St. Thomas far surpassed anything they had heard or imagined. At the same time they could not believe how Friedrich Martin had changed. Disease and relentless activity had aged him so much, that when he emerged from prison no one from Germany recognised him.

Brother Ludwig, with his gift for languages, soon caught the drift of Dutch creole, and began to write hymns in the language. In his diary he wrote:

Three days after I got to St. Thomas and Friedrich Martin was still weak unto death, I took charge of the worship service for him. Brother Abraham, in moving and penetrating words, led in the opening and prayer. . . . After that I was nearly swept off my feet as the large group of black people (more brothers and sisters than I have ever seen at one time in any of our congregations) stood to sing and cry out, some with many tears, “My Lord, My Lord, the One who has redeemed me from condemnation!”

About eight days later, on a Sunday afternoon, nearly half of those plantation workers who have turned to Christ came to visit me and we had a service in a large Saal. There was hardly room for everyone to stand (yet the segregation of the sexes has already been taught and is practiced here). Oh how glad I was to be able to sing with this large congregation two of my favourite hymns: *May you be praised Jesus Christ*, and *Let the Soul of Christ Make Me Holy!*²

During Brother Ludwig’s stay the congregation chose more leaders, and to the joy of all, he bought Andreas and Johannes back from St. John for 200 pieces of eight. Friedrich Martin described the situation:

Hardly a day passes when we are not visited by souls feeling their misery and crying out for mercy. Wherever we go we hear someone in the sugar cane, among the bushes, or behind a house, praying and crying out to the Saviour, asking him to wash away his sins with his blood. We no longer have people satisfied with getting a bit of school knowledge. Now they come to us feeling their lost condition. Their only conviction is of their own wickedness and their need of the Saviour’s mercy and help.³

“The Saviour is melting souls like wax,” another worker on St. Thomas reported, and even the children, as many as four hundred at a time, came to the Posaunenberg on Lord’s Day afternoons for special love feasts. Valentin Löhans wrote:

The amazing impact of the Saviour’s grace and mercy among the heathen in these days cannot be described! The blood of Jesus flows over them, softens their hearts, and makes them see how great his love is. They feel his power. He becomes great to them and his grace, important. Their hearts have opened up. Many of them who were dead as stone have been moved by Jesus’ death, the constant subject of our preaching, and now they cry for mercy. Jesus’ death and his blood have penetrated their hearts, making them cry out and search for the Redeemer. It is heartbreaking to listen to them as they lie at the feet of the Lamb and cry out to him.

No one, however, could have felt more surprised about the growth of the new black church than the people who did all they could to stop it—and failed. Georg and Elisabeth

² August Gottlieb Spangenberg, *Leben des Herrn Nicolas Ludwig von Zinzendorf*, 1774.

³ From a letter, 1740.

Weber returned to St. Croix and with the help of many friends began to build a new community they named Friedensthal (Valley of Peace). This time the heat, the tangled scrub, and the scarcity of water did not surprise them. But they faced even greater opposition. During the dry season, hostile neighbours set fire to their houses again and again. Practically every night the cry of fire sounded through Friedensthal. One night ten houses burned at once, on another night fourteen. The largest fire spread to surrounding plantations destroying forty-eight houses, including many that belonged to black believers, in one night. But through severe trials, Friedensthal became a home and refuge for many. The Lord blessed gardens planted in the rainy season and spiritual gifts far outshone every material loss. Stephanus, a black leader there, told a baptismal class in the early 1740s:

We may be ignorant, but we have a master teacher, the Holy Spirit, that explains everything to us. We should enjoy and take part in everything the Saviour has earned for us. The way to it and the gate are open. Still, we should not only stand at the gate and look in, but enter and go to the Saviour himself. This cannot be accomplished only by coming to the church. No, we dare not be satisfied with that. Not the church but real communion, real *Gemeinschaft* with the Lord Jesus, will save us. That is the right way. No one can excuse himself by saying he has no time for this because of his master's work. Dear brothers and sisters, I know that one can think about bad things during all kinds of work. I say this from my own experience because I have often done that all day long, during the blind period in my life. If that is true, can we not just as easily think about good things? Can we not put the beloved Saviour before our eyes, and occupy ourselves all the time with him, remembering in our hearts what he has suffered and done for us? I wish that all of you, from this time onward, might do this and enjoy the grace and blessedness our dear Lord has earned for us. He will gladly give it to you.

Conquerors

Grace and blessedness came to the believers on St. Thomas and St. Croix, even though trials continued. A group of drunken white men held Georg Weber up at gunpoint, but he testified so fearlessly of his confidence in Christ that they could not kill him. Others waylaid Matthäus Freundlich and nearly beat him to death. Some planters threatened the Danish government with pulling out of St. Thomas if no one got rid of the Moravians.

But the church kept on growing.

A river of mercy flowing from Christ's wounded side attracted more and more seekers weary of sin. Brothers and sisters kept coming from Herrnhut to help in the work, and with time, reached every plantation on the island with the message of peace.

On his return from America and St. Thomas in 1739, Brother Ludwig met two young brothers from Herrnhut, Gottlieb Israel and Alban Theodor Feder, in Amsterdam. They planned to travel to the Guinea Coast in Africa, but Ludwig persuaded them to go to St. Thomas instead. "The church there needs you," he told them.

On their way across the Atlantic Alban turned deathly sick. Gottlieb, crippled from birth and left as an orphan at Herrnhut, did his best to care for him. Then a great storm blew up. The ship lost its course and ran aground off the shore of Tortola. The captain and crew escaped, but they left the two believers and all slaves on board to perish. Three slaves and the boys from Herrnhut climbed out the bowsprit and jumped onto a rock. High waves came crashing in and threatened to tear them away. They had so little room on the rock they had to lie stacked up on one another. Alban tried to jump from rock to rock and swim to shore, but the waves carried him out to sea. "Go, my dear brother, in peace," Gottlieb shouted after him in the wind and storm, not knowing whether he heard him before he drowned.

Clinging to the rock until the afternoon of the following day, the four survivors saw people coming to rescue them. From St. Thomas, soon after his arrival, Gottlieb sent a long letter home in which he wrote:

Oh what a great blessing it is to see how the Saviour shows himself to these black people! First they are awakened. Then they come to know their own hearts, finding out how bad they are. After that, they shed tears and cry for mercy until they have found faith in Jesus' wounds. Oh, how joyful are they then! They come running through the night to tell us about it and bring joy to our souls.

Even though he walked with difficulty, Gottlieb Israel found his way about the island and blessings came to many through him. In another letter he wrote:

The Saviour is both powerful and merciful among us . . . but the prince of darkness has been very busy in his attempts to steal souls from him through temptations and threats . . . Pray that the congregation of the faithful may build on Christ the cornerstone and be strengthened in his blood. I am not so anxious to see a large number of converts as I am to see the ones who find the Saviour to experience his living presence in their hearts.

Georg Weber's wife died in childbirth and their little daughter a day later. Johann Schurr's wife gave birth to twin sons that both died and she followed them in death after two days. Gottlieb Israel turned sick and died. Johann Böhner and his wife, newly wed ran into a serious storm on the way to St. Thomas. While he struggled with the sailors to lift a broken mast, his wife died and had to be dropped overboard. By the time Johann reached St. Thomas, Valentin Löhans had died so he married his widow, Veronika.

Friedrich Martin, on the other hand, not only survived but managed to visit the new Moravian community in Pennsylvania where he married Maria Leinbach. Jakob Tutweiler, a brother from Switzerland who survived a flogging by a plantation owner, settled on St. John and began the new Bethany community. Johann Michael Wäckler, Samuel Isles, and Nikolaus Schneider fell into the hands of French pirates and landed on Martinique. Joseph Schaw, an English brother, got lost in a storm at sea and was not heard from again. . . .

The story both of the ones who came and of the ones who joined the brotherhood in St. Thomas, became one many-faceted testimony of Jesus' grace. Not infrequently hurricanes flattened the cane fields on St. Thomas, uprooted clumps of banana plants, and carried roofs and buildings into the sea. Epidemics followed floods, and on January 17, 1759, a series of earthquakes rocked St. Croix, the third one tearing the earth open with a loud roar, nearly tipping the meetinghouse of the Friedensthal community. But in less than twenty years of Leonhard Dober's arrival, there were usually a thousand or more applicants for baptism all the time. Slave villages had changed from night to day, squalid, nearly naked people having turned into neatly dressed men and women with orderly families. Miserable huts had given way to plastered cottages among vegetable gardens and flowers. Wild dances and sacrifices of animals to unknown spirits had given way to weddings and funerals held in peace.

By the time Christian Oldendorp came to St. Thomas in 1768, seventy-nine Pilgrims sent out from Herrnhut had lost their lives in the West Indies. But for every one that died there were sixty baptised converts. Within fifty years nearly nine thousand African slaves, only on St. Thomas, had found their way into the Saviour's Gemeine. And this was only the beginning.

To the North

One year after the first brothers from Herrnhut sailed for St. Thomas, Christian David, with Matthäus and Christian Stach (cousins) left Copenhagen for Greenland. Ignorant of what lay before them, they "took nothing with them for the journey" and expected to find food, a means of income, and lumber to build, on the island.

Their first sight left them speechless. They saw rocks and snow. Unfriendly fishermen in furs slipped about in kayaks between chunks of floating ice in the harbour. The few Danes who ran a trading post there felt discouraged themselves and did little to help the brothers. Inspired nevertheless, by Christian David's boundless faith in Christ, they set to work with a will.

Already late in spring, but with plenty of snow left in the shade, they planted cabbages, lettuce, and turnips. Nothing grew. From the Danes they purchased a few sheep and a goat and cut skimpy grass for hay. They also learned to use seal oil for their lamps and how to make bedding and clothes out of seal skins. But on their first hunting trip they lost their boat in a storm and an early winter caught them unprepared.

Instead of helping them, the Greenlanders made fun of the brothers from Herrnhut and kept asking how soon they would go away. They stole what they could from the brothers and instead of showing interest in Christ, tried to tempt them into immoral acts.

Matthäus and Christian Stach attempted to learn the Greenlanders' difficult language, but led by their angekoks (spiritual leaders) the people of the island refused to teach them anything. Even though two thousand lived around the crude shelter the brothers had built,

none of them ever came to visit or find out what they did. Then, in 1733 they began to die of smallpox.

First dozens, then hundreds of Greenlanders died. So frightened did they become that when they saw pox beginning to appear, many stabbed themselves to death, or jumped into the sea to drown. Following the epidemic, the Danish settlement where the brothers from Herrnhut lived, suffered even greater want. Then, in 1735 no ship from Europe came. With only half a barrel of oatmeal left for another year, and a few dried peas and biscuits, the brothers knew they faced starvation. Every day they combed the beach for shell fish and sea weed. But every day they found less. Already weak with hunger they set out in a leaky boat, hoping to find food further away. A storm came up, soaked them to the skin, and carried them out to a barren island where they had to keep running in circles through the night to keep from freezing. After four days they made their way back with the Lord's help. Then winter storms struck in full force. Daylight hours virtually disappeared and in their dugout of stones and frozen sod, suffering from scurvy, they drank the soup of boiled tallow candles to stay alive.

The Lord heard their prayers.

Forty leagues to the south of where the brothers lived he moved the heart of Ippagan, a Greenlander, to travel north to bring them food. And when the ice finally opened and a ship arrived, on July 7th 1736, who should stand on deck but Matthäus Stach's widowed mother (one of the original refugees from Moravia) with his two sisters, Rosina, twenty-two years old, and Anna, just turned twelve!

First Fruits of Greenland

After five years of continual struggles—struggles to stay alive, to build a relationship with the Greenlanders, and to get along one with another in trying conditions—the brothers finished their preliminary translation of the Gospel of Matthew into the Eskimo language.

Shortly afterward, Kayarnak, another man from the southern part of the island came to visit and listened carefully to stories about Christ. He brought his extended family and before the end of the month two other families moved in. The brothers began a school for children and scarcely able to believe what was happening, held instruction classes for those who repented and believed in the Lamb.

On March 29, 1739, on the feast of the Lord's resurrection, Kayarnak, his wife, a son and a daughter, became the first Greenlanders to enter the Saviour's Gemeine through baptism. David Craz, a brother who spent time in Greenland during the 1760's, wrote:

The converts explained in public the full reason for their hope in Christ. They promised to renounce all heathen practices and superstitions to walk according to the Gospel as they had been taught. Then they received baptism with fervent prayer and the laying on of hands, commended to grace in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. In the meeting where this took place, the presence of the great Head

of the church could be felt in the most powerful way. Tears flowed in streams from the eyes of the recently baptised and those who had come to watch were so overcome that they earnestly desired to become partakers of the same grace.

That the Saviour himself brought about this change of heart among the Greenlanders no one doubted. But it also had to do with a change among the Moravian brothers. David Cranz wrote:

Around this time a great change took place in the way our brothers instructed the Greenlanders. Up to now they had mainly spoken to them of the existence, the attributes, and the holiness of God. They had called on the people to obey God's laws, hoping through this to prepare their minds gradually to receive the higher and more mysterious truths of the gospel.

It is true, common sense would tell us this is the right thing to do. But in practice it does not work at all. For five years the Pilgrims in Greenland tried this route, barely managing to get people to listen to them. But as soon as they determined to preach nothing but Christ and him crucified, without first "laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, and faith towards God," they saw its converting and saving power. No sooner did they bring this "word of reconciliation" to the Greenlanders in all its natural simplicity, than it reached the hearts of those they spoke to and produced the most astonishing effects. A way opened up to their consciences and their understanding was opened up to the light. . . . They saw that they were sinners and trembled at the danger in which they stood. They rejoiced in the Saviour's offer of grace and became capable of enjoying higher pleasures than to have plenty of seals to eat and partners to sleep with.

Building on the sure foundation of the crucified Redeemer, new converts rapidly gained an abhorrence for sin and the power to do what is right toward God and their neighbours, living soberly, righteously, and in a godly way, in this world. They began to look forward to the glorious hope of life and immortality, and walked in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

So powerfully did conviction fall on the Greenlanders, after 1739, that one worker reported people "trembling like frightened deer" in their meetings, bursting out in tears and running away to weep. Kayarnak, the first of the believers, soon travelled south and stayed away for a year, only to come back with many more. At long last a Christian community began to take shape around the brothers' first miserable settlement. They named it Neuherrnhut, and by 1747 built a Saal large enough to accommodate three hundred or more people—the number that often met to worship there.

A People Transformed

To everyone's dismay, Kayarnak, after his return from the south, contracted tuberculosis. But he prepared to die in peace. "I was the first of my people to know Christ," he said. "It is right now that I should be the first to go and meet him." His Christian burial, held in an orderly way with singing and a reading of Jesus' words in the Eskimo language, stood in powerful contrast to the wretched deaths of unbelievers on the island.

Soon afterward, another believer who had taken the name of Daniel, became the first Greenlander chosen to leadership in the congregation. He helped both the islanders and the settlers from Europe very much. Not only did he preach simple, powerful sermons. He showed the Europeans how to hunt, how to store dried meat and fish, and make better clothes. Everyone, even the Danish traders, looked up to him as a man of God.

The winter of 1752-1753 lasted longer and turned colder than any other the brothers had seen. The ocean froze as far out as one could see. Such high winds blew down from the north that their houses shuddered as if in a constant earthquake. Even icebergs split open offshore, everything blew full of snow and lightning flashed in the storms. Following this hard winter came three months of sickness when great numbers, including thirty-five believers, died. Many orphans and widows stayed behind. But the people of Neuherrnhut had become loving and caring. Not only did they assume responsibility for those in need, they responded with open hearts to the needs of people they had never met.

When the news reached Greenland of the massacre of Indian believers on the Monocacy Creek in Pennsylvania, the whole assembly broke out in loud weeping. Some offered to send reindeer skins or boots to those who survived. One brother said, "I will send them a seal so they will have something to eat and oil to burn."

Following the translation of the Gospels into the Eskimo language, the brothers worked on a hymn book and simple catechism. With the community at Neuherrnhut firmly established, Matthäus Stach moved further south and began another one, Lichtenfels, on an island close to the shore. In a few years it also became the home of three hundred people. After that Johann Sorensen and his wife and Gottfried Grillich began the third community, Lichtenau, 700 km south of Neuherrnhut where another two hundred joined the community.

A Transformed Sea Captain

Working with Danish traders, not always favourably disposed to believers on Greenland, involved trials and expense. For that reason, when the brotherhood's ship, the Irene, landed at Godthåb in the summer of 1747, loaded with building supplies from the Netherlands, it brought great joy to the whole congregation. Not the least among the joys was to greet Christian David, returned after several years absence, and Nicholas Garrison the sea captain Brother Josef had led to Christ in the West Indies.

Captain Garrison, now working full time for the Unity of Brothers, had much to tell. After his conversion he had hurried home to his family to bring them the good news. Then, with his fourteen-year-old son John, he had returned to sea to bring the Gospel to the wretched men he had wasted so many years with. On this trip, Spanish pirates captured him and his son and dumped them onto the shore of Cuba. There they walked fifty km through the wilderness toward Bayamo. Carrying his son, dying of thirst in the heat, Captain Garrison had walked until he could go no step further. Then the Lord showed him a stream. They both recovered and found their way to the town where the governor threw them into jail. There, amid terrible curses and fighting in the heat,

Captain Garrison spoke of Christ with miraculous results during fourteen months. Then they let him go. Brother Ludwig and his daughter Benigna sailed with him back to Europe in the brotherhood's ship, almost landing on the rocks off the Isles of Scilly, in a storm. In England, the Captain met his son John, who had found his way there from Cuba. They returned quickly to New York, picked up Mrs. Garrison (whom the Saviour also awakened) and the rest of the captain's twelve children, and returned to Europe. The French captured them en route and took them to St. Malo. From there they found their way through the Netherlands to Marienborn in the Wetterau where they settled among the believers.

On their way back from Greenland, narrowly escaping disaster among icebergs in Davis Strait, Captain Garrison and Christian David took five Eskimo believers to visit Marienborn and other communities in Europe.

Perils On Land and Sea

Even though the believers' communities on Greenland became better established—the brothers and sisters from Europe living in wooden homes with their animals protected in comfortably attached stables during long winters—getting to and from the island grew no easier. They could have written books about their adventures.

After years of faithful service in the community at Lichtenau, Gottfried Grillich left one year in the fall for Denmark and Germany. Pack ice trapped his ship for five weeks. With winter coming he made his way back to shore, but left again in February. This time the ice crushed the ship he travelled on. He helped the sailors drag a lifeboat across the ice for a two day journey before they came to open water. A storm caught them unawares, but after three months of struggling to stay alive, he reached the island community of Lichtenfels. That fall he managed to leave safely.

Other pilgrims in Greenland, Christian David Rudolph and his wife left Lichtenau after twenty-six years, in the month of June. Trapped in the ice until mid-July, they finally managed to distance themselves from the shore, but icebergs roaring and crunching shifted around them. The sailors fastened slabs of ice to the sides of the ship with grappling irons to protect it. In a letter, Christian David Rudolph described how it went:

Early on August 25 a storm rose in the south-west. It drove the icebergs close to our ship. They looked terrible and we expected them to crush us. Once we struck a small rock but not much happened. Then we hit the ice head-on with such force that several planks broke and water rushed in. The captain and part of the crew jumped into a life boat at once. The rest worked frantically to loosen another boat for the ship was filling with water and going down fast on her starboard side. By the time they had the boat ready, only the gunwhale remained above water. My wife and I stood on the deck alone, with the water already higher than our knees, holding fast to the shrouds, before the sailors helped us into the boat.

We were about a league out from shore and seventy-eight miles from Lichtenau. We feared our lifeboat, heavily laden and leaking badly, would sink too, so we steered for the nearest island. It was a steep naked rock, but we found a small spot with grass.

From there we tried to salvage what we could of the wreck, but the waves beat frightfully against the rock and tossed the boat so violently that our rope broke, and it got away on us. Eight men jumped into the other boat at once and caught it. But the wild waves kept them from regaining our landing place and carried them out among the ice that quickly crushed both boats. Only one man drowned, however.

All hopes of reaching land vanished and there was much weeping. When it got dark we lay down, close together, with no tent or covering. All this time it had rained heavily and it kept on raining through the following day and night, the water rushing down in torrents from the summit of the rock. All of us were soaked and lay in the water that stood in pools around us. But this was good for in this way we had fresh water to drink.

On August 27 the captain and most of the sailors made their way, jumping and climbing across the floating ice, to shore. We would have gone with them but after two days without food did not feel strong enough. With the ship's cook we stayed behind on the rock with no hope but what came from the Lord our almighty Saviour. We saw nothing else but that we would die here. The thought of lying unburied as food for the ravens and other birds of prey already hovering around us, troubled us for a short time, but the consolations of our Saviour overcame them and we soon felt entirely resigned to his will.

After nine days a band of Eskimo seal hunters found the Grillichs and the cook, still living. They gave them food and dry clothes, and brought them back to Lichtenau. Other believers travelling to and from Europe simply disappeared.

Labrador

Friedrich Martin, pilgrim to St. Thomas, wasted no opportunities to speak with others about Christ. Travelling on a Dutch ship he spoke to Hans Christian Erhardt, the ship's mate, who humbled himself and came to trust in the wounds of the Lamb.

Back at Zeist in the Netherlands, Hans Christian became a member of the believers' community. But he could not forget the people and places he had seen. Already in 1741 he had served on a whaling crew off the wild, desolate, coast of Labrador (now part of Canada). With the support of brothers in England he organised a group to travel there in 1752. They took supplies and building materials for themselves, as well as goods to trade with the Eskimos for a means of contact. But shortly after their arrival and the founding of the community they named *Hoffenthal* (Valley of Hope), hostile Eskimos fell on Hans Christian and six others with him on a trading excursion and killed them.

In the meanwhile, the Lord had prepared a brother from Denmark to work on the Labrador coast. Jens Haven first came to know Moravian pilgrims travelling through Copenhagen. Struck with their message, he found his way to Herrnhut where he worked ten years in the community's printshop. Then, even though he felt attracted to the Labrador coast he had heard and read about, he followed the Lord's call (through the use of the lot) to Greenland. Four years later, after learning the Eskimo language at

Lichtenfels, he returned to England and with the brotherhood's approval left from there for St. John's in Newfoundland.

At first Jens found work as a carpenter in the British colony. But, speaking their language, he soon made friends with the Eskimos. After another trip to England where the Lord gave him with a wife, Mary Butterworth of the Lamb's Hill in Yorkshire, he returned with two other couples, a widower, and seven single brothers to establish a new community at Nain, 250 km north of Hoffenthal's ruins.

One of the first to find rest in the wounds of Christ at Nain was a medicine man and leader among the Eskimos. The brothers baptised him Peter. Another medicine man, Tuglavina, even more powerful and obstinate, followed. But for twenty-five years the brothers worked in Labrador's extreme cold and poverty with few results. Seeds of love they scattered in the snowy wilderness did not bear fruit until two young Eskimos, Siksagak and Kapik, coming to make trouble repented instead and a time of glorious awakening broke out. With the help of Eskimo believers the brothers rebuilt the former community at Hoffenthal and began two new ones, Okak and Hebron, far to the north on the shore of the Ungava Peninsula.

Cold Feet, Warm Hearts

Finding their way between scattered Eskimo settlements in Labrador proved no less challenging than in Greenland. In 1774 Christoph Brusens and Gottfried Lehmann drowned when an ice floe crushed their boat. Several years later a group of believers travelling on the ice from Nain to Okak met a similar disaster.

All day long it had snowed heavily. Guided by the Eskimo brothers Markus and Joel, and an old medicine man travelling with them, the believers found themselves a good distance from shore when the ice began to break. With a thundering roar the floe buckled as the ocean lifted and lowered it. At intervals the brothers could see rocks protruding along the shore and rushed with their dogs and sleds to scramble onto them while the ice sank.

No sooner did they gain this refuge than the floe broke up. "The sight was tremendous and awfully grand," one of the group wrote afterwards. "Large fields of ice raised themselves out of the water, struck against one another, then plunged into the deep with a violence that cannot be described and a noise like the discharge of innumerable batteries of heavy guns. The darkness of the night, the roaring of the wind and sea, and the dashing of the waves and ice against the rocks nearly deprived us of the power of speech."

With the help of the Eskimo brothers, the group made an igloo in which to sleep. But by two in the morning salt water dripped through. Everyone awoke. Joel snatched his wife and child. Mark and the others scrambled out behind him and they just reached the top of the rocks before another great wave came crashing in and carried their igloo out to sea. In the darkness, in densely swirling sleet and snow, they built another shelter but "not a thread" of their clothes remained dry, and they nearly starved during the five days it took them to return Nain.

Epidemic followed epidemic on Labrador. The Hudson's Bay Company opposed the Moravians' work and supplied the Eskimos with liquor. Gruesome murders took place among them. But warm love for the Saviour flourished in his Gemeine and the brothers and sisters that lived there overcame every difficulty in their way.

Northern Europe

Three years before he left for Greenland, Christian David already felt the Saviour calling him north. Setting out from Herrnhut on foot he found a way along the Baltic Sea, through Poland and Courland to Riga. Some of the time he walked barefooted along the beach. In other places he struggled through swampy forests, wading up to his knees in water for hours, and after the snow fell he joined a fifteen-sled train to Reval (Tallin) on the Gulf of Finland. There a noble woman invited the brothers from Herrnhut to begin schools and many doors opened to the Gospel. Ten years later, Christian David wrote:

The Saviour's work in Livland [Estonia] goes on. But we need help. Rejoice with us that his grace is accepted by hundreds of seekers, like men rejoice in the time of harvest or after a battle when they divide the spoil. Praise the Saviour in his Gemein! Sing to him and do not keep silent for he is the blessed and beloved one! Who would not want to serve him with all his heart?

The Lamb of God knows how much it cost to redeem us and how much he loves our souls. It is still like in the days when John baptised. Many come to confess their sins and ask what they must do to be saved. But faith in the wounds of Christ is only now being comprehended. . . . Many who believe still depend on the law for their salvation. The side-shrine opened by a spear in Jesus' side has not yet been opened to them. But a few have obtained grace to enter that holy of holies through Jesus' blood. . . . In Livland and the surrounding area more than six hundred thousand people still need to hear this message. But for the time being we must hang our pilgrim gear on a nail and sit still. We must teach the people through quiet example, showing them first how to work with our hands. Jesus compels no one to conversion, but moves them with the power of love.

When the *Lammsberg* (mountain of the Lamb) and *Seitenschrein* (side wound) communities took shape in Livland, Christian David became the enthusiastic director of their building projects—choir houses, meeting rooms, and *Gemeinhäuser* patterned after Herrnhut.⁴ Even though faced with opposition he wrote in 1743:

I am building cheerfully and let nothing disturb me. Overseeing various projects at the same time, I have carpenters, masons, furniture builders, and sawyers at work. Several stone cutters are getting ready to build the mill. Others are making wheels, digging wells and burning brick. The boys take care of the horses and wagons and the girls bake bread. . . . We have not started with building the Saal, but the first storey of the large residence is ready for its ceiling. Its windows have glass in them. I have not yet decided what to do with the plank house that gets too hot in the summer and too

⁴ Falling from the second storey of a building in progress, Christian David surprised everyone when he got up and began running away at top speed. "I wanted to keep my blood circulating," he explained later.

cold in the winter. But we will figure something out. . . . There will be two kitchens, one for single brothers and one for the sisters, and two dormitories. The ceramic works and bakery have been built under one roof, the ovens, windows, and doors already done. . . . Along with this, we are threshing a good crop of rye. The foundations for a mill and a dam have been laid. All four millstones are finished and a waterwheel and gears will soon be ready to use.

From Reval, Andreas Grassman, Daniel Schneider and Johann Nitschmann found their way to the Lapps in far northern Sweden, and later with Michael Miksch to the Samoyeds and other tribes living along the Arctic Ocean. At Archangelsk, Russian authorities took them captive and kept them in a dungeon for five weeks. Then they sent them, with three soldiers, on foot to St. Petersburg. Crossing a frozen lake, two of the soldiers broke through and would have drowned had the brothers not acted quickly and saved their lives. They arrived at the Russian capital as friends and the Tsar sent them back to Herrnhut unharmed.

Travelling, working, building, praying—with their eyes fixed on Jesus, brothers and sisters from Herrnhut watched his Gemeinde take shape in the far north, during the mid-eighteenth century.

To the West

Nothing fascinated Katharina Budmanski like the secret book. Day and night she lived around it. Deep in Roman Catholic Moravia in the early 1720s she learned to read from it, with her mother's help, and her heart told her its message came from God.

Reading the words of Christ, Katharina found the way to inner peace. But trouble came with it. Her father, a strict Catholic from whom they had tried to keep their Bible hidden, became suspicious. Whenever he sensed Katherina and her mother trying to get off by themselves he followed them, or appeared suddenly. Finally, on the day of All Saints in 1725, after Katharina had turned 21, she dared act on what she believed and left home.

With her mother, a descendant of the forbidden Unity of Brothers, she had discussed it briefly. Her mother had told her that beyond the Sudeten Mountains, somewhere to the north, believers lived in peace with God and one another. "But tell me nothing of your plans," she had cautioned Katharina. "The less I know, the better it will be for both of us."

In the crowd of worshippers entering the village chapel on the day of All Saints, Katharina slipped away from her parents, unnoticed, and made her way behind village orchards, across the fields, into mountain forests surrounding her village of Seitendorf. From the top of a high ridge, she looked back and saw people already leaving the church. Knowing she would soon be missed and pursued, she committed herself to Christ and

hurried on. By the next day she reached Niederwiese, home of more secret believers, who directed her across the mountains through Silesia to Herrnhut.

Nothing in Herrnhut disappointed Katharina. With her whole heart she gave herself to the Saviour and his Gemein, taking her place as a nurse in the young sisters' choir house. Her father learned where she stayed and did what he could to get her back. But instead of that happening, her mother escaped and found her way to Herrnhut as well.

When the Saviour led Katharina into marrying Friedrich Riedel, a young stone mason at Herrnhut, she did not object. Neither did she complain when their first two children died, or when the congregation chose Friedrich to accompany Brother Josef, Johann Töltzschig, Peter Rose, and seven others to America, in 1735. The Saviour, she had learned, makes no mistakes, and true joy springs from true surrender to him.

For a long time Katharina heard nothing from Friedrich and his companions. Then word came from America that they had arrived safely, the weather was warm, and she should come too. The British governor had given five hundred acres of land to the brothers at Savannah, Georgia. He had promised them exemption from swearing oaths or bearing arms, and said they could establish a Christian community however they desired.

With a group of twenty from Herrnhut, Katharina sailed from England in the winter of 1736. Fierce storms hindered their progress. On the fifth of February many thought the ship would go down, but casting themselves before the Saviour the believers on board sang and prayed. Their tranquillity in danger spoke to John and Charles Wesley, travelling on the same ship to America, and after twenty-one weeks at sea they reached Savannah in safety.

To Katharina's surprise, Friedrich had turned sick and died, so the brothers quickly arranged her marriage to Peter Rose. With him she moved five miles up the Ogeechee River where they settled on an island among the Creek Indians. A friendly chief, Tomochichi, arranged for them to teach his tribe to read and write.

Katharina did well at learning the Creek language. She loved the children and found they easily memorised scriptures and songs. During their time on the island the Lord gave her two more children of her own. But her new husband often left for days or weeks at a time, visiting seekers. The Indians around her drank more and more liquor, their wild dances and songs lasting late into the night, and when the Spanish made war on Georgia, she was thankful to leave.

Pennsylvania Refuge

The British in Georgia did not trust the Moravian believers who, like Petr Chelčický and their Waldensian ancestors, refused to take up arms to defend the colony. The Spanish, just to the south in Florida, would have trusted them even less. But the Saviour had everything arranged.

Shortly before the Moravian believers settled in Georgia, the Schwenkfelders who had lived with them at Herrnhut moved to Pennsylvania. At the time the war with Spain broke out, Brother Josef had gone to visit them, and sent back reports of the healthier climate, the presence of many other nonconformed believers (Quakers, Mennonites, and Dunkards), and the freedom from military obligations there. To the brothers and sisters in Georgia it sounded too good to be true. But in little groups they made their way north, and friends in Germantown, not far from Philadelphia, opened to them their hearts and homes.

Brother Josef had not spent much time in Pennsylvania before a cluster of seekers gathered around him. In the home of Christoph Wiegner, a Schwenkfelder living with his mother and single sister, they met in the evenings to sing and pray. Johannes Gruber, a leader among the “Inspired” came to the meetings. So did the Reformed brothers, Heinrich Antes and Johannes Bechtel, the Dunkards Wilhelm and Andreas Frey, with Christian Weber, Conrad Weiser, Francis Ritter, and others. Seeing the reality of Christ’s church, far above denominational boundaries, they called themselves nothing but “brothers in unity at the Skippack” and prayed for the day when all who loved the Saviour could serve and worship him in similar peace.

Peter and Katherina Rose, with the others from Georgia, found their place among these warm-hearted believers at once. But living in Germantown did not remain their privilege for long.

The First of The Mohicans

The better Brother Josef came to know Conrad Weiser, one of the seekers sometimes attending meetings in Germantown, the more interested he grew in his story. Conrad told him how he came to America as a child, settled with his parents in a German colony in New York, and spent long periods with the Indians. Living among the Mohawks, Conrad said, he learned their language and now used it in his work as an interpreter for the government.

Conrad showed Brother Josef the diary he had kept on a journey from Pennsylvania to the Finger Lakes area, south of Lake Ontario, on foot. He spoke of six Indian nations that lived there under wise and fair rulers. He spoke of their great towns and just laws. The more Brother Josef heard, the more excited he grew. “Souls for the Lamb!” he declared. “Who will go and tell them of the life-giving blood?”

Not only Brother Josef found Conrad Weiser’s reports exciting. When Christian David heard them back at Herrnhut, he jumped up and would have rushed to America at once. Brother Ludwig suspected the nations Conrad described might be the ten lost tribes of Israel, mixed with the Scythians or another ancient race. But the congregation brought the matter before the Saviour and chose Christian Heinrich Rauch, a twenty-two-year-old brother to visit the Indians in New York (near Conrad Weiser’s first home in America) in 1740.

The first Indians Christian met—two Mohicans called Shabash and Wasamapah—agreed to take him to their village. But they both got drunk and forgot their promise. Christian found lodging with a family of German settlers instead, from where he made his way to the Indian village alone.

The Indians hardly knew what to make of him. White traders, the only people they had much to do with, did not come to their villages alone, much less unarmed like Christian Rauch! Traders came with rum, cloth, and supplies to exchange for furs. Christian came with nothing. He knew only a few words in their language, yet acted friendly. What did he want? When would he go away?

At first the Indians of Shekomeko made fun of Christian and threatened to kill him. But to their amazement he hung around until after they had eaten and it grew dark. Then, finding a place near the fire, he curled up in a blanket and went to sleep.

The Indians looked at him in disbelief. A white man sleeping peacefully, without arms, in Shekomeko! Obviously he did not know much about the place. Or did he possess some unseen spiritual power? As quickly as they had despised him, their attitude changed to one of deep respect, and when Christian woke up he found them eager to learn what he had to say.

The longer Christian lived and worked among the Shekomeko villagers, the more they realised he was no ordinary white man. He loved them, and spoke of God's Son who loved them too. Almost a year after his arrival Shabash and Wasamapah both repented and found mercy in the wounds of the Lamb. Christian felt the hearts of others becoming tender as well, and made plans to travel with them to Pennsylvania.

Arriving in Germantown early in 1741, Christian Rauch with his group of Mohican friends, brought great joy to all that loved Christ. In a meeting with the "Skeppack brothers" at the home of a Mennonite farmer, Jan de Türck, in Oley, Christian described his work at Shekomeko. Mennonite, German Baptist, and Schwenkfelder believers had gathered there. So had the spiritually minded of local Lutheran and Reformed congregations, with a few white-robed brothers from the Sabbatarian community at Ephrata. All listened to the new Mohican believers telling how the blood of Christ had washed their sins away.

No one could doubt their testimony. They spoke of how dreadfully they had lived under the bondage of superstition, liquor, and fear. But now their faces shone with peace and who could deny them the privilege of Christian baptism?

For a moment the brothers and sisters gathered in the Mennonite home looked at one another. How should the new believers be baptised, by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling? Someone suggested the Saviour should decide the matter and the brothers cast lots. Pouring appeared as the Saviour's choice, and the gathered crowd found their way out to the barn where kneeling over the water trough, the first three Mohican

believers, baptised with water poured from a hollow gourd, received the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Not long afterward, Wasamapah (whom Dutch traders had called Tschoop) also asked for baptism and took the name of Johannes. Everyone that knew him “before and after” marvelled. From a drunkard and fighter the Saviour transformed him into a gentle believer with firm convictions. In 1742 when the Christian Mohicans of Shekomeko—Abraham (Shabash) and his wife Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jakob, Thomas and Esther, Jonas, and Timotheus—formally became a congregation of the ancient Unity of Brothers, Johannes served as interpreter for the brothers from Germany and become an enthusiastic evangelist among them. A year later the Indian believers celebrated their first communion and love feast. In July 1743 they built a Saal. Abraham, the first baptised among them, became their leader, and by the end of that year they numbered sixty-three souls.

Trouble For the Christian Indians

As the congregation of believing Mohicans increased, their testimony touched the hearts of native Americans throughout the English colonies. Tired of the disorder and debauchery contact with white traders had brought them, more and more turned to the Saviour. In him (and to stand in spiritual communication with unseen worlds was not a new concept for them) they found more than any medicine man had told them about. They found inner peace and forgiveness for their sins. Their attitudes changed to where they could live in peace one with another—at Shekomeko, in a new community they named *Gnadensee* (Lake of Grace) in Connecticut, and four other locations among the New England hills.

Believers in Christian Indian villages overcome the barriers that years of warfare and abuse had erected. Rachel, an Indian sister, became the first to marry a European, Friedrich Post. Christiana, another sister from Shekomeko, married Joseph Bull, a Quaker baptised by the Moravian pilgrim Andreas Eschenbach in 1742. From widely varied backgrounds they become one Gemein at the feet of the Lamb—Christoph Pyrlaeus from Switzerland, Johann Jakob Schmidt from Reval in Livland, some from Germany and Moravia, and a growing number of believers from the tribes of the Allegheny, Hudson Valley, and Northeastern Woodland regions. But the enemy would not leave them undisturbed.

Unfriendly white settlers in New York, led by Gilbert Tennant, a Methodist preacher, could not stand what they saw. Week after week, Gilbert denounced the “pernicious sect of people called the Moravian Brethren” over his pulpit, together with their “detestable Arminian doctrines of the free will and the apostasy of the saints.”

“I cannot stand as an unconcerned spectator,” Gilbert Tennant declared, “to behold the Moravian tragedy. My heart bleeds within me to see the precious truths of Christ opposed, slighted and trodden under foot by our new Reformers, and that under a pretext of extraordinary sanctity, love, and meekness.”⁵

⁵ *The Examiner*, Boston, 1743

Not everyone in New York shared Gilbert Tennant's "grief," but colony authorities under continual pressure finally arrested Friedrich Post and David Zeisberger (a young brother who fled with his parents from Zauchenthal in Moravia, coming by way of Heerendyk to America), kept them in jail for six weeks, and banished them for refusing to bear arms or swearing oaths. The colony also passed a law forbidding Moravians to preach or hold unauthorised meetings, and obligated all suspected of belonging to their "sect" to swear the oath of allegiance.⁶ A British official locked and sealed the doors of the Saal at Shekomeko, and the Indian congregation, by now numbering over seventy baptised believers, knew the time had come to leave.

Bethlehem

While young brothers put everything they had into bringing the Indians of New York and Connecticut to the Lamb, Peter and Katharina Rose, with their companions at Germantown found work as well. Some of them, travelling by sea from Georgia to Pennsylvania, had come with the English evangelist George Whitefield. Even though they could not understand everything he said, his plans to build a Christian boarding school on a five thousand acre tract at the Forks of the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers, sparked their interest. William Penn's daughter, George Whitefield said, had left behind the estate, called Nazareth. Now, with the help of his supporters, he planned to build on it a school for freed slaves and whoever could not afford an education elsewhere. He hoped to teach practical skills along with the academic, and to train his students in Christian virtue.

In Germantown the Moravians kept seeing George Whitefield. He spoke at a meeting in Wiegner's house, and when he asked them if they would build his school for hire, they consented readily. A few of brothers made their way to the forks of the Delaware, set up camp under an oak tree, and held a meeting to praise the Saviour for seeing to their needs.

For a short while the building project went well. The brothers from Herrnhut—skilled stone masons among them—worked on the lower storey of the first large building on the Whitefield property. Some made friends with Indians living in the area. But when George Whitefield and Peter Böhler (who also came to Pennsylvania by way of Savannah) began to discuss the doctrine of predestination, things stopped going well. George Whitefield became very upset. "How dare you Moravians insist that anyone can be saved?" he stormed. "Don't you know that God alone grants that privilege to whoever he wills? How dare you insist he must grant it to all?"

When the brothers from Herrnhut remained unconvinced by his Calvinist teaching, George Whitefield broke his contract and asked them to leave his property at once.

They left. But not for long.

⁶ The same law gave Dutch and French Reformed preachers, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Congregationalists, Quakers and Anabaptists (groups less likely to upset colony affairs) total liberty.

A short distance south of the Nazareth estate, closer to the forks of the Delaware, the brothers bought another tract of land. With even greater zeal they began to chop down trees and construct their first building of logs—a house and stable combination—before the snow fell. In the meantime, George Whitefield, short of help and out of money, had to give up his plans and his estate came up for sale. The brothers, seeing in this a divine opportunity, quickly agreed to buy it.

In Germantown, Peter Rose died. But more seekers kept coming and Katharina, even though she missed her second husband, found help to raise her children in a growing circle of believers. By 1741, when Brother Ludwig and his daughter Benigna arrived in Pennsylvania, he found the Moravians already living on their new land near the forks of the Delaware. Around them stood the great silent forest. Snow lay deep beneath the stars. But inside their first log building they shared a cheerful love feast of corn cakes and coffee made of roasted rye. With a choral liturgy—the work of Peter Böhler—all joined to sing before the Lamb of God in his advent season, and when the issue of naming the new community arose Brother Ludwig could think of nothing else but Bethlehem.

New World Peace

Brother Ludwig saw more than casual parallels between Bethlehem in Pennsylvania and the place of Christ's birth. Peace and goodwill among men, he believed, might come again at Bethlehem. With the Quakers he dreamed of a new order in the New World where Christ would reign—a new land without forts or major harbours, not devoted to commerce “lest it incur the jealousy of surrounding nations.” In Pennsylvania, Ludwig hoped, the Indians would find mercy in Jesus' wounds. Slavery would end. The black, the white, and the brown would all live as brothers, and unity among Christians would flourish again.

For all these “holy expectations,” what the brothers on the Skippack had begun, seemed a sure sign. Already on December 15, 1741, Heinrich Antes had published an open letter to the Christians of Pennsylvania—German and Swedish Lutherans, Dutch and German Reformed, Swiss and Dutch Mennonites,⁷ Socinians, Quakers, Schwenkfelders, Dunkards, Seventh Day (Ephrata) Baptists, the Wissahickon Hermits, the *Neugeborene* (Baumanites) of Oley,⁸ and the Inspired:

Dear friends and brothers,

For lack of trust and because we suspect evil one about another, a terrible thing is happening in the Church of Christ, and among souls called to follow the Lamb. Even though we have been commanded to love one another, the good that could be happening among us is continually brought to nothing. For this reason, for two years or so, some of us have thought of calling a general meeting, not to argue about

⁷ Appearing in the list as *Vereinigte Vlaaminger und Waterländer*

⁸ A celibate group, rejecting all sacraments, and believing themselves incapable of sinning—therefore beyond need of the Scriptures. Most of the *Neugeborene* joined the Moravian Church and moved to Bethlehem.

opinions, but to learn how to understand one another in love. We think we should come to agreement on the basic issues of faith, and learn to accept one another in love even though we may disagree on matters peripheral to the salvation of our souls. If we would do this, much judging and criticising could be eliminated and the world would stop making fun of us for preaching peace and conversion while fighting among ourselves.

Considering all this in prayer, and acting on the counsel of many brothers and souls that seek after the Lord, we have decided to meet this coming New Year's day in Germantown. You are invited to attend, along with your brothers that have a foundation for their faith and are able to explain it. This invitation has been shared with nearly all the other groups through letters like this. There will probably be a large gathering, but do not let this keep you from coming, for everything will be taken care of without much commotion. May the Lord Jesus grant us his blessing.

From your poor and unworthy brother, Heinrich Antes.⁹

The meeting at Theobald Endt's house in Germantown, on New Year's day, 1742,¹⁰ left all who came with much to think about. Brother Ludwig described his vision of a *Gemeinde Gottes im Geist* (Church of God in the Spirit): "My goal is to help all the scattered children of God to find their way, not into the Moravian brotherhood—something I would rather strive against—but into that universal *Gemeinschaft* of believers into which the *secta moravica* must also finally merge."

With powerful conviction Brother Ludwig exposed the foolishness of bringing Old World divisions into the new, and challenged believers to rise above denominational strife to glorious liberty in the blood of the Lamb. Did that mean all Christians needed to merge into one mega-denomination? Not at all! "The Church of God in the Spirit," Ludwig explained,

consists of innumerable believers around the world, united in the same basic beliefs. Not all of them have to belong to one household of faith, because in their diversity the wisdom of God lies hidden. If all Christian groups are merely parts of the same whole, there is nothing evil in each of them maintaining their own order and fellowship and no one should leave them as long as he is needed in them. Every one of these small groups that for geographical or other reasons has become a distinct unit is the church made visible. And if every visible manifestation of the church rests on Jesus Christ and is built a spiritual house, then diversity is something beautiful.¹¹

If all Christians united, some who attended the meeting in Germantown wondered, what would happen to existing institutions?

⁹ *Büdingische Sammlungen*, vol. II

¹⁰ January 12, according to the Gregorian calendar

¹¹ *Authentische Relation von dem Anlass, Fortgang und Schlusze der am 1sten und 2ten Januarii Anno 1741/2 in Germantown gehaltenen Versammlung einiger Arbeiter derer meisten Christlicher Religionen und vieler vor sich selbst Gott-dienenden Christen-Menschen in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin*

To the brothers from Herrnhut it did not look complicated. Man should not take it upon himself to destroy what God tolerates, they believed. Much of religion belongs to Babel, but only God knows what to tear down and what to leave standing. We may leave the work to him. We will not overcome denominational strife by trying to tear denominations apart. But if we bring people within them to see the Lamb, Babylon (denominational confusion) will crumble and disappear on its own.

The emphasis of the Germantown meeting lay on the believer's "privilege to sin no more." Deeply inspired with this, and with the vision of unity in Christ before them, all who attended planned to hold another meeting soon, in the cloister at Ephrata. But a number of events changed their plans.

Leaving Germantown, Brother Ludwig visited the Schwenkfelder colonists and preached for them on the day of the Three Kings. Then he stopped in at Dunkard, Mennonite, and Lutheran homes. Wherever he went, he found people more inclined to argue than to pray. About the Dunkards, Ludwig wrote:

They are God-fearing people and do what their conscience tells them. Even though they do not have much light, they are sincere, and for that reason friendly. It seems they should unite with the Mennonites, if only they could agree on how to baptise, for that would make one less sect in the country.

About the Mennonites he wrote:

It is not our work to judge these people. In the Netherlands the blessing of the Lord has come among them, and many are true builders of the Invisible Church. But those of this land [Pennsylvania] have been more against us than for us, right from the start. Also, they are a small isolated religion with boundaries and gates. . . . We must leave them in the hands of the Lord.

The Lutherans, Brother Ludwig found sharply divided over the case of a baptism on the Tulpehocken Creek in Berks County. One pastor had agreed to baptise an infant presented to him by a drunken father, Philip Beyer. Another insisted that baptism (for the drunkenness) was invalid, and groups of people formed on both sides.

The Reformed, wherever Brother Ludwig and his companions from Herrnhut travelled, opposed them with their talk of the sovereignty of God. The Inspired accused them of holding to "meaningless sacraments." And in the end, even the Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata turned against them, forbidding them to hold their next meeting there. "All the Count [Brother Ludwig] wants," his opponents declared, "is to get everyone under his own hat." Christopher Sauer, a printer at Germantown, began to publish material against them, and Ludwig—forced to conclude that "everyone in Pennsylvania, except the Quakers, keeps their religion primarily to plague others"—gave up his plans.

From Jews to Gentiles

Saddened by the Pennsylvania colonists' rejection, but by no means discouraged, Brother Ludwig and his companions turned their attention to the heathen. "If the Jews—that is,

the white Christians—have no desire for unity in the wounds of the Lamb,” they reasoned, “the Indians may.” So in the summer of 1742 a small group, including Brother Ludwig, travelled west.

West to the Tulpehocken Creek and Conrad Weiser’s house the brothers made their way before they met a large group from the Six Nations region, south of Lake Ontario. Important chiefs had come—Shikellamy, Canastego, Coxhayion and others—on business with the Pennsylvania government. Some had brought their wives and children. All smiled when Chief Coxhayion’s little son ran out to meet the men from Germany. Brother Ludwig picked him up and the boy threw his arms around his neck. “A little child shall lead them,” the brothers said in wonder, and the Indians took it as a sign from heaven.

For several days Conrad Weiser helped the leaders of the Six Nations and the Unity of Brothers speak with one another. They spoke of the Saviour and his work. With growing astonishment at their unity of ideals, they discussed the basis for peace between white and Indian people in America, and Brother Ludwig promised Chief Shikellamy (who lived much closer than the rest) that he would come to visit him.

Following several months of planning the group set out for Indian territory in the middle of September. Conrad Weiser served as interpreter. Joshua and David, two boys from Shekomeko recently baptised at Bethlehem, went along, as did Heinrich Leinbach of Oley, Martin and Johanna Mack (newly married), Peter Böhler, Anna Nitschmann, Brother Ludwig and his seventeen-year-old daughter, Benigna.

With pack horses heavily loaded (one with nothing but Brother Ludwig’s writing supplies and the books he planned to read) they followed the Shamokin trail. West over the Blue Mountains, five days through silent valleys, and across the last high ridge before the Susquehanna, they made their way. Describing their descent from there Brother Ludwig wrote:

Anna, the most courageous one among us, a brave girl, led us down the hill. I held onto the end of her coat to keep from sliding off my saddle. Conrad held onto my coat, and Peter Böhler onto Conrad’s. In this way we all kept each other from slipping and the Saviour helped us safely down.

The sight that met them was worth all hardships encountered. On a flat spot at the forks of the broad, shining Susquehanna, stood the little houses of Shamokin surrounded by sheltering peaks.¹² Shikellamy, the Six Nations chief living in the village, welcomed them with open arms. He set food (boiled squash) and drink before them, and sitting by his fire, the brothers took note of his sincere interest in what they told him.

From Shamokin the travellers made their way north to Ostonwakin, and east into the valley of Skahantowano (the Wyoming Valley) where the Shawnees lived. Everywhere they met curious people—so interested in the brothers’ buckles and buttons Brother

¹² Sunbury, Pennsylvania, today.

Ludwig soon had to tie his clothes shut with strings—but not all of them were friendly. Only after escaping, by the grace of God, a plot to take their lives, did Brother Ludwig and his companions return after several months in the wilderness, to Bethlehem.

“Sea Congregations”

While the believers in Pennsylvania turned to the Indians, events in Europe brought more and more of them to seek passage across the Atlantic to America. In the spring of 1742 a group of fifty-six—mostly from Herrnhut and refused permission to settle at the Pilgeruh community in Holstein—sailed from England on a chartered ship. Georg Piesch travelled with them as their leader. The entire crew consisted of Moravian boys, and a “little Herrnhut,” or *Seegemeine* (sea congregation) as they called it, formed on board.

Three brothers’ and three sisters’ choirs (for children, adult single, and adult married passengers) kept to their own sides of the ship—brothers on one and sisters on the other. Days on board began at six with a call to wash and dress. Morning prayers came at seven, with a reading of the Watchword, and breakfast at eight. Then the English believers on board began their German lesson for the day, and German believers studied English. At twelve, those assigned to kitchen duty served the meal. At seven in the evening everyone gathered for prayer and song services, one hour of German and another of English, followed by a daily brothers’ meeting and bedtime at ten.

All passengers had clearly assigned duties. Some kept track of the time, some cleaned, some prepared the food, and others did nothing but see to the comfort of the elderly and sick. All night long the hourly watch continued. One day they set apart for prayer and fasting, and with great joy in the wounds of the Lamb they celebrated love feasts at sea. Even though storms slowed them down and pirates pursued them three times, they arrived by June 7, 1742 at Penn’s Landing in Philadelphia, in good spirits.

Another sea congregation of 120 people—including thirty young couples married as the Saviour directed at Marienborn,¹³ just before departure—arrived a year later. Captain Garrison brought them on the *Little Strength*, and in 1749 another group of thirty-nine single brothers and forty-eight sisters. Promptly after arrival in Bethlehem, at a great love feast, the Saviour joined thirty-one couples in marriage. Some settled in Bethlehem, others in Nazareth, and twenty-two youths built a young men’s community at a place they named *Gnadenhöh* (Heights of Grace).

Light In The Wilderness

With so many young believers at Bethlehem, its population quadrupled within a few years and the brothers had to enlarge their log *Gemeinhaus* (community house). They also built new stone residences—single brothers’ and sisters’ choir houses, a chapel, and quarters for many new families around it. On the Nazareth estate, a group of single sisters moved into the Whitefield school building. Katharina Budmanski Rose, who had overseen the widows’ choir for several years, married Johann Michael Huber and together they became the *Kindereltern* in the childrens’ house there.

¹³ with the use of the lot

Like a joyful army the young men set to work clearing land, planting grain and vegetables, and building a circle of shops and a grist mill in Bethlehem. Hans Christoph Christensen, a hydraulic engineer from Holstein, built an oil mill and the community's ingenious water works. But far more than earthly things got looked after. As soon as they could talk English—even haltingly—the brothers visited Scotch and Irish settlers on the southern bank of the Lehigh, and the English in New Jersey. Thanks to Captain Garrison a group of seekers on Staten Island formed a congregation, and in evening meetings at Bethlehem the believers heard letters read from St. Thomas, Greenland, Livland, Africa, and wherever Pilgrims from Herrnhut had gone. To each letter they responded with a song.

No weekend passed at Bethlehem without anxious seekers coming to evaluate the believers' community. From all Pennsylvania settlements, from all denominations they came to speak of their inner need and worship the Lamb together. Before long the congregation put up a guest house with a believing couple on day and night duty to receive them. The *Fremdenstunde* (meeting for strangers) on Lord's Day afternoons became a regular English-language service, and when this did not suffice, the brothers began to hold daily "question and answer" sessions from three to five in the afternoon. So many came to some meetings they had to stand at the back of the Saal, in crowded hallways, and down the stairs of the Gemeinhaus.

A few glimpses from the Bethlehem diary of this period:

Saturday, September 4, 1742: In the daily *Viertelstunde* we sang the litany as always. After the softly spoken request, "Bless us with your holy testaments dear Lord," two Indian catechumens from Shekomeko and a single brother from Oley, a Quaker, were baptised into the death of Jesus. We could feel the Saviour's presence in a special way.

Saturday, October 16, 1742: We spent a blessed Love Feast at noon in the Lord's presence, remembering our brothers and sisters in Europe who were being fed with the Lamb's flesh and blood at this very time. In this way we felt united with them in Spirit. The single brothers' choir held their all-night vigil and received rich blessings. They discussed their condition, both as individuals and as a choir, thoroughly one with another and made plans for the *Sprechen* (personal interviews) next week. During all this they were keenly conscious of the Lamb's presence among them.

September 22, 1743: An Englishman came to visit. He seemed like a nice man and asked to live among us. He was also ready to place his ten-year-old daughter in our care. The man was serious and we did not question his motives. But because Bethlehem is full at this time we could not take him in.

Sabbath (Saturday), December 11, 1742: All the brothers and sisters rose at four in the morning for the feet washing. His water and blood made us clean. Then came communion. We felt the blood from the Lamb's wounds sweeping through our hearts, souls, and bodies, like a flood.

April 13, 1743 and other dates: We became vividly aware of our Saviour's death and blood and he showed his grace, particularly to the single brothers' choir. . . . Our communion was unusually blessed, and we were overcome with wonder in the gracious presence of the Lamb. . . . The Lamb showed himself to us, a little band of sinners with special grace. . . . The head of the congregation allowed his gracious presence to be felt among us with power. . . . Our love feast ended today with an explanation of the Watchword, during which the Saviour came to us in unspeakable joy. . . . We celebrated our love feast in tender awareness of the Lamb's presence. . . . This Sabbath we spent quietly in the presence of our Lord. . . . Tonight the single brothers went about singing and praising their choir's elder [Christ] with musical instruments. At six o'clock we held a love feast for the whole congregation in which his Spirit moved us mightily, causing us to fall on our faces and worship him. . . . The Indian brother Jakob from Shekomeko spent fourteen days among us and came to love the Saviour again.

December 29, 1743: The older sisters laid hands on Anna Maria Birstler at her baptism and received her with a kiss. Lights flashing from the blood of the Lamb circled through the Saal and melted the hearts of the brothers and sisters to tears.

November 13, 1756, on the celebration of the chief eldership of Christ: We felt the Saviour's presence so powerfully we could no longer speak, pray, sing, or anything else. Such an awareness! Oh Lord! All of us were in tears and we fell with our faces on the ground before him. I cannot, no I will not describe it!

Shelters of Grace

When the Indian believers from Shekomeko and the Connecticut villages arrived in Pennsylvania, the brothers gave them a place along the Monocacy Creek at Bethlehem. There, close to the *Wundeninsel* (Island of the Wounds), a place the brothers kept as a refuge for those wanting to pray alone, they set up camp. But living next to so many people did not suit them well. They missed the unspoiled wilderness in which to hunt and fish. So with the help of Martin Mack and David Zeisberger they settled further up the Lehigh, on a 1400 acre tract along the Mahoney Creek. There they built a new community named *Gnadenhütten* (Shelters of Grace).

With great eagerness the Indian believers erected a new Gemeinhaus and Saal. Around it they built a log *Pilgerhaus* (residence for temporary workers), a young brothers' choir house, family residences, a barn, a stable, a kitchen with bake ovens, and a milk-house. Particularly important to their well being, they built a saw and gristmill from which many rafts of lumber floated down to building projects at Bethlehem and Nazareth. After a few years they bought more land across the Lehigh River, and their farms and fruit orchards flourished.

At the same time, Chief Shikellamy, through Conrad Weiser, asked for the brothers to settle in Shamokin on the Susquehanna River. Martin and Johanna Mack answered the call. With the help of the villagers they set up a smithy in 1746. Joseph Powell, a young brother from Shropshire, Johann Hagen, and Anton Schmidt came to help them. They showed the villagers how to plant turnips and cabbage, and the seed of Christ's Word

they planted flourished as well. Not only Chief Shikellamy, but numerous ones of his family and the Lenni Lenape people among whom they lived repented and found peace in the Lamb.

From this place David Zeisberger, Johann Jakob Schmick and groups of Indian believers made their way upstream to establish the *Friedenshütten* (Shelters of Peace) community at Wyalusing, and *Friedensstadt* (City of Peace) in far western Pennsylvania.

Rainbow of Promise

Before Brother Ludwig returned to Europe, the brothers in Bethlehem took care of an important issue. Up to this time they had worked with one man, a “chief elder” in charge. But “having found this office too much for a mortal being” they asked the Saviour (with the use of the lot) whether he would not take it himself, and he consented. That evening, on November 13, 1741, a rainbow arched across the eastern sky and the believers fell on their faces, assured of the Saviour’s approval and committed as never before to surrender themselves to him.

From this time onward the use of the lot, taken as the Saviour’s voice, became the last word in every major decision—and to the believers on the American frontier, it brought security and peace.

Samuel and Mary, the first Indian believers to celebrate a Christian wedding, received permission from the Saviour to become man and wife in 1744. That same year Andreas (the boy that had given Friedrich Martin the chickens, on St. Thomas) and Maria became the first black couple married at Bethlehem. Andreas, purchased by Brother Ludwig, had come to Pennsylvania with him. But he returned, and three years later the Saviour called Johann Michael Huber (Katherina’s third husband) to St. Thomas as well. A storm struck his ship. It sank and he drowned on the way there, leaving her a widow again.

Chief Shikellamy, baptised in his old age, died in 1748, resting in the wounds of the Lamb. The brothers rejoiced at his home going. But great tribulations fell on the Indian believers soon afterward.

Angered by white settlers’ seizure of their lands, the Lenni Lenape (Delaware) and Shawnee tribes revolted against British rule in the 1750s. The French, from Canada, supported them, and reports of sudden massacres began to trickle in from the frontier. In the Path Valley, at Penn’s Creek, in the Northkill Amish settlement, and along the Swatara Creek Indians fell suddenly on lonely cabins to burn, scalp, and destroy. Some, particularly women and children, they led captive.

For Martin and Susanna Nitschmann, with the rest of the believers at Gnadenhütten on the Mahoney, this frontier violence became a serious threat. Unconverted Indians hated them for turning so many of their number into peace-loving Christians. Those among the Indian believers, not well grounded in Christ, found it easy to slip back into their old ways. One of Chief Shikellamy’s sons, after white frontiersmen treacherously murdered his wife and children, became a leader in the Indian revolt. So did Teedyuscung, a

Shawnee the brothers had baptised as Gabriel. But threats ended and action began on the evening of November 24, 1755.

Martin and Susanna Nitschmann, Gottlieb and Johanna Christina Anders with their baby, Joachim Sensemann (whose wife was sick, upstairs), Georg and Susanne Luise Partsch, with several young people sat around the supper table at Gnadenhütten on the Mahoney. It had just grown dark and the dog seemed restless. Joachim stepped outside to make sure the door to the Saal was latched. The others kept on eating. Then they heard pounding footsteps, dogs barking furiously, and Joseph Sturgis rose to open the door.

A roar of gunshot and painted warriors burst into the room. A bullet grazed Joseph's face and Susanna Nitschmann saw her husband drop to the floor. Shots in quick succession struck John Lesley, Johann Gattermeyer and Martin Presser.¹⁴ Susanna herself was struck by a bullet and while the others scrambled up steps to the loft she slipped and fell into the arms of an Indian who dragged her out the door, surrounded by war whoops, tomahawks, knives, and guns.¹⁵

From the single brother's house, Peter Worbis (who had been fasting that evening) looked on with horror as he heard continual gunshots through the floor into the loft where the others had fled. Then he saw flames and Joseph Sturgis leap from an upstairs window. Following him Susanne Luise Partsch also jumped out and ran, followed by Georg Fabricus promptly struck down by a tomahawk and scalped.¹⁶

For fifteen minutes Peter listened to shots and yells. He saw one sister run from the burning building to a cellar nearby. Then something momentarily distracted the warrior posted in front of his door, and he also jumped out and ran. The last he heard were the screams of Johanna Christina's baby above the roar of the flames.

By the time David Zeisberger and believers from the other side of the river arrived on the scene, nothing remained of Gnadenhütten but a blanket and a hat left on a stump with a knife sticking through them. Grief swept the believers' congregation, but only for a short while. Hearts fixed on the Lamb could see nothing in this bloody massacre but a confirmation of life as it is—short and perilous, a prelude to the everlasting—and set out with good courage to build new and larger settlements in the Tuscarawas River valley of Ohio. There, with the believing Indians of western Pennsylvania, the survivors of Shekomeko and Gnadenhütten built the new communities of Schönbrunn (Beautiful Spring), Lichtenau (Meadow of Light), another Gnadenhütten, and Salem. Their squash and beans grew wonderfully. The forest abounded in game. Once more they planted fruit trees and flowers, and before long their central meetinghouse at Schönbrunn, built for five hundred, could not hold the crowds of Indian believers that came to worship there.

¹⁴ Martin Presser, not immediately killed, managed to drag himself off to the woods where his body was found several days later.

¹⁵ The Indians took Susanna to Tioga and eventually killed her.

¹⁶ Georg's body, riddled with bullets and mutilated, was found the following day, still guarded by his faithful dog.

Witness of Grace

Back in Bethlehem, trials of faith continued through the French and Indian war. But the Saviour's grace did not fail. A band of Indians gathered to fall on Bethlehem before dawn on Christmas, 1755, experienced it with singular power. Just before the planned attack, heavenly music broke out above them, floating over the town and out across the Lehigh River. The single brothers' trombone choir stood in the belvedere above the Saal, playing the Advent Chorale, and all the Indians could do was listen, speechless, before fading back into the woods. One of them, who came to the Saviour several months later, told the brothers what had happened.

In the summer of 1752, Brother Josef, Heinrich Antes, and four others left on horseback to explore and purchase one hundred thousand acres of land in North Carolina. On this tract they named *Wachau* (Meadow of the Watch) believers coming both from Europe and Pennsylvania built the communities of Bethabara, Salem, Friedberg, Friedland, and Emmaus. And from here Pilgrims left to bring the good news of peace to the Cherokee and Catawba Indian tribes.

South of York, Pennsylvania, the brothers began the small community of *Gnadenheim* (Home of Grace), and near Lancaster, a larger one they named Lititz, after the first home of the Unity of Brothers in Moravia. In Lititz, and at Hope, New Jersey, they built brothers' and sisters' choir houses in beautiful "home communities" from which the brothers contacted seekers far and wide.

The Revolutionary War brought new trials to the believers, in particular to the Christian Indians of the Tuscarawas Valley in Ohio. American militiamen massacred eighty-six of them at the village of Gnadenhütten and the rest fled to Canada. Opposition continued here and there but on the Love Feast celebrating fifty years at Bethlehem, in 1792, thousands had been added at immeasurable cost, and immeasurable gain, to the Saviour's Gemeine in America. And in that Love Feast, as a special witness to his grace, one of the eight surviving settlers was still able to take part. That was Katharina Budmanski Huber.

Christ's words still fascinated her.

To the South

In the wet fall of 1734 Brother Josef took the post coach to Köln am Rhein. High water and muddy roads hindered him all the way. At Köln he joined a company of Jews travelling to Nijmegen. "On the way we all nearly lost our lives," he wrote later. "Our driver got drunk and not only succeeded in rolling our wagon over once, but also got off the trail and so deeply mired in the swamp I thought we would all go under and perish. God helped us. The night was as black as a bag but a man came with a lantern and got us

out. Around midnight, after totally losing our way again, we came upon another man who showed us the right road. From Utrecht we took a boat to Amsterdam.”¹⁷

In Amsterdam Brother Josef stayed in the home of the Mennonite minister Jeme Teknatel, an awakened brother, eager to take part in the Saviour’s work however he could. He helped Brother Josef contact the Dutch West India Company with the prospect of settling in Suriname on the coast of South America.

All Herrnhut, perpetually in trouble with German authorities, dreamed of settling in a new land. Would Suriname prove the Saviour’s choice? Brother Josef did all he could to find out, and a year later the community sent Georg Piesch (a shoemaker who had fled from Kunvald in Moravia), Georg Berwich, and Christoph von Larisch, a young convert from a noble family, to sea.

Their voyage started out badly. Leaving Texel in the Netherlands at the beginning of October on a ship of the Dutch West India Company, they had barely lost sight of the last lights on Cornwall before a storm struck. Everyone turned sick. So violently did the storm pitch and toss the ship in the waves that a Jew sharing the brothers’ cabin lost his mind and came plunging after Christoph, trying to stab him with a nail. Of thirty-five soldiers on board the ship, the brothers never saw more than ten sober at a time. But after three months they landed safely at Fort Zeelandia, outside Paramaribo, on the Suriname River.

Nothing they had imagined prepared them for what they found. Every year the planters of Suriname, Dutch, English, French and German, one third of them Jews, imported from ten to twelve thousand slaves from Africa. From ships unloading at Fort Zeelandia the brothers watched them come, “like walking skeletons covered with a piece of tanned leather,” to be branded, given names, and fattened for sale—traders seeing to it that women expected babies, if at all possible, to bring higher prices. Under the blazing sun the brothers from Herrnhut watched them pick cotton and cut cane. In the fine houses of Paramaribo they saw them wait on their indolent masters—many of them unmarried but living in a circle of concubines—and state of society in the New World dawned slowly upon them.

The first man the brothers visited in Suriname, a pastor of the Dutch Reformed church, warned them to avoid whoredom and laziness. “But we soon discovered he was stuck in both, up to his ears,” the brothers wrote. Horrified, they saw how white children grew up slapping and kicking slaves, and how a white gentleman cracked the skull of a slave on the street for not lifting his hat. White ladies branded beautiful slave girls on their faces, and disfigured them in other ways to keep their husbands from looking at them. Punishment for running away (something the Suriname planters feared with good reason) ranged from cutting off legs and arms, beating with steel rods until every bone was broken, decapitation, and burning at the stake, to such bizarre methods as hanging people from hooks, or tying a fourteen-year-old boy to a dog house, forcing him to bark at every passing boat until he lost his mind.

¹⁷ *Brief Spangenbergers an Zinzendorf, Amsterdam, d. 7. Dec. 1734*

On the plantations the slaves worked in unhealthy and dangerous conditions. A hatchet hung ready in sugar mills to chop off arms that not infrequently got caught in the rollers. Slaves tasting sugar had all their teeth knocked out at once. And when the brothers found work in a stone quarry at Berg en Daal, south of Paramaribo, they began to suffer like the slaves from heat and malnutrition. Within two months of arrival young Christoph von Larisch died. The two other men, too sick to know clearly what they did, stumbled to and from work “like deaf mutes among the slaves with whom we could not speak” until they found a captain kind enough to take them back to Europe.

Berbice

When he was eight, in his hometown of Wernigerode, in Germany, Ludwig Dehne’s mother died. His father, a soldier, married again, but he grew up unhappy and alone. By the time he turned seventeen, such *Seelenangst* (anguish of soul) had overtaken him that he thought his life had to end. But he met a pilgrim from Herrnhut instead and came to rest in the Saviour’s wounds. His step-mother, when she heard of it, spat in his face. His father turned him out of the house. But Ludwig found work as a tailor in Weimar, and after five years came to Herrnhut where he joined the single brothers’ choir.

Now, with Hans Güttner, a young brother from Silesia, Ludwig accepted the call to South America in 1738. Soon after leaving Texel in the Netherlands a storm hit them. Then Barbary pirates chased them for twelve hours. “How good it is to trust our Saviour in times like this,” Ludwig wrote in his diary.

After three months at sea, the brothers reached Suriname and the mouth of the Berbice River. Eyes wide with wonder, they floated past an Amerindian camp on the shore. Brown people without clothes sat around a fire eating what looked like the roots of a tree. Was this what the Watchword for that day, September 12, 1738, had meant? “I will give them a sign. Some who are awakened I will send to the heathen along the sea, and far away to the islands, where men have not heard about me nor seen my glory. They will tell the heathen of my wonderful works.” With hearts warmed by the Saviour’s promise in a strange land, Ludwig and Hans continued upstream to Fort Nassau.¹⁸

The Dutch governor of Berbice Colony did not welcome the brothers from Herrnhut. “Unless you swear the oath of allegiance,” he threatened them, “I will send you away on the first ship that leaves.” Only grudgingly did people give them work. For food and lodging they paid high prices, and before long they both felt sick from the heat. But Hans wrote a cheerful letter to his parents at Herrnhut, hoping it would reach them within a year:

My beloved parents, I greet you from the heart. I kiss your hand, and wish you much grace from our Saviour. This is to tell you we are well and cannot praise him enough for his faithfulness. He helps us through everything.

They do not know winter in this land. Fruit grows all year, and there are always twelve hours in the day and twelve in the night. The sun passes straight overhead. There are

¹⁸ The site of Mara, south of New Amsterdam, Guyana, today.

snakes here as thick as a man and fourteen feet long. We cannot wear our woollen clothing. It is too warm.

One makes bread here from a root. It gives two kinds of heathen here, some black and some brown. The black ones are slaves, the brown ones are not and live in little shelters. We visited them. My heart breaks when I see these people. If only I knew their language!

I am doing carpenter work here on a plantation. Brother Dehne is making clothes. Carry no worries for me. It is very well in my heart. I stay your faithful son,
Johann Güttner¹⁹

As soon as the brothers knew Dutch well enough they began to teach two black boys, James and David, and the son of an Indian chief, a boy they named Jonathan, how to read and write. The also walked far into the rain forest to meet the Indians. After one trip, Hans wrote:

I got lost and wandered about until ten o'clock at night. Then I came to an Indian shelter. I stayed with them. They took me in good, and made me a fire. It rained very much. They gave me cassava bread to eat but I could not say much to them. In the morning one of them went with me to show me the right trail. I cannot help but see these people with compassion.²⁰

In spite of struggles trying to decide what best to do (not always able to agree right away), Ludwig and Hans learned to work together. They held a Singstunde every day and began to celebrate communion in bread and wine, even with only the two of them present.

Combé

A month after Ludwig and Hans arrived in Berbice, in 1738, Georg Berwich returned to Paramaribo. This time he came with his new wife Rosina, daughter of Jakob Neisser of Sehlen in Moravia, and the young brother, Michael Tannenberger. "*Sie sahen uns als Wunderthiere an* (they looked at us like animals in a zoo)," Rosina wrote home about the Dutch officials at Fort Zeelandia. No one could understand why ordinary white people from Europe—let alone people without money and no intentions of making much—would come to South America.

"What will you do here?" a Dutch official asked the believers. When told that they intended to farm and work for their living, he shook his head. "You could work hard at this place for a whole year," he said, "and have nothing to show for your efforts. Only the major cash crops, cotton or sugar, produce, and for that you would need many slaves. You white people cannot work in this heat and with these bugs. It has already been tried. The Labadists came with three hundred people and almost all of them died. So did a group of nineteen families from the Palatinate. Only one woman with her son is still living! It is impossible, and I tell you the truth, you had better go back to Germany while you can!"

¹⁹ *Hans Güttner an seinen Vater, Johann Güttner, in Herrnhut, 7. December 1738*

²⁰ *Hans Güttner an Leonhard Dober, 8. Februar 1740*

Sobered, but not dismayed by the official's words, the brothers hired themselves out to plantation owners, the Berwicks on the estate of Jan Pieter Visscher, and Michael at Sandyk, an eight hour journey away. As in Berbice, their eyes soon opened to the wickedness around them. In a letter home, Rosina Berwick wrote:

The whites here are much worse than the heathen. They steal and deceive wherever they can, yet if their deeds are uncovered they blame their black slaves! They cannot stand us because we do not live like them. All day long they do nothing but curse and swear, gorge themselves on food, drink wine, and fornicate. They say if we refuse to do likewise we will not survive here, it is the way of this land. I told them such things do not even attract us, and it is terrible how they carry the name of being Christians yet live like that.²¹

On the Visscher plantation, both Georg and Rosina—true to the official's predictions—soon lay sick unto death. Then, to their horror, a black man brought Michael Tannenberger from Sandyk, skin and bones, delirious, and laid him at their feet. Michael no longer knew them. The white people of the plantation shunned them, and with the blacks they could not converse. But the Saviour did not leave them. In May 1739, Rosina wrote to her family in Herrnhut:

We got your letter and read it together. The Saviour gave us much grace and we rejoiced to hear how he does not let the work among his children in all places lie. He will not let us get stuck here in Suriname either. We got a hold of ourselves in the Spirit. We are coming to rest on a foundation of love. We drink from the flood that pours from the Rock. We walk on a highway of grace. . . .

Right now my husband is very sick according to the body. On May 17 he began having the red dysentery and fever. He has never looked as bad as now. The Saviour knows better than anyone else what is to become of us. My husband is tiny and stooped over inside. It looks bad that we have no medicines with us and I fear for him, yet since I can do nothing about it I will leave it up to the Saviour. He is a doctor to the sick in body and soul, and cures all damage with his blood and power. He is my only comfort. For myself I can say I am still doing well. Even though there are days when I cannot get up, I always recover and get up the following day. May the Saviour be praised for helping me this far so I can serve my husband. Otherwise I do not know how things would go.

This was Rosina's last letter. No doubt sicker than she let on at the time, she died soon afterward. But both Michael and her husband survived. And the following year Heinrich and Katherina Steiner (formerly of the "Inspired" in the Wetterau), Johann Hadwig, Heinrich Meisser, and Georg Zeisberger (brother to David) came. So did Franz and Maria Barbara Reynier, formerly of the Ephrata cloister community in Pennsylvania. Their presence brought the brothers great joy and with Franz's skill as a doctor, everything looked more encouraging. Soon after their arrival, Heinrich Meisser wrote:

²¹ *Brief Rosina Berwick an Anna Nitschmann, 1738*

What we have to do is important to us and the Saviour will help us overcome the thousand obstacles that stand in the way of freeing the heathen from bondage. We will learn the language now. The Indians are more decent and orderly than the white people among whom the devil keeps his fire and hearth. The white people live like beasts, but we bring everything to the heart of the Saviour. . . . We love one another and will let him show us what to do from here on. . . . It seems as if the power of the blood were already touching the roots of paganism and I expect to see plants and fruit. I am rejoicing in the wounds of the Lamb.

Half an hour's walk down the river from Paramaribo, the brothers found an abandoned plantation for sale at a place called Combé. They offered its owner, a Jew, three hundred florins, and to their delight, he accepted it. Even though they did not enter the house on the property "for fear it would collapse and fall on our necks" they thanked the Saviour for the citrus and coconut trees already growing there and eagerly made plans to reclaim the rest of it from fast growing jungle vegetation. Besides this, they saw the first signs of a spiritual harvest in South America. Franz Reynier wrote:

On the evening of the day we bought the plantation, such a number of people came to our Singing Hour that the place where we stayed got full. We thought they just came out of curiosity and it would not happen again. But since then such a crowd—including both Jews and Christians—has been coming every evening that only about half of them can get into the house. The rest have to stand in the yard and those among them that know High German the best, help us sing.

On the evening of the 29th of October we dedicated our little plantation. Before going out we had our Singing Hour in town. Then at seven o'clock we gathered there and held communion. Before going ahead with that we had our band meeting where we expressed our innermost feelings about one another, so that we could forgive one another with the whole heart. I spoke on the importance of communion and what believers may expect from it. I also gave an explanation of the rite of footwashing and why we do it. Then we brothers practised it among ourselves and our two sisters did the same. After this we had communion and discovered in it the blessing we looked for. We live in close community and daily sense the Spirit of the Saviour among us.

With great anticipation, the brothers planted bananas, sweet potatoes, and cassava on their new land at Combé. They also tried beans, cabbage, and corn. They bought some chickens, a cow and two calves. At the same time Brother Franz Reynier began to visit the "sick houses" of local plantations. In unlit, unventilated quarters, with dirt floors serving as the only drain, he found slaves too sick to walk lying on sloping boards. Undressed, unable to care for themselves, their masters put them there to avoid contaminating the healthy, but with no thought for their cure. The dead lay among the living, and in the tropical heat Brother Franz found nothing but the love of Christ able to penetrate the sick houses' atmosphere of horror and doom. Even though he could not speak much with the dying slaves he could attend them with mercy, and little by little hearts began to respond.

Opposition From Without

At first the planters of Suriname paid little attention to the believers from Herrnhut. Expecting them to die or get discouraged they thought they had little to worry about. But when their work at Combé began to bear fruit they rose up in alarm.

For years the planters had taken care of slave rebellions, runaways, and insubmission. They had developed ingenious methods of “breaking in” slaves and training them to all manner of work. But when slaves got converted and began to live noble, orderly lives, the planters feared them. They had no idea how to deal with slaves more righteous than themselves, and resorted to further irrationality and violence.

On the other hand, most of the Moravian Pilgrims were craftsmen and day labourers, used to working for others. Most had been refugees and lived in poverty. Like the slaves they had crossed the ocean. Like them, they lived under the arbitrary rule of rich plantation owners, so they naturally felt an affinity with them, and with the Indians in Berbice, from the start. Just as naturally, they felt an aversion for their fellow Europeans. Franz Reynier wrote:

In the beginning [the white people] made fun of us, especially the Lutherans. They asked us “What do you poor people think? Will you seven be a church!” They also made fun of our living together in community of goods. They said that among the people of Suriname not even the closest blood relatives, often not even husbands and wives, could stand one another. They asked us how we could attempt anything so foolish as bringing people together from all corners of the world, people who could barely speak one with another, and who know nothing about one another, then expect them to share everything on the basis of belonging to the same religion!

Another pilgrim wrote soon after arrival in Berbice:

The white people here are as a rule utterly depraved. They think only of staying here until they have made enough money to return to Europe to live in luxury and dissolution the rest of their lives. While they are here they revel in every abomination. For this reason we find it the most comfortable to stay among the Indians. Among them we sense wellbeing in our hearts.²²

The Dutch Reformed pastor of Paramaribo warned his congregation publicly not to have anything to do with the Herrnhuters that “hold everything in common, even their wives.” Beyond that, he pressured colony authorities to pass a law forbidding the brothers to hold public meetings, to pray, to teach, or allow people to take part in their worship.

Fortunately the old house at Combé had many cracks in the walls. To comply with the new law, the brothers shut the door when they held meetings, but as great a crowd gathered as ever to listen in the darkness outside. And some who came grew as bold as to warn their masters they should sooner forbid people to go to drinking houses than to Christian meetings.

²² *Theophilus Schumann, Pilgerhut in Berbice, an Ludwig von Zinzendorf, 27. December 1748*

Another source of irritation to the Dutch in Paramaribo was the brothers' refusal to swear or to take part in armed night watch duty. But in this, colony law overrode their objections. In August 1740 the authorities ruled: "In case of enemy attack or other emergencies that call for bearing arms, the Moravian brothers shall be treated in every way like the Mennonites of this country. . . . In the case of swearing of oaths they shall have the option of using the *Mennoniteneydt* (affirmation)." For the time being the brothers' legal situation seemed secure. But they soon faced. . .

Opposition From Within

Living in close quarters at Combé, with constant questions about food, visitors, work, and plans for the future, the believers found their love for one another tried out. Franz Reynier wrote:

We now live together here on the farm. We are very happy one with another and only wish our little Gemein would be larger. We wish more would come to enjoy our blessedness together, but whoever thinks of coming should be ready to leave all selfish ambition and self will (*Eigenheit* and *Eigenwillen*) behind. The Saviour treats us with greater sharpness here than he does you brothers in Germany. All of us work in close proximity all the time. No one pursues his own interests. No one has more to say than another. Neither do we look through our fingers one at another for we try to help one another in priestly love, even in the small areas of life. We do this in confidence knowing that all of us want to be taken captive in every area by the Lamb. This makes our Gemeinschaft daily more meaningful and ties us together in such a way that no demon can tear the band of our unity. In the beginning it happened a few times that one did not feel like accepting the loving reminder of another. But we did nothing more than commit the matter to the heart of the Saviour. He pursued that discordant member day and night until he came back in anguish and sorrow to make things right. Now all of us fear to fall into the Saviour's discipline, all recognising that we are students in his school.²³

Often sick and usually feeling tired in the heat, the first of the group to die was Johann Hadwig. None of the rest felt able to take care of the crops they had planted and everything grew up in weeds. The planters (fearful of reports he might spread) forbade Franz to visit their slaves and he turned to making shoes. But sales were slow, the material needs of the community kept growing, and Heinrich Steiner got very discouraged. Even though his wife, Katharina, wanted to stay at Combé he took her to Paramaribo. There she turned sick unto death and in his search for work he neglected her until she had large bed sores. Tempted to discouragement himself, Franz Reynier wrote in 1741:

Men's hearts here as hard as stone. If we hadn't been called to come we would certainly leave. The Jews here are just like in Germany. Slavery has become a part of the black people's mentality. They believe that after death they will go to a land where

²³ Nov. 26, 1740

there is nothing but eating, drinking, and sensual pleasure. Therefore they are not afraid of death.²⁴

But Georg Meisser, keeping his focus right, wrote soon afterward:

We have a free and open way to the wounds of the Lamb. This has become such reality for us that it makes pilgrimage a pleasure. How great is our joy, brothers, in being chosen to serve him! I believe the Lord will shoot us like an arrow to hit his mark. For that reason he has let me recover. We were all sick for eight months. The nature of this land and climate oppress the tent [the body] very much. Yet may the Lamb be praised that he gives us such inner cause for rejoicing!²⁵

Pilgerhut

Coming to the Saviour, for Heinrich Beutel, meant he had to flee from Jägerndorf in Upper Silesia. Even though it was late in the year and the leaves had fallen, the threat of Roman Catholic authorities in his home village forced him on. More than that, he felt obligated to help Katharina Ludwig, another young believer attending meetings with pilgrims from Herrnhut, to escape. Her parents had threatened to turn her in to the police.

Heinrich and Katharina left late at night. But the police got wind of it and set out, four on horseback, two on foot, in hot pursuit. The fugitives heard them come and huddled down in the underbrush, calling on the Saviour to hide them until the sound of their persecutors faded away. Then they got up and ran, tearing their clothes in the night, hardly daring to catch their breath or drink water until they had crossed the mountains and the border into upper Lusatia in safety. There, at Herrnhut, they found refuge in the young brothers' and sisters' choirs. Katharina married Joachim Sensemann,²⁶ and at Marienborn in the Wetterau Heinrich married Elisabeth Paschke. Eight days later, on October 8, 1739, they left for South America.

At Fort Nassau on the Berbice River, the newlyweds found Ludwig and Hans still alive and trusting in the Saviour's wounds. On their suggestion they all moved in dug-out canoes a twenty-four-hour journey upstream to the Wironje Creek. Many Indians lived there. Further from Fort Nassau they suffered less opposition from the planters, and with good hope (although Elisabeth was sick with her first pregnancy) they built a log shelter and named their place *Pilgerhut* (The Pilgrim's Watch).

An eleven-year-old black boy, whom the brothers named Christian, moved to Pilgerhut with them. So did Jaantje, the seven-year-old son of a Dutch father and an Arawak Indian mother. On December 21, 1740, Elisabeth gave birth to a little boy, and not long afterward Johann Gräbenstein, a cheerful brother who had grown up on a farm in Ansbach, in Germany, joined them.

²⁴ Johann F. Reynier *an die theure und ehrwürdige Kreuzgemeinde*, 16. September 1741

²⁵ Georg Meisser *an Bruder Götz in Heerendyk* 27. Januar 1742

²⁶ With whom she travelled to America on the first "sea congregation" where she lost her life in the attack on Gnadenhütten on the Mahoney. She lay sick, upstairs, the night the Indians came.

Johann liked children and made friends with Jaantje (who knew Arawak as well as Dutch) at once. Spending hours with him, he gradually produced a simple story of Christ in Arawak, in written form. With this the “three Johns”—Jaantje, Hans Güttner, and Johann Gräbenstein—set off into the virgin rain forest to win South America for the Saviour.

On widely scattered *campos* (grassy clearings in the forest) they found Indian groups, usually five or six families, living with their chiefs. More often than not, the men were out hunting. Some women, if they had not seen white people before, put up their hands and ran screaming into the woods. But Jaantje became a good interpreter, and once they recovered from the shock of meeting, the Indians became very curious. The boys read for them the story of Christ and sang. Sometimes they had to sing on and on, while some Indians looked through their things or touched them to see how they felt.

Because the Indian groups moved constantly about, the boys never knew when or where to find them. They carried their own hammocks and enough cassava to last them for five to nine days. Sometimes long snakes or jaguars frightened them. Stinging bugs bothered them all the time, and on unfamiliar trails they easily got lost. Describing one such event, Hans Güttner wrote:

It got dark in the forest and I could no longer see where to go. I crawled on hands and knees to keep on the trail, but even so I got lost. I told it to our Saviour and asked him to help me. When I had told it to him I began searching again and found the way back to the river. There I found my boat and came to the brothers again. Then I thanked the Saviour.²⁷

A few Indians made fun of the boys in their attempt to communicate with them. But as time went on, more and more showed a genuine interest in “the Creator’s Son.” On rare occasions the boys even found men who had worked on plantations and knew some Dutch. Once they met an Indian who to their amazement spoke Plattdeutsch well.

Back at Pilgerhut, Georg and Susanne (Funk) Kaske, joined the group. Susanne, a convert from Pennsylvania, had grown up on the frontier and took part eagerly on long trips into the rain forest. Not only that, she took special interest in the garden and cassava the brothers had planted. With the rest, she helped care for the fruit trees, coffee bushes, cows, goats, and chickens.

Fresh Start at Combé

After the group at Pilgerhut seemed fairly stable, Hans Güttner left to visit the brothers at Combé, near Paramaribo. By the time he got there, he felt very sick. The Steiners had returned to Europe—no longer part of the brotherhood, even though she had not wanted to leave. The Reyniers had also separated from the rest, and everyone looked discouraged. Hans grew steadily worse himself, and died on August 23, 1742. Two months later, Wilhelm and Magdalena (Müller) Zander arrived.

²⁷ *Hans Güttner an die theure und liebe Kreuzgemeine, 5. December 1741*

Newly married, the Zanders came from Berks County, Pennsylvania, where he had been studying Indian languages with Conrad Weiser. Soon after they arrived, Wilhelm wrote:

I found the brothers in a state of confusion. The devil had deceived them and filled their heads with things against one another. He had managed to divert their eyes from the wounded Lamb and was trying to turn them crazy. Yet in their hearts they longed to return to the Lamb and wished for a new hour of grace in which they could be bound together in love again. This took place on the first Sunday after our arrival, and was inwardly felt by all present. We felt *him*. Now we are totally new people together! Once more we are people who see the Lamb and call on him. We look to him to lead our way to the Indian people.²⁸

Wilhelm and Magdalena began visiting the people around them—black, brown, and white—at once. Describing what happened by Christmas, he wrote:

On the night of Christ, December 24, 1742, all of us were together in great blessedness. We discussed our circumstances thoroughly and what we should do from here on. It occurred to us to ask our Saviour to send us an Indian soul for a gift. This our deep desire was granted the very next morning. A young man, an Indian, came walking in. He was a decent fellow and we named him Franz. He soon made it known that he wanted to stay with us and has been here since.

With new hope stirring the believers at Combé, they dared make an offer and purchased five hundred acres on the Cottica Creek. That involved travel in dugout canoes. None of them had experience, and in a sudden rainstorm several of the brothers almost drowned together. But not until the week of Christ's passion did serious accidents occur. Franz set out to look for game. After waiting a long time on him to return, the brothers saw his capsized boat come floating downstream and knew something had gone wrong. They set out to look for him, but Georg Zeisberger got into deep water and drowned. Wilhelm Zander became too sick to remember what he was doing or even to recognise people, while his wife had her first baby. Six days later it died, and Franz and Maria Barbara Reynier returned to Pennsylvania.

The Gemeine at Pilgerhut

In spite of setbacks at Combé, the Saviour's Gemeine at Pilgerhut in Berbice, flourished. One evening when the boys came to an Arawak settlement several days journey into the rain forest, a very old woman came to sit beside Johann Gräbenstein. She listened carefully as he read the story of Christ. When he finished she asked him to read it again—and again. Finally, when she understood how the Son of Kururuman (the Arawak's name for the Creator) had come to die, and how his blood washes guilt away, her face beamed. "I want to be washed in the blood," she said.

With Jaantje's help, Johann talked with her and prayed. But the next day, when the old woman insisted on coming with them, the brothers gently told her it was impossible. "We

²⁸ *Bericht Zanders über seine Thätigkeit in Suriname, 1742*

live too far away,” they said. “It will take us three days to get back and you could not walk that far.”

The old woman surprised them. Shortly afterward, while the brothers worked around Pilgerhut, she suddenly appeared on the edge of the forest, with her daughter. Pointing to herself she said, “Wash me in the blood from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet!”

Struck with wonder, the believers at Pilgerhut could do nothing but praise the Saviour and get ready for their first baptism in South America. In their community diary they wrote:

We believed her desire was from the heart, and the Saviour allowed us (through the use of the lot) to baptise her on the 31st of March. She was the first of her people. Our sisters put a long white gown on her and led her into the Saal. Brother Kaske spoke to the congregation. Then our sisters knelt with her and Brother Kaske poured water over her head, three times, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, while naming her Hanna. One could not keep back the tears. Our sisters laid hands on her and blessed her. Then they led her, light and joyful, out of the Saal.²⁹

With old Hanna’s conversion the windows of heaven seemed to open over the South American rain forest. Soon after her, the brothers baptised an Arawak believer they named Simeon. After him came Magdalena, then Jonathan, the boy the Indian chief had entrusted to their care. Old Hanna’s grandson received baptism as Nathanael, along with Jakob and his wife Sara, who knew Dutch. Isaak followed, and a fifteen-year-old girl the believers named Elisabeth.

No one could doubt the transformation. Their faces shone. Released from *Jawahu* (Satan) whom they recognised as chief of evil spirits, they revelled in the joy of freedom from fear. As the Saviour whom they called *Wakukü* (Our Life) forgave them, they learned to forgive one another. Old Hanna told the brothers how her heart turned warm inside her, and others testified to feeling the Lamb’s blood pouring over them.

The believers from Herrnhut boldly preached Christ and him crucified—never questioning whether it made sense to the Arawak Indians or not. And, strangely enough, it made sense. The more Johann Gräbenstein learned their language, the better he understood their beliefs about God and the world. In the beginning, Arawak Indians believed, all people used to live happy lives in a land of plenty. No one used to die. But when people disobeyed Kururuman they had to go out of that land. That he should now have sent his Son to make it possible to get back, did not seem at all incredible. More and more believed and almost daily baptisms took place at Pilgerhut.

On the feast of Christ’s Resurrection, in 1749, the brothers and a great number of Indians gathered for the singing of the Paschal Litany and a love feast—a brown-skinned multitude, mostly naked, but with the baptised ones dressed in white linen robes. Jakob’s

²⁹ *Diarium von Pilgerhut, 31. März 1748*

wife, Sara, did the interpreting and the brothers baptised a young convert they named Christian.

Christian's parents received baptism soon afterwards as Johannes and Maria, followed by Thomas and Esther, with Isaac's wife, *eine sehr dreiste Wilde* (a very bold savage), who took the name Rebekka. Joseph became a follower of the Lamb, together with his two wives, Mary and Martha, admonished by the brothers not to be selfish in their places. When Rosina and Lydia (old Hanna's daughter who had walked with her to Pilgerhut) received baptism with Lydia's husband Philip, three Arawak sisters, Sara, Rebekka, and Magdalena, laid hands on them. Jonas, Bathsheba, and Joshua followed. Then Moses and Miriam, a married couple baptised together, and Jephtha, who had been the most powerful *bogayer* (medicine man) of the region, with his wife Debora and two others.

Behind it all, old Hanna spent her days sitting on a hammock under a thatched roof on poles at Pilgerhut. Too old to work anymore she spent her time praying. Day and night she prayed until every one of her grown descendants—her children, her grandchildren, her great-grandchildren, and her great-great-grandchildren—had come, one after another, to rest in the Saviour's wounds. She prayed until the day following a particularly blessed love feast on July 31, 1760, when with a smile on her wrinkled face, she went home.

“Orderly and Beautiful Lives in Peace”

So many Arawak people came to Pilgerhut to live that the brothers needed to settle them in satellite communities, Gnadenhütten, and Friedenshütten, along the Wironje Creek. There, amid cassava patches and fruit trees, they learned how to follow Christ. The pilgrims from Herrnhut, a chronicler of the church in Berbice wrote, “were not only sent out as preachers, but as Christian colonists. Through their work and way of life they were to show the Indians and black people what Christ is like and to win them for him.”³⁰

This involved challenges.

Arawak men had never done gardening or work around home. They only hunted, and let the women do the rest. Even women expecting babies, or with little ones in their care, worked in cassava patches while men sat in hammocks under the shade. How would this change? The German brothers at Pilgerhut decided to teach by example—and it worked. Before long, all believing men pulled weeds and built their own houses.

Used to continual heat in the rain forest, Arawak families lived without clothes. But after they loved the Saviour, their thinking changed. Theophilus Schuman, who came to Pilgerhut with his new wife from Germany in 1748, wrote:

Every morning and evening when they are home we have hours (meetings) with them. We read to them about the Lamb and speak with them through Jonathan, our interpreter as well as we can. We feel the presence of the Lamb among us. Four young brothers live with us so they do not have to be constantly among the naked women. They have made a room for themselves alongside that of our single European

³⁰ Fritz Stähelin

brothers, and we try to spend as much time with them as possible. Until now they have been used to nothing but unlimited personal liberty. Now they are learning to study. They are starting to speak a nice German, and are understanding us better all the time. We expect the Saviour will use them as witnesses among their own people.³¹

When asked if they wanted to get married, the young Arawak believers, did not seem in a hurry. They showed more interest in teaching and as soon as Immanuel and Aquilla learned how to read they began to hold classes for the rest. They also helped the brothers from Germany translate Scriptures and songs. This provided more challenges. The Arawaks, for instance, had no concept of sin. But they knew what disobedience meant. They only dimly comprehended abstract ideas like love, worship, or faith. But they lived according to rigid ethics of their own. It did not take long for the Europeans to realise they had things to learn from the Arawaks too.

The Indians kept themselves cleaner than the Europeans. Believing that sweat weakens the body, they bathed frequently throughout the day. In their houses—thatched shelters without walls—they sat on clean sand, and they treated one another very politely. Young people called their parents and others of that age “honoured ones.” Older people called all young men “handsome ones” and it took the believers from Herrnhut a while to learn the correct titles for women, girls and children, and how to use them.

Even though the Arawaks did not have an exact word for humility, they well knew the attitude. One should not look another person in the face while speaking “like a dog,” they believed. Rather, one should rise so that others might sit and count it a privilege to give. Arawak hospitality always involved eating and drinking together.

Jonathan, along with Sara, became a gifted interpreter—repeating in musical, almost sad-sounding Arawak, what the brothers told him in German. Not only did he repeat what the brothers said, he offered brilliant explanations of his own, and evening meetings at Pilgerhut soon attracted up to one hundred and fifty or more people—old Bilka, a crippled widow regularly first in the Saal. On joyful *Gemeintäge* (monthly all-day meetings) the Indian believers listened with great interest to letters from Germany, Greenland, Africa, and from their distant kin in North America.

Life in communal residences at Pilgerhut (from three to five families to every house) provided the new believers with pleasant fellowship. Even work became pleasant as they learned to do it together in a Christian way. Before they met the Saviour, the Indians drank fermented cassava and fought at their festivals. Now, during the cassava harvest, or at great fish poisonings along the river, they sang German and Arawak songs. They held frequent love feasts, and around fires in the tropical night they listened to brothers speak of the Saviour whom they loved.

During these evening meetings, the believers first noticed new faces among the crowd—not Arawaks, but painted Caribs and Waraus, clutching tall spears. Silently, cautiously, they came out of the woods, then disappeared again. But the brothers did not fear. The

³¹ From a letter to Ludwig von Zinzendorf, December 27, 1748.

Lamb was with them in the heart of the South American wilderness, and like him, they had no need of arms.

On Christmas eve, 1748, the believers celebrated the baptism of Peter and Anna. On New Year's day Cornelius, Noah and Tabea, Rachel (Peter's second wife), old Leah, and Jephtha with his two wives, Caritas and Rosina, received baptism, and the community diary reports:

Our Esther went out after the meeting with several sisters and most of the visiting women. She explained to them what they had heard. They stayed out until late in the night, praying, and from this time on, it happened regularly.

The first Arawak wedding, celebrated with great joy at Pilgerhut, united Christian (Johannes's son) and Klara, in marriage. Wilhelmina, a young Arawak believer, married Elieser, a Carib, soon afterward.

In their unconverted state the Arawaks feared nothing more than death, and the souls of the departed. But the Pilgerhut Diary describes what happened when the first believers among them died:

Our old brother Simeon was the first of the Arawak Christians to go home. He was sick for a week. Every time we spoke with him he was content and remembered the wounds of the Lamb. Minutes before he took his last breath one of the brothers asked him what he was thinking. He answered, "I am thinking about the Lamb of God and how he will make me a new person."

Moments after Simeon went home, our old sister Naemi (mother of Jephtha and Rebekka) followed him. Before her death she had spent much of her time in conversation with the Lamb.

We held the burial in the evening. We covered the coffins with white cloth and decorated them with green branches from trees. Everyone gathered in the Saal. We sang and spoke to those who gathered of the blessedness of going to be with the Lamb. Then we walked, a long column of people following those who carried the coffins, to where we laid the bodies to rest. Four brown brothers and two white ones carried the coffins. We sang while we buried them. Then we returned in an orderly way to the Saal. We thanked the Lamb for blessing with such grace the homegoing of these first believers among the Arawaks. Instead of being filled with fear and superstition they all left with a great blessing.

Another entry in the Diary reports:

Our nine-year-old Daniel was bitten by a snake and soon died. One could picture in him the boy Jesus. He was a decent, blessed, child. Half a year ago when his grandmother was mourning the death of her son Cornelius, he said: "Do not cry, Grandmother. He is with the Saviour. We will soon be there and see him too!" Yesterday in the childrens' hour he had such a happy face, fixing eager eyes on the teacher who spoke. He always paid attention like that. Today, down by the river, as

soon as he got bitten by the snake he told his parents: “I will not stay with you. I am going to the Saviour.” Soon afterward he said: “Now it is over. I no longer feel any pain.” Then he died.³²

Not everyone that came to Pilgerhut learned to walk with Christ. Sometimes, because they did not understand the people well, it took the brothers a while to notice what happened among them—like the illicit relationship that developed between a black boy and an Indian woman they took in. A few walked off with things that did not belong to them, lied when questioned, or covered up the sins of others. But the beautiful testimonies of the sincere, far outshone every trial, and convinced the brothers over and over that their coming from Europe to South America had not been in vain. Wilhelm Zander wrote in 1745:

Now we live in joyful community one with another, sensing the efforts of our beloved Mother [the Holy Spirit]. The Lamb is with us and we feel his wounds. I rejoice to be his little creation, to love him and to know that he loves us—not from compulsion but voluntarily, out of grace!³³

Theophilus Schuman wrote:

The Arawak brothers and sisters have the privilege of coming to know without detraction or confusion the centre of all blessedness: the Lamb with the wound in his side. Washed with the blood and water of that wound it is no wonder that excesses so often associated with revival have not occurred among them. They have thrown themselves down before their Redeemer and are constantly becoming more joyfully dependent on his wounds. Their blessedness has greatly increased since we can speak their language well enough to talk to them without interpreters.³⁴

In a letter to Brother Ludwig he added in 1748: “As often as one comes upon Pilgerhut in the wilderness where so many live orderly and beautiful lives in peace, one has to fall down and kiss the feet of the Lamb.”³⁵

A Growing Light

Far from a trackless wilderness, the brothers from Herrnhut found South America’s rain forest a complex world of its own—complete with efficient communications and travel. It did not take long for the parents, brothers and sisters, and more distant relatives of the Arawak believers to learn about Pilgerhut. A few, like Thomas and Esther, left on regular journeys into the forest, bringing others back with them every time. The baptised believers Amos and Ignatius with their wives, and Manasse, a single brother went to live west of the Essequibo River, toward the great falls (Kaietur). Tobias went even further, to the Orinoco River delta, and did not return for several years. But when he did, the brothers rejoiced to see him even more at rest in the Saviour’s wounds than before.

³² *Diarium von Pilgerhut*, 31. März 1758

³³ *Wilhelm Zander an Ludwig von Zinzendorf*, 29. November 1745

³⁴ *Theophilus Schumann an die Societät in Zeist*, 23. Juli 1749

³⁵ December 27, 1748

The same could be said for Jeremias and Abisai of whom the Pilgerhut Community Diary reports:

Jeremias and Abisai came back to us from the other side of the Essequibo. We had not seen them for five years. They confirmed our feeling that once a soul has truly come to know the Lamb, he will not lightly remove himself from his faithful arms. The two brothers told us we should not think of them forgetting the Saviour. The thought that he died for them and that they belonged to him, washed in the blood, never left them in all their travels.³⁶

Jeptha, the converted medicine man, and his wife travelled far to the south where he spoke about the Saviour at many tribal councils. When he returned after a year he described how they had travelled to the end of the Essequibo, carried their canoes across the hills and floated down other streams to a great river in the south (the Amazon?). Around this time the first Warau family came to live at Pilgerhut, and a delegation of strange but “very decent Indians” came from the Orinoco delta to “hear about the Lamb.” So did a group of fifty from the Muruka area, and a chief from the Corantijn River with eighty men, women, and children.

Visits the German brothers themselves made into the rain forest no longer resembled their first laborious journeys. No one feared them anymore. Requests came constantly, begging them to come here and there. But even they stood in wonder before the Lamb the day an old man walked out of the forest into the clearing at Pilgerhut. He came with a circle of dignitaries, carrying a silver-studded cane. Through their interpreters the brothers learned he was the “chief of chiefs,” the head of the Arawak nation itself.

Ephrem

By the mid-1750s the brothers needed more space and Ludwig Dehne with the Arawak leader Christoph moved to a new location on the Corantijn River with a large group of believers. They named it Ephrem. But within a short time everyone turned sick. The Indians felt sure evil spirits lived there and fled. Christoph stayed for a while longer, then for two years Ludwig, trusting in eventual victory through Christ, laboured on alone.

So sick he could scarcely walk Ludwig cleared the land, planted bananas, fifty coffee bushes, sweet potatoes, oranges, and limes. Before he harvested his first crop he went many a day without food. One time an ant bit him and he did not know how long he had lain unconscious before he came to. Another time a snake nearly strangled him. In his diary he wrote:

When I lay down in my hammock to sleep a fairly large snake let itself down from the roof beams upon me. It circled three times around my neck and head and began pulling itself tight. I thought this could be my end. With my one hand I could reach a piece of chalk and with it I wrote on the table: “Do not think it was the Indians that killed me. It was a snake.” Then it came to me to call on the Saviour to deliver me. I pushed upwards on the snake so suddenly and so hard I skinned my cheek, but I got

³⁶ *Diarium von Pilgerhut, 18. März, 1757*

it off. It was dark and I could not see where it went, so I crawled back into my hammock to sleep. Every evening, for a while, a jaguar would roar close to my shelter.³⁷

More worrisome than the danger of wild animals, however, were the hostile Caribs of the region. In his diary Ludwig wrote:

In November [1757] the Carib Indians finally came to carry out their threat of striking me dead. At noon, while I was eating, around fifty men came on canoes and surrounded my shelter. They were terrible to see. Some had iron hatchets and some knives. Some carried wooden clubs and other weapons. I went out and welcomed them in Arawak. One man, whom I noticed was their captain, shouted back, "Talk to us in Carib." They said more things but seeing I could not understand, they finally had an interpreter step forward. "Who gave you permission to build here?" he asked.

"The governor," I answered.

"Why did you come to our land?"

I answered with pleasure: "I have brothers across the great water. They heard that the people of this land do not know their Creator, so they sent me to tell you about him. I am to learn your language, then more of my brothers may come to join me.

"Are you Spanish?"

"No."

"Are you French?"

"No."

"Are you from the Low Country then?"

"No. I came here from the Low Country, but I came from further away. I come from the brothers who love you."

"Have you not heard that we want to kill you?"

"Yes, but I did not believe it. You have men among you who have spent time with me and who know that I did not come to harm you."

"That is true," the chief answered, "and they have told me that you are not like other white men."

"So if you know that I love you, why would you want to kill me?"

At this the Carib chief began to smile and the circle broke form. Through the interpreter they began to ask me questions. Before they left they wondered how I stood for food, and promised to bring me some.³⁸

With the Caribs on his side, Ludwig's situation gradually improved and new believers came to join him at Ephrem. First a few, then steadily growing numbers of Caribs and Waraus found peace in the Saviour's wounds. Visitors came, sometimes sixty or more at a time, bringing chickens, fish, and fresh venison. After several more years at Ephrem, the entire community moved to a healthier and more adequate location upstream they called *Hoop* (Hope). The pilgrim Hans Wied described it years later:

The house at Hoop is somewhat like an Indian house, and somewhat like the houses of the colonists. The front side is covered with boards. The other three sides have

³⁷ Ludwig Dehne, *Lebenslauf*

³⁸ *ibid.*

double walls of sticks, plastered white. The inside partitions are also of sticks. The floors are of a hard-packed mixture of clay and chalk. The ceilings of the brothers' and sisters' rooms are also of sticks, but the large room where they eat together and where they have their meetings is open up to the roof of cane and palm thatch. Covered walkways lead to all the outbuildings, the kitchen, the storehouses and stables so that in rainy weather one can get everywhere in the dry.

Saron

Early in 1757 the believers Elias, Immanuel, Bartholomäus, and sixty others set up camp at the mouth of the Corantijn to fish where its wide brown waters merge into the tropical sea. To watch a ship coming upon them did not surprise them. But when they recognised the face of their beloved brother Johann Gräbenstein on board (coming back from Germany), the Indian believers went wild with rejoicing.

Johann did not come by himself. On the brotherhood's ship with his new wife Rosalina, he came with Wilhelm Zander, Mathias Nyborg (an unmarried brother from Finnland) and six other men—the converted sea captain, Nicholas Garrison, at the wheel—with a load of materials to build a new community in Suriname.

Much had happened to Captain Garrison since his trip to Greenland with Christian David. Coming back to Germany from there, he found his wife and one of his children had died. But he married again, made more trips between Pennsylvania, England, and the Netherlands, and now found himself in South America—eager to do what he could for the Saviour's Gemein.

Pulling up to the docks at Nieuw Nickerie on the Suriname coast, the newcomers from Europe met their second surprise: Theophilus Schuman and a group of brothers from Pilgerhut en route to Combé. Rejoicing for the Lamb's direction in bringing them together on the wild coast of South America they sat down for an impromptu love feast in his name.

Soon afterward the rejoicing turned into serious considerations. The group came in the rainy season and all turned sick. Johann Gräbenstein died even before Captain Garrison decided on a site for the new community, a lovely plain along the Saramakka River. His widow married Wilhelm Zander (Magdalena had died and was buried at sea). While laying out the new site Captain Garrison—as skilled a surveyor as he was a pilot—walked into a nest of bees that almost stung him to death. But with the willing co-operation of all, a circle of buildings stood in the wilderness and the brothers knelt on the clean sand floor of a new Saal by March 25, 1757.

They had hurried to finish it before the feast of the Lamb's Resurrection. But Mathias Nyborg's home going came first. Never complaining, always eager to help (the morning the brothers at Herrnhut knocked on the door of his room to ask him to go to Suriname they found him standing with his bags already packed) he had turned deathly sick before anyone knew it. During his last days he seemed to speak constantly, very happily, with

the Saviour. But no one understood him because in his delirium he spoke only Finnish, until he drew his last breath and they laid him to rest beneath the aloe trees.

With the help of some from Pilgerhut, Aquila (chosen a leader in the congregation), Levi (one of the best hunters in the group) Ananias, Stephanus, and Timotheus with their wives, and the single sister Maria Agnes, the believers planted new cassava plots, yams and cacao at Saron. All thanked the Saviour for their new refuge in the wilderness, but the day after a blessed Gemeintag and communion on June 25, 1761 the Bosneger (bands of runaway slaves that lived in the rain forest) attacked.

Just before the morning meeting on the Lord's day, Ludwig Dehne, on a visit to Saron, returned from his morning walk in the woods. Suddenly he saw the brother Daniel Kamm come running wildly toward him. Shots rang out, followed by terrible screams. Wilhelm Zander fled from a burning house and Ludwig saw one of the Indian brothers fall with a long arrow sticking from his back. Within moments flames roared from the palm-thatched buildings of Saron, but neither Ludwig nor any of those that escaped remained to see what would happen.

Only after days of flight in almost continual rain, living on fruits of the forest, did a number of those that survived find their way back together. At Saron they found the bodies of eight believers that had died in the attack. Eleven women and children had disappeared, presumably kidnapped by the Bosneger, and most of the buildings at Saron lay in ruins. But taking fresh courage in the Saviour, the brothers set out to repair what was left and keep on building the community. Old Georg Weber, refugee from Kunvald in Moravia, pioneer on St. Thomas and St. Croix, moved with his fourth wife, Martha, into what had been an Indian shelter. Others cleaned out the cow barn in which to live, and a few settled in the carpenter's shop. All turned sick. Both Georg and Martha soon died and Theophilus Schumann who had come to Saron followed them shortly.

Bambey

Early in 1763 the community at Saron, thriving once more in the Saviour's love, hosted three unusual guests. Black guests, and very shy, they came from a twenty-two day journey up the Saramakka River.

At first the guests, who knew some Indian words and English creole (the language used by slaves), did not talk much. They only said they came from large villages up the river where they planted yams and sugar cane, where they kept chickens and pigs, and found wild game in abundance. But the more they questioned them, the more convinced the believers at Saron became that they were the very men who had fallen on Saron earlier and destroyed it.³⁹ Knowing this, they became immensely interested in them and tried to learn more.

³⁹ Seven years later when a band of Bosneger visited Saron, the brothers wondered about an Indian man among them. It turned out he was Gottlieb, the son of the Arawak brother Ignatz, kidnapped on the day of the massacre in 1761. He had become totally absorbed in Saramakkan black society and married there.

What had brought about the change in the Bosneger's attitude toward them? What did they know about God, and how could one get there?

Following the instructions their black visitors left them, Ludwig Dehne with two young brothers, Rudolf Stoll from Winterthur in Switzerland and Thomas Jones from England, left in 1765, to travel up the Saramakka River.

Several weeks travel upstream, having found their way through five sections of raging white water, the brothers reached the settlement where Abini, one of the men who had visited them, lived. In his diary Ludwig wrote:

On the 24'th of December, around two in the afternoon we arrived at the village where Abine lives. Roars and screams of joyful welcome, along with the firing of guns, followed us until we were inside one of the lodges. Close to it sat the council house. As soon as the elders had gathered there they summoned me. The head elder stood in the middle of the circle and spoke to all about what he had in mind for us and our work. Everyone was very happy and thanked him. After the meeting Abini came and invited us to live with him. We accepted his offer and I began to tell them about their Creator, and the one who loved them enough to give his blood for their peace. "Well," he said, "You must be talking about our Gran Gado!" "That is right," I told him. "I am talking about the one who made heaven and earth, the one whom all men must honour and obey." At this the Bosneger trembled and feared that their gods would be unhappy.

Several nights later a terrible roar echoed through the Bosneger village. No one knew where it came from, but the people did not doubt their gods were angry and staged a three day feast to pacify them. Even Ludwig, who had spent many years among the heathen, had never seen or heard anything like it. The Bosneger were not gentle, peace-loving people like the Arawaks. One could not even talk with them as to the stern Caribs. Pounding on drums, shouting in unearthly voices in unison, and dancing until they wallowed in the dirt, rolling their eyes back into their heads, the Bosneger worshipped cruel spirits and seemed in bondage to them. Women ruled the village, often through dark spiritual powers, and even little children took part in wild celebrations.

Unlike the Indians, the Bosneger (still remembering the horror of slavery) held no respect for white men. Some demanded guns from the brothers, and on not receiving them became angry. But Abini showed himself friendly and placed his grandson, a twelve-year-old boy named Schippio, into Rudolf Stoll's care.

The brothers settled close to the village and began to plant peanuts. After two months Thomas Jones died, but Christ's presence became ever more powerful. Arrabini, a leader among the Bosneger, began to question the power of their gods and show serious interest what the brothers had to say about the Saviour and his blood.

Early one morning Arrabini took a decorated wooden *obeah* (cult figure) and burned it to see what would happen. Then he took his gun, went down to the river and trained it on a

lazy crocodile, worshipped by the villagers. “If you are really a god,” he told the crocodile, “I will not hit you. But if you are just an animal, I will shoot and kill you.”

A shot rang out and the crocodile dropped dead.

The whole village reacted in horror. “What will happen to us now?” the people wailed. “Arrabini has slain the body of a god!”

Before long Arrabini lay in his house, deathly sick. Everyone believed the gods had cursed him. The witch doctor cursed him too and said he could never have children again. But Arrabini recovered. When he found a Boma snake in his house one night (another supposed god) he killed it too, and a year later his wife gave birth to a little boy. They named him Isaak.

The unconverted villagers, led by their chief priestess, did what they could to hinder the brothers and drive them away. One man became possessed by a spirit identifying himself as Jesus, and tried to convince the villagers to listen to him instead of to Ludwig and Rudolf. But more and more began to hunger after the truth. Grego, the son of the chief priestess herself, began to come to the brothers’ evening meetings for Bible study and prayer. The Saviour touched his heart. With tears in his eyes he promised to go back to the village and tell everyone about Christ.

Thoni and Fonso, Grego’s friends, began to come, followed by a boy named Jessu, and with great joy, Rudolf noticed their hearts becoming tender before the Lamb as they learned how to read and write. When Schippio had a sore foot, an infected puncture wound, he prayed for it to get better. On his slate he wrote, “Jesus meki mi foette kom boen.” On the day Arrabini, the first believer among the Bosneger, received baptism in the name of Christ a great crowd of villagers converged upon the meeting with cutlasses, loaded guns, terrible shouts, and curses. But Arrabini, baptised Johannes, gave them a calm and beautiful testimony and the crowd faded away in fear. Schippio received baptism some time later as David, and Grego as Christian, followed by many more.

With Johannes Arrabini’s help the brothers built a community at Bambey on the Saramakka River. Once more they planted cassava and bananas. Once more they built a Saal and celebrated great love feasts in holy joy—not infrequently with visitors from the Saron Indian community they had once destroyed.

“Christ’s Sacred Nearness”

Johannes Arrabini, beloved leader of the Saramakkan Christians, became known in the communities of the rain forest as a quick and wise counsellor. When a careless man told him he did not fear hell because he would have much company there, Johannes told him: “Go stick your hand in the fire. Does it hurt any less to burn all your fingers at once?” No matter what the evil one and his followers brought up against him, Johannes overcame their opposition with the blood of the Lamb, and the Saviour’s healing power spread through Suriname.

In 1767 the brothers bought a large wooden house in Paramaribo itself. With a well and water tank, a garden, and numerous outbuildings, they began a Christian community unlike any they had attempted before. Johann Gottlieb Krohn from Stettin on the North Sea, Johann and Eva Penner from Schwerin, and other believers from Germany began to make clothes. They hired free blacks to help them and loaned slaves from masters in the city. Their business prospered. Learning songs and listening to stories about Jesus while they worked together, the employees of the clothing factory soon became a band of earnest seekers—a black brother, Cupido, who took the name Christian, becoming the first to receive baptism.

But even in Paramaribo, the heat, the opposition, and the challenge of their racial diversity, kept the believers struggling for survival—both physically and spiritually. Those not sick unto death were always hot, itchy, molested by stinging bugs day and night, or suffering from eye infections. Steady rain could last up to forty-eight hours or more, sometimes beating down so hard no one could hear what the brothers said in their meetings. After Johann Penner and most of the other Europeans at Paramaribo, including her husband Jesse, had died, Charlotte Petersen wrote a letter home in 1762:

All the men have gone home, and now Sister Weber has gone home too. Regina (Frau Millies) and I are the only ones left. We cry much and our hearts could dissolve in lamentation for all the brothers and sisters we have lost. It is very hard on the tent [the body] here, especially for people already over forty. Such people, like us, cannot take the climate and are soon delivered off. When one comes here the air is so hot and heavy it feels like one will suffocate. Then one is soon sick and it goes between life and death.⁴⁰

In all the communities of Suriname and Berbice, the list of those who “went home” [died] grew rapidly longer, and in constant need the brothers and sisters of all races—black, brown, and white—learned to share their suffering with Christ and one another. One night the believers at Pilgerhut heard terrified wailing (*klägliches Geschrei*) outside as the Arawak brother, Philip, came running with his little daughter, just bitten by a snake. During a meeting at the same place, the sisters suddenly noticed two abaras, the most poisonous snakes of all, under their benches. Another one appeared among the children during a love feast, and at Saron an eight-foot-long kunukusi bit the Arawak brother Elias.

Fields, laboriously cleared by hand in rain forest communities, soon lost their fertility and the brothers at Pilgerhut had to search far and wide, some travelling all the way to the Demerara colony, for enough cassava to feed themselves. Even so they had barely enough. Ants and blight destroyed what they planted, and faced with the need to pay all their own expenses (the European communities having enough debts of their own) the brothers lived simply and worked hard. They also experimented with whatever they thought might bring extra income. Theophilus Schuman collected spiders, scorpions, and centipedes to preserve in alcohol and send to Europe in case they had medicinal

⁴⁰ September, 1762, from Paramaribo

properties. He also offered to supply a German pharmacy with regular shipments of snake fat, and tried raising vanilla. Others made shoes and did carpenter work.

Travel, both on South America's wide rivers and at sea, involved dangers. When the brothers on the Corentijn bought a boat they sunk it with everything inside on the way back from the Demerara. On another occasion they soaked two hundred pound sacks of flour and the sisters had to bake it all right away—making Zweiback to last for months.

Spanish and French pirates lurked along the coast. On one occasion when they fell on a group of believing Indians the Arawak brother Stephanus startled them. He had lived along the Orinoco River and in good Spanish told them about the Lamb of God. In 1781 Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice fell to the English under Sir George Rodney. A year later they passed into French hands, then back to the Dutch. Then all the colonies became English until their final partition to France, the Netherlands and England after the Napoleonic war.

During these disorders the brothers Hans-Georg Jorde and Kaspar Pfeiffer suffered capture at sea. Carried off with three hundred prisoners (eighty of whom soon died) they suffered unspeakable thirst and brutal treatment. Hans-Georg died too but Kaspar kept his courage and did what he could to preserve his dignity among the wild and filthy men. One day he tried to wash his clothes. A big wave came in and swept them away. After months at sea, wasted beyond recognition with starvation and disease, long hair flapping about his face and nothing but a rag tied around his loins, he arrived on Barbados.

Pirates also caught Ludwig Dehne when he finally returned to Europe with a one-year-old black child. But no one, perhaps, had a more eventful ride across the Atlantic than Elisabeth Möser.

Coming to Suriname from Europe as a young bride, Elisabeth soon found herself a widow and decided to return. The English, at war with the Netherlands, captured her ship, kidnapped her, and gave her a berth in a cabin with six rough men. At first they tried to make her participate in wild parties on deck. But they soon came to respect her firm convictions, and left her alone to pray. When the ship docked at a West Indian port and Elisabeth realised it was Bridgetown, Barbados, she asked to see the pilgrim Johann Gottlieb Klose, then living on the island.

Bruder Klose, at first her captives did not understand, and told her, "Yes, yes. You may keep your clothes!" But when Elisabeth persisted and pointed to the town, they let her go with two friendly girls who said they knew where to take her. The girls led Elisabeth deep into the worst part of town and into a tavern. They took her upstairs and showed her a room. To her horror, when Elisabeth stepped inside, she found a man lying in bed, waiting for her. Crying to the Saviour for help, she turned and fled. A friendly captain took her to the island of St. Christopher. From that place she found passage with another ship to Cork in Ireland. There the people took her, with her plain dress and head covering, for a Quaker. But a Dutch captain could understand what she said and put her

on a ship for Amsterdam from where she found her way back to the believers' communities.

Far more serious than the threat of snakes, poverty, and pirates, however, were white planters' continual attempts to ruin the believers' communities. Because the brothers would not swear oaths or bear arms, the planters said, they would exile them and drive all their Indian converts back into the woods. The planters did all they could to turn the Indians against the brothers, saying Pilgerhut was nothing but a trap through which the brothers would capture them. They said the brothers planned to take them all to Europe to sell as slaves. They gave the Indians rum and warned the Dutch government the Moravians were planning a rebellion.

The Dutch Reformed church circulated a warning against contact with the Moravians because they were "doctrinally unsound." At the same time, colony authorities tried to force the brothers to enslave all Indians living on their land, claiming it was illegal to farm in the colonies without doing so. Time after time, Dutch planters chased their cattle onto the believers' crops, and Lauerens Storm van s'Gravensande, governor of Essequibo and Demerara threatened to kill every Moravian that would set foot on his territory.

The Indian believers, far from turning against the brothers because of the planters' threats, lived in constant fear that white colonists would capture them. None of the pilgrims in the rain forest knew the extent of this fear until an Arawak boy saw a strange boat coming up the Wironje Creek one day at noon. He shouted an alarm and within minutes Pilgerhut stood empty. But real danger did not come, in the end, from white planters.

It came from Cuffy.

On March 1, 1763, a strange band of refugees appeared in Pilgerhut. In bedraggled clothes, their hair dishevelled and nearly senseless with fright they were a Dutch planter's wife with six household slaves and all her children, escaping the greatest slave revolt in the history of the Guiana colonies. On February 23, in a massive uprising at the Magdalenenburg plantation on the Canje Creek, a slave named Cuffy and his supporters established black rule in Berbice. In quick succession the Juliane, Lelienburg, Elisabeth, and Hollandia plantations had fallen, followed by twenty-five others in rapid succession.

Cuffy, an intelligent and educated man, set up black rule at Fort Nassau. The tables turned. Suddenly white gentlemen and ladies worked in the fields under the whips of black masters. White arms lifted against them got chopped off. Whites trying to run away lost a leg. White women everywhere suffered violation with a vengeance and the heads of many planters stood on pikes along the road. In a wave of unspeakable savagery swarms of black men and women ravaged Berbice colony, looting, burning and killing. They beat drums and danced. In wild feasts they roasted white children to eat with their parents' wine.

Hearing the roar of cannons on the nearest plantation, only an hour downstream, Heinrich and Elisabeth Beutel, Johann Heinrich Clemens, Georg Meisser, Friedrich Vögtle, Johann Nitschmann, Gottlieb Schultz, the Indian believers Christoph with his wife Akale, Ruth with her two children, Michael, Christian, Martin, Gottlieb (a lame boy), and the rest at Pilgerhut fled.⁴¹

In some ways, the flight from Pilgerhut reminded Heinrich Beutel of his escape from Jägerndorf in Silesia, years before. But now he was old. His wife had a hard time keeping up. Some of the group was sick and they had to leave the work of many years behind them—clothing, cattle, linen, furniture, tools, even the carefully maintained archives of the Pilgerhut community.

Stumbling through the rain forest on narrow trails in the dark, the brothers and sisters split up into smaller groups. Old Georg Meisser, pioneer at Combé, widowed for the second time, slipped on a rotten log and fell into a creek. A small group of blacks patrolling the Berbice frontier fell on them and stripped them of the few things they had managed to save—including the handwritten Arawak dictionary Theophilus Schuman had spent years to prepare—but let them escape with their lives.

Weeks later the first survivors came straggling into the plantations of the Demerara colony. Johann Heinrich Clemens wrote: “Brother Beutel and his wife . . . Gottlieb and I were almost six weeks in the forest. The brothers Vögtle, Meisser, and Nitschmann reached Demerara by Green Thursday, but the rest of us had the grace of being fed with the body and blood of Jesus Christ while still in the wilderness. . . . In all this the Saviour was unspeakably close to me.”

Pilgerhut, after Cuffy’s rebellion, lay in charred ruins. So did Ephrem, and black marauders repeatedly raided Saron—killing Nathanael (Old Hanna’s great-grandson) who served as a leader in the congregation. But as long as the believers kept their eyes on the Lamb, they flourished no matter what happened. Sixty years after Georg Piesch, Georg Berwig, and young Christoph von Larisch set foot at Fort Zeelandia, the pilgrim Hans Wied, visiting Hoop on the Corantijn, wrote:

On the day of our *Gedenktage der Gemeinde* (day of communal remembrance), after our morning blessing at the house, Brother Lösche led the first meeting. The place was full and the worshippers reverent. At ten in the morning the whole congregation came together for a baptismal service. Those to be baptised sat in white clothes, on chairs in front of the audience. After the liturgy, led by Brother Fischer, he baptised a young Indian woman, Smerra, and gave her the name Zippora. I baptised Arowa, naming him Manasse, and Brother Lösche baptised Sebaygu, naming him Cleophas. The sacred nearness of Jesus’ presence surrounded us. It built me up to see the Indian brothers’ and sisters’ active participation and how they came, after the service, to

⁴¹ Johann Heinrich Clemens wanted to ask the Saviour first (with the use of the lot) whether they should abandon Pilgerhut, but none of the rest felt that was necessary.

congratulate the newly baptised ones and greet them with the kiss. In the evening we celebrated communion, in beautiful silence and order, with all the members.⁴²

The Lamb, in the eighteenth century, built his church in South America.

To the East and Other Places

“As pilgrims on earth and friends of the whole world, we can be at home anywhere,” a meeting of the brothers decided in Germany, in 1749. From Labrador igloos to a bark shelter on an island in Canada’s St. Clair River (where Christian Friedrich Dencke lived among the Ojibwas who “let the dogs lick their dishes clean and ate one another’s fleas like sunflower seeds”) to leaf houses without walls in the rain forest, they had already found this true. But vast regions of the world still remained, to them and other Europeans, unknown. Untold numbers of “heathen” still needed to be won as friends, and all the Moravian believes could hear was the Saviour telling them: “Go!”

David Nitschmann and Christian Friedrich Eller had already sailed, by way of the Cape of Good Hope and Zanzibar, to Ceylon, in 1738. At Mogurugampelle (Shady Spot in Which to Rest by the Way) in the centre of the island, they had discovered an open door for the Saviour’s message. But white Protestant preachers serving Dutch traders on the island, drove them away.

Nine years later Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker (a doctor) and Johann Ruffer found their way with an Armenian trader overland from Syria to Baghdad. At Aleppo they joined a camel caravan following the Euphrates River. More and more traders joined until the caravan included two thousand camels. But numbers did not guarantee safety. Kurds fell on them near Shermakhan and robbed them of everything they had—even their clothes. In the confusion, the two brothers from Herrnhut lost each other. Severely wounded and barefooted on the burning sand, Friedrich walked for a day until he arrived, nearly dead with thirst, at a village. Kind people gave him clothes. Others brought him water, bread, and grapes, and in the village Friedrich found Johann again. After another month of travel bandits attacked them again. This time they left Friedrich with his underwear, and Johann with a shirt, but they had to travel nine days with only a little bread and water until they came to Ispahan, in Persia.

For two years the brothers lived in Persia, seeking contact with old Christian churches, and telling the Muslims what they could about Christ. When they left Ispahan bandits attacked them once more and stole everything they had. Johann Ruffer died and Friedrich made his way to Egypt. In Cairo he learned Arabic. The Muslims tolerated him because he knew medicine, but when he set out with a band of traders to Abyssinia their dhow sank off the coast of Mecca and he lost all his supplies.

⁴² *Reise der Geschwister Hans Wied von Paramaribo nach Hoop . . . im Jahre 1794*, Gemein Nachrichten, 1795

After a trip back to Europe, Friedrich returned to Egypt with Johann Heinrich Danke, and Hans Antes (son of Heinrich, of the brothers on the Skippack, in Pennsylvania). This time they made their way up the Nile. Fighting between desert tribes kept them from reaching Abyssinia, but young Hans made clocks and Friedrich attended the sick—while demonstrating life in the Saviour’s wounds—until he died.

Before Friedrich Hocker left for Egypt the second time, fourteen single brothers from Herrnhag, under the leadership of Johann Stahlmann and Adam Völker, made their way around Africa to the rainy Malabar Coast of India. There, at Tranquebar, where rice paddies lie between the ocean and the Western Ghats, they established a small community they named *Brüdergarten* (Garden of Brothers). One of the young men, Christoph Butler, began to learn Malabar and Portuguese at once. The rest, even though suffering under the heat, set about erecting buildings and planting crops. A year later a group of families arrived under the leadership of Nicolaus Andreas Jäschke. Many died. Six brothers that survived moved onto the island of Nancowry in the Bay of Bengal. In 1771 others moved to Serampore, near Calcutta.

Russia

Thirty-five years after the first brothers from Herrnhut found their way on foot to Archangelsk on the White Sea, Peter Konrad Fries and Johann Erich Westmann (just returned from the West Indies) travelled to St. Petersburg. Russian authorities no longer wanted to capture or imprison them. In fact, their new empress, Catherine II (a German noblewoman by birth), was asking Moravian settlers to come.

In St. Petersburg, Catherine II gave the brothers a document promising them great freedom and exemption from bearing arms. She also granted them a tract of nearly eleven thousand acres, far to the south-east, in the lower Volga region. The brothers saw it as a miracle of grace. Not only would that place them in the midst of the heathen Kalmuk tribes. It would give them a base from which to reach Persia, China, and Mongolia.

Daniel Heinrich Fick and four companions from the single brothers’ choir at Herrnhut travelled overland to Nizhny Novgorod in 1765 and sailed down the Volga to get the place ready. They came prepared to fell trees and build with logs. But to their amazement they left the last forests behind at Saratov and entered treeless steppes. What lumber they needed had to come floating down the Volga. Their land proved salty and largely unfit for growing crops. But with four married couples, a widower, twenty-five single brothers and seventeen single sisters that came from Herrnhut a year later, they built a new community called Sarepta.

The brothers and sisters planted many trees. They built large choir houses, a Gemeinhaus and a Saal, in a protected place along the river. Even though swarms of mosquitos bothered them in the summer and harsh winters buried them in snow, the trading post they set up proved an excellent way of getting to know their neighbours, and they soon felt at home. Kalmuk tribesmen brought horses, beef and furs to trade for goods the brothers shipped in from St. Petersburg. The young men in the community also set up

shops where they wove cloth, baked bread, built carriages, dyed wool, tanned leather, and made shoes, clothing, locks, and candles. Joachim Wier, the community doctor, not only cared for patients from far and wide, he discovered a mineral spring near Sarepta. This brought even more patients, many of whom had money and paid well for the hospitality the brothers offered them.

In the midst of all the work necessary to build their new community, the brothers did not neglect what they had come for. Gottfried Grabsch and Georg Gruhl made their way into the Caucasus and Muslim lands. Johann Gottfried Schill and Christian Hübner translated large portions of the Scriptures into the Kalmuk language. The priests of these nomad tribesmen, followers of lamaist Buddhism, opposed them. When a group of twenty-three Kalmuks, touched by the mercy of the Lamb, moved to Sarepta the priests notified Russian authorities. Claiming the Moravians could not legally receive converts, they came and took them away. But faithful pilgrims, like Konrad Neiz, did not give up. And in his wandering life among the Kalmuks he made a discovery that would change Sarepta forever.

He discovered mustard.

Using the Kalmuk's recipe the believers at Sarepta began to cook and sell a delicious mustard spread. Russians all over the country, including the tsar Aleksandr I, tasted it and wanted more. Before long Sarepta's mustard and vegetable oil factory supplied the whole community with a stable income.

In spite of disastrous fires and revolutions on the steppes (that caused the whole community to flee in 1774), Sarepta came to stand as a witness of the Saviour's peace. Russians came from far away to visit it. Other German colonists along the Volga and in the Ukraine—Lutherans, Mennonites, and Hutterites—looked to it for spiritual direction and believers from there began the branch communities of Schönbrunn and Gnadenthal (Beautiful Fountain and Valley of Grace) nearby.

Africa

The year after the awakening to the blood in Herrnhut, in 1735, the Moravian refugee Heinrich Huckoff met a mulatto from the Gold Coast (Ghana). Touched with what he heard, he travelled as soon as possible to the slave trading centre of São Jorge da Mina. Four years later the brother Abraham Ehrenfried Richter entered Algeria. But Georg Schmidt, who fled Kunvald in Moravia as a seventeen-year-old, first established a community after the pattern of Herrnhut on that continent.

He did not come unprepared. On a trip to Moravia with Melchior Nitschmann the Austrians had captured him and handled him roughly in prison for six years. But in his affliction—alone—Georg prayed. He found a sure source of strength in Christ and travelled, on his release, to the Netherlands to learn Dutch. From there he sailed to Africa, landing at Cape Town on July 9, 1737.

In the Cape Colony Georg found white Protestant settlers (Dutch Reformed and Huguenots) greatly outnumbered by the Malays, West African blacks, and local tribes they had enslaved. Cattle ranchers and farmers—the Boers—ruled the surrounding veld. Among them, in squalid *kraals* lived the Bastards (the offspring of white settlers and their slaves) the San and Khoikhoi people.

Georg found the Khoi villagers shy and humble. But those living close to large numbers of white settlers feared them (for good reason—men in Cape Town bragged how many “wild” Khoi they had shot, along with zebras and antelopes) so Georg decided to go further inland. He caught a ride with some Dutch settlers in a covered cart drawn by twelve oxen. Along dry river beds and over barren hills they made their way against a cold wind until they approached Stellenbosch. There, in a sheltered gorge along the Sonderend River, Georg found a band of Khoi hunters with whom he decided to stay. *Bavianskloof* (Monkey Ravine), the Dutch called that place.

Georg’s first challenge was speech. Few of the Khoi women or children knew Dutch. Their language (recognised since then as one of the most difficult in the world) consisted of sharp clicks made with the tongue, with the teeth, with sudden gusts of air, and sounds from the throat or nose. Some of the same sounds meant different things on five different tones.

No Dutch people had tried to learn the Khoikhoi language. They called it *Hottentotten* speech for the way it sounded, and took for granted these slight brown-skinned people were predestined by God to damnation—good for nothing except work, if even that. Georg set out to prove the contrary. He made friends with the Khoi children and taught them to read and write Dutch, while he learned words in their language. He took in an orphan boy and soon had fifty students in classes he held every day. As communication between them improved he told them about the Saviour. He prayed with the people and taught them songs.

The first Khoi villager to repent and receive baptism, Georg named Willem. He was the boy that lived with him. Following this, he baptised forty-six others, and the Saviour’s love shining from *Bavianskloof* brought results no one would have expected. Thirty-nine Dutch settlers, marvelling at their neighbours new-found peace repented and became followers of the Lamb as well.

Those that did not repent arrested Georg and shipped him back to Europe.

For fifty years no one from the believers’ communities could come to South Africa. The Dutch, staunchly Calvinist, refused to take them there or let them in. Georg Schmidt died. But in 1792, with Dutch politics in upheaval, the brothers Heinrich Marsveld, Daniel Schwinn, and Johann Christian Kühnel managed to find passage to Cape Town again. They hurried out to *Bavianskloof*, hardly daring to see what they would find.

They found Lena, the last baptised member of the Khoi congregation, still living.

Lena could not walk anymore. Her eyes had grown dim. But after she understood who the brothers were, she had a grandchild fetch her most treasured possession—a Dutch New Testament wrapped in sheepskins inside a leather bag. Georg Schmidt had given it to her when she was young. For fifty years she had guarded it, even though she could not read, and treasured what she remembered about Christ.

The newly arrived brothers from Herrnhut found the seed planted by Georg Schmidt lying dormant, but far from dead. Some Khoi villagers, even though they did not understand it well, had kept on reading from the Bible, generation after generation. Now that the brothers lived with them again they quickly responded to its message and a new community, *Genadendaal* (Valley of Grace) took shape in South Africa.

Dutch farmers did not like their Khoikhoi workers “wasting time” at meetings in Genadendaal. They feared what would happen if all of them would learn how to read and “think themselves equal to whites.” So many, who had depended on the farmers for their living, lost their jobs. This, with poor hunting and several dry years in a row, soon brought the believers to the edge of starvation. At Genadendaal they planted fruit trees and worked hard to prepare the land for crops. But a dam they built for irrigation broke, and swept their fields, with most of their houses, away. It ripped up the trees they had planted and buried promising gardens with rocks and sand. Johann Friedrich Hoffman, Gottfried Horning, etc.

Hyenas fell continually on the sheep and goats the Khoi believers tried to raise. But when the brothers Adolf Bonatz and Johann Heinrich Schmidt set out with thirty Khoi hunters to eliminate them, they met a greater danger:

Not far from Genadendaal they discovered a hyena and fired at him, but being only slightly wounded it escaped. After searching for it in vain the brothers left. One of the Khoi hunters heard something in the scrub, however, and called them. Johann Heinrich Schmidt hurried back, dismounted, and entered the bushes with several of the hunters close behind. When they had reached the middle of the scrub their dog roused some animal, but tight foliage prevented them from seeing what it was. Those standing outside, when they saw it was a leopard, fled, leaving Johann Heinrich and one of the Khoi brothers alone. Not knowing which way to get out, and afraid of meeting the leopard head on, they backed up slowly with their guns cocked, ready for attack. All of a sudden the animal sprang on the Khoi brother, pulled him down and began to bite his face. Johann Heinrich aimed his gun at the leopard but at such close quarters he could not get a good shot. Then, when the animal saw him, he let go of the Khoikhoi and jumped at him. Johann Heinrich’s gun went flying and he held up his hand to defend himself. The leopard bit him close to the elbow and hung on. With his other hand Johann Heinrich caught it by the throat, and managed to throw it back, pinning it down with his knee. He called for the Khoi hunters who came running. One of them stuck his gun in behind the brother’s arm and fired. He killed the leopard but the Johann Heinrich had eight ugly wounds from his elbow to his wrist, the teeth having sunk in to the bone.

Drought, hunger, and accidents notwithstanding, the community at Genadendaal became established and flourished in the Saviour's love. The Khoi women, taught by sisters from Herrnhut, learned how to sew and made handcrafted articles for sale. The brothers planted more trees and vegetables and turned to raising grapes. They also built a blacksmith shop, a furniture factory, and a mill. Seekers came from far and wide and in slightly more than twenty years, 256 mud-and-wattle houses, plastered white, with doors and windows, and thatched roofs, stood along the wide, flat street of Genadendaal. Peach and pear trees bordered the street. The believers planted many rose bushes, and their village became home to more than a thousand baptised Khoi believers.

At their regular meetings the believers made room in the Saal for visitors from many places, and their love feasts drew joyful crowds. Once again their lives spoke to the Dutch farmers, one of them who told the Khoi brother Philip who worked for him: "You Hottentots surprise me very much. No matter how wretchedly and drunkenly you live before coming to Genadendaal, once you are there and hear the Word of God you become utterly different. You seem to receive mercy and grace. I was born and raised a Christian. I have a Bible and read it often, yet I find those blessings still escape me."

Philip answered him, "Even though I cannot read the Scriptures myself, I remember much of what I hear." Then he related to his boss the parable of the workers in the vineyard, applying it in a fitting way to the situation of the Dutch and Khoikhoi believers. The farmer listened carefully. "You know," he said when Philip was done, "I never understood that parable before. But now I do!"

This farmer was only one of many Dutch colonists to humble himself before the Lamb and become a supporter of the Khoikhoi congregation.

Antigua

Johann Töltschig, pilgrim to England, found one Yorkshire boy particularly eager to hear what he had to say. Night after night Samuel Isles came to meetings of the believers at the Lammsberg until 1743, when he left his parents' home, surrendered everything to the Saviour, and went to live among the brothers in the Netherlands and Germany.

From Germany Samuel left for St. Thomas in 1748. French pirates captured the ship he travelled on and took him to Martinique. When he managed to leave that island Dutch pirates overtook him, and the Spanish narrowly missed capturing him again before he slipped into the St. Thomas harbour. Eight years later, newly married, and with his wife Molly expecting their first baby, Samuel landed on Antigua.

Samuel and Molly did not know anyone on the island. They had thirty pounds sterling with them and looked at once for a means of supporting themselves. Behind a rickety wooden house they rented, they planted kale, cabbage, and turnips. They used hollowed out gourds for dishes. Within a year Samuel baptised the first awakened slaves on the island, Joseph and Abraham. Then Molly died. John Bennet, a tailor from England, came, and Samuel married Maria Margarethe Zerb from the brothers' community at Bethel, in Berks County, Pennsylvania.

The believers on Antigua lived in serious poverty, often stitching clothes by candlelight until late at the night. But with the help of those who brought a few stones every time they came to meeting, they built a Saal just north of St. Johns, at a place they named Spring Gardens. Samuel and Maria Margarethe had a child they named Joseph. But Samuel, already deathly sick when he arrived, died soon afterward. Then she married the brother Paul Schneider. A week later he died too (some tropical fevers hit suddenly) and the brothers married her for the third time to Johann Christian Auerbach. With him she had one daughter that died.

By this time Peter Braun, a brother from southern Germany, Benjamin Brookshaw from England and Johann Meder from Livonia had joined the fourteen believers on Antigua. Benjamin soon died and a hurricane devastated the island. But like John Holmes wrote later:

The catastrophe seemed to have a positive effect on the black people, teaching them the necessity of knowing the Lord who hides from the wind and is a refuge in the time of storm. An awakening broke out among the slaves, spreading like a fire in every direction. Those who came to the meetings at Spring Gardens increased every year so that by 1775 they numbered around two thousand and not a month went by without the baptism of ten or twenty more.⁴³

Altogether serious in their desire to know the Lamb, some slaves walked as far as ten miles after their day's work in the fields to attend meetings in Spring Gardens. They did this week after week even though their masters beat them for it and the pilgrims living there soon found themselves answering the door day and night. So many came "their hearts tender to the Saviour's mercy" that the brothers had little time left over to earn money or eat.

A new community, Grace Hill (Gnadenberg) took shape on Antigua, where the brothers soon baptised two thousand believers. Another four thousand attended meetings, or took part in instruction classes throughout the week. In 1778 hardly any rain fell, and famine struck the island. Some planters fed their cattle rather than their slaves (thinking the slaves could find food on their own) and a time of terrible thievery began. Many of the believers, coming home from work, found all the food and other possessions gone. Four years later the French attacked. One believing slave found himself carried to Guadeloupe, but he took it as the Saviour's leading and preached the Gospel there.

Little by little, as their slaves persisted in following Christ, the Antigua planters came to believe in their sincerity. One master tried for ten years to entice the believers working on his land to commit fornication. He did everything he could to tempt them. But not one of them, neither old or young, fell into his trap. Neither could other slaves lead them astray.

After nearly everyone on their plantation professed Christ, a young slave named Richard and his friend planned a dance. They planned it on the Lord's Day and hoped to distract

⁴³ John Holmes, *Historical Sketches of the Missions of the United Brethren*, pg. 340

the believing young from going to meeting. But it did not work. No one came to the dance and the boys decided they might as well go to meeting too—if nothing else than to have some fun.

They went to laugh and make trouble. But they stayed to pray. So powerfully did conviction fall on Richard, and so earnestly did he call on the Lamb for mercy that the brothers soon baptised him and he became a leader in the congregation. With unswerving faithfulness he served the Saviour and his Gemein until he turned ninety-nine years old. Then he went home.

All Antigua changed. Where as many as twenty or thirty slaves had commonly been hanged on Monday mornings for weekend fighting or stealing, crime almost disappeared. Murders became unheard of, and the practice of witchcraft died out. The brothers began a school for eighty students. Almost before they knew it, they had seven hundred students eager to learn how to read and write. Because not nearly everyone could come during the day, they began to have classes during the night as well. Both at Spring Gardens and Grace Hill crowds had grown to where communion had to be served on shifts. By 1788 more than six thousand baptised members met there for worship, and the brothers began a third community they named Grace Bay. Membership there grew to rapidly to more than a thousand as well.

During the war with America in 1812 another famine struck Antigua and two hundred from the Spring Gardens community alone, died from hunger. But with their eyes on Christ the enslaved believers did not lose hope. More than anything else, they liked to sing. Those who could read, like the black leader, Jacob Harvey, carried their hymn-books with them and learned hundreds of songs by memory. One day, after a brother from Europe saw Jacob's hymnal crammed with blades of grass, dried leaves, cane tops, bits of paper, and rags, he said in surprise, "Why Jacob, you will break your book apart."

"But massa," Jacob answered apologetically, "Dem me partikler hymns!"

After a Good Friday service at Spring Gardens, another European brother, Joseph Newby, wrote:

From where I sat in my room I had a good view of the roads leading from different plantations. From every direction I could see groups of people come running at various distances, and as it occurs when people eagerly haste after something from which they expect much pleasure, one may see the attitude of the mind in the bent of the body. So it was here. They took every short cut, the young and healthy passing the aged and the lame, and the latter pressing on with all their might, every effort telling of the eagerness of their souls to be present at a place where they might hear the marvellous of Jesus giving himself a sacrifice for sinners.

When I considered that many, if not all, of these people had thrown down their hoes in the middle of the day, left their noon meals, and foregone the little rest of which they stood so much in need for the support of their bodies, under hard labour, I broke out almost involuntarily in this ejaculation: "Oh Lord Jesus! Feed these poor

hungry souls with the precious word of thy sufferings and death. Oh enable thy poor unworthy servant to give them their meat in due season!”

Sowing in Tears, Reaping with Joy

The brothers Andreas Rittmansberger and John Wood landed on Barbados on 1765. Andreas promptly turned sick and died. But others came and a circle of believers formed around them until the great storm of 1780 struck the island. Hardly any house stayed standing. Absolute chaos reigned as black and white survivors struggled for survival among the ruins. When the brother John Montgomery and his wife (parents of James, the hymn writer) arrived from England in 1784 they found only fourteen believers surviving.

After six years the Montgomerys left to begin a new congregation on the island of Tobago. Daniel Gottwald and James Birkby began to work among the slaves on St. Christopher and a congregation of more than two thousand baptised believers took shape—this in spite of French invasion and a tidal wave that carried the town of Basseterre into the sea.

Christian Heinrich Rauch, who first lived among the Mohicans at Shekomeko, travelled to Jamaica where he died in 1763. But once again, his efforts bore fruit. Within a year of the arrival of the first brothers in Jamaica eight hundred or more slaves attended their meetings.

Jamaica, like Antigua, was an English Island. Some of the plantation owners were Methodists (or had come under Methodist influence) and allowed the brothers to establish the Carmel community on seven hundred acres at St. Elizabeth, and later on, Emmaus. Mesopotamia and Eden, followed, and one of the pilgrims reported:

The number of our hearers increases all the time. The preaching of the Gospel works powerfully in the hearts of the black people and changes the way they act. Some walk in true fellowship of Spirit with our Saviour and have received the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins. Others mourning because of their sins seek salvation in Jesus. Of the latter class there are about two hundred. Recently, on a Lord’s Day, a black man from an estate about fifteen miles from here [Carmel] brought me a stick marked with seven notches. Every notch he told me stands for ten slaves on that estate that pray to the Lord. About twenty of them attend meetings at a plantation called Peru. They are all unbaptised but want to receive holy baptism. The awakening spreads, and we hope that our Saviour will gather a rich harvest.⁴⁴

The believers on Jamaica lived in the hope they had in Christ, but far from everything went as they would have liked. “The people of this island have all sunken in ungodliness,” wrote one of the first pilgrims on the island. “Either they serve the god of money, or else the god of their flesh.” French pirates captured Nathanael, son of Peter Braun, coming with his new wife from Pennsylvania, and took them to Sainte-Domingue (Haiti). In 1780 a hurricane flattened the Mesopotamia community and severely damaged the rest. In their first fifty years on the island, forty-seven believers from Europe died of

⁴⁴ Brother Lang, letter from Carmel of March 15, 1813

tropical fevers. But their afflictions, compared to those of their black brothers and sisters, were light. One of them described life on the plantations:

Every morning at dawn, a shell is blown to call the slaves to work, and they all have to appear at once to join their gangs. Every gang walks off to the field under the direction of the driver, also a black man, armed with a long whip. The children, from six to twelve years old, under the care of a black woman, also armed with a rod, form another gang and go to clean the pasture or any other work suited to their strength. These black drivers are steeled against all pity and compassion, being generally as brutalised as can be. The gangs go to work all day in the sun, their only covering being a cloth tied around their loins. In digging cane holes they have to keep in line and anyone getting behind feels the driver's whip. There is no let-up in the work, except at noon when they eat. Late in the evening, after the sun goes down, they come back weak and faint. Not infrequently they also have to keep on working by the light of the moon. Then the overseer who has kept track of how much they worked flogs those men or women with whom he is dissatisfied. They have to lie on the ground and before the whip comes down the third time, they are already covered with blood. . . . Not an evening passes without us hearing the crack of the whip and the screams of the victims. But what can we do? We are as much despised as the slaves. If we write a line to the overseer begging him to have mercy, it sometimes, but not often, helps to save one of the poor creatures. Day after day, the same toil, the same scenes continue.⁴⁵

Slavery continued on the British West Indian Islands until events in England changed the situation forever. Hannah Moore, an English Christian deeply troubled by what she heard, wrote against slavery. So did William Wilberforce, a Member of Parliament, and others. Many people in England stopped buying sugar produced by slave labour, and revolts in Haiti and the Demerara Colony (at that time the world's largest cotton producer, and one of Great Britain's wealthiest overseas possessions) convinced the government to call for change.

In 1833 the British government—against all opposition of the planters—voted to set the slaves free. Five years later, on the stroke of midnight, August 1, 1838, when the act went into effect, three hundred and twelve thousand slaves, only on the island of Jamaica, prepared to celebrate. Thousands of them baptised believers, clothed in white, gathered at their chapels shouting, “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed,” and praising God.

That same night, hundreds of thousands more in Barbados, Demerara, Berbice, and other British islands celebrated the end of their slavery. But nowhere did the brothers feel more deeply grateful than on the dry island of Antigua, lit up that night with the almost continual flashes of a great thunderstorm. Of the thirty thousand free men and women rejoicing in the rain, almost all belonged to the Saviour's Gemeine.

⁴⁵ Henry Whitley's account from J.H. Buchner, *The Moravians in Jamaica*, London, 1854

Like Samuel Isles, pioneer of the Spring Gardens community said there before his death: "As little as one can accomplish, one likes to do what the Saviour would most have liked to do."

Of One Blood

"You children of the Most High, how is your love one for another?" an eighteenth century Moravian hymn writer asked, "How do you follow the true impulse for unity? Do you stand tied together as one? Has no division of spirits occurred among you?" In answer to his own questions he wrote:

Our Father in Heaven knows our hearts. Without love we have no reason to call ourselves brothers. . . . But as soon as we are born from above we become brothers and sisters in Christ. We have one Father, one faith, one Spirit, one baptism, one way to heaven that we all travel together in full unity of heart. In our unity we find nothing but sweetness, for all suspicion, hatred, and offences have flown away.

Our Mother that is above [the Holy Ghost] holds us together and baptises us with heavenly fire. No difference finds place among us because humility has united our hearts. Where selfishness, quarrelling and hatred survive we cannot feel the grace of love, neither can we prosper in the choir of foreign thrones.

Zion's fellowship brings us to leave our earthly kindred and sets our brothers and sisters in Christ in the place of former acquaintances. The one still enchanted by love of the world, even though he wants to have a place in the brotherhood, can in no way be accepted by it until he makes himself small at the foot of the cross. . . . On the other hand, see what a blessing it has been for the redeemed to be counted as brothers! Praise the Father, for he brought it about! Sing to him with united hearts and voices! Do not let one hour pass without love and praise! We stand before the Lord as one in his covenant.

What I am, brother, you are too! Through the Lamb's wounds and bruises we share our inheritance. With all that we have we struggle toward the same fatherland. The church as one strives toward Christ and we must be ready, brother, to die one for another like Jesus who made us his heirs. One member feels the other's pain.

Let us remind and point one another to the crown of life! If Babylon thirsts for the blood of the saints, let us stand, watch, and defend ourselves together. The crying of the children will yet be heard and with the force of unity Babylon will be destroyed among us! Who can resist the power of unified spirits?

Let us love and rejoice in our hearts, making life sweet one for another, even though in pain. Let us press into innermost fellowship with Christ, illuminated by the blood. . . . In the world to come it will go even better with us. Our whole brotherhood before the Father, ablaze with love, will rejoice in his blessing. Oh let us give one another our

hands and hearts and pray that Zion may soon be rescued to where love knows neither beginning nor end!⁴⁶

In no other way did those who went out from Herrnhut testify more powerfully to the Saviour's love, than through their lives in brotherly community. Even though they had settled in places around the world and their influence had spread into all branches of Christianity, they renewed their commitment—at a meeting in Marienborn in 1764—to building *Ortsgemeinen* (communities at specific locations) as bases from which pilgrims could work. Without the Ortsgemeine, they believed, their pilgrims would have nothing to set before the world as an example. They saw the Ortsgemeine as a continuation of the early Christian community, preserved in part by Catholic orders, but long fallen into ruin, and looked to the Saviour for help in restoring the “little places he has chosen for his people's special abode, the communities on which his Shekina rests.”

The Ortsgemeine, the Moravians believed, should be a model for all members of the great Church of Christ (seekers of all denominations) to learn from and follow. It should be the prototype of the truly awakened community, where brothers and sisters “live only by the rule of Christ” and “possess the spirit and understanding required for life together.” As such, the members of the Ortsgemeine enjoy a “special grace that sets them apart from all other children of God,” but only as long as they gave their minds and hearts

to the furtherance of the common good. If a member finds that the pursuit of his career does not contribute to this, he shall not insist on continuing it, but willingly and without resisting forsake even what means very much to him. It must also be remembered that outstanding economic success for one brother easily creates problems for all. Even though he may have been poor and humble, the brother who becomes economically very successful may no longer feel motivated to concern himself with the welfare of all. We must take great care that economic success—even though we must thank those who bring it about—does not distract us from our most important work.⁴⁷

Genadendaal in South Africa, Sarepta in Russia, Saron in Suriname, Lichtenfels in Greenland, Lamb's Hill and Ockbrook in England, Friedensfeld on St. Croix, Salem in North Carolina—every Moravian community told the world in its own way what the brothers and sisters believed: “*In commune oramus, in commune laboramus. In commune patimus, in commune gaudimus* (we pray and work together, we suffer and rejoice together).” But nowhere did the ideal of the Ortsgemeine reach happier fulfilment, or shine brighter in a dark world, than at Bethlehem in Pennsylvania. One who recorded their story wrote:

Every man, woman, and child became part of one household. Everyone worked for the good of the whole. They gave their time and labour, receiving in return shelter, food, and clothing. No one was paid any wages. The church owned all the land, all the buildings, even the tools with which the people worked. Yet no one was forced to

⁴⁶ *Gesangbuch*, 886

⁴⁷ Marienborn Synod, *Protokolle der Sitzungen* 4. August, 1764

surrender his private property. Anyone who disliked the system was free to leave. As it was pointed out, there was no wall around Bethlehem.⁴⁸

When families moved to Bethlehem (that operated as one household with Nazareth and surrounding settlements) they signed a document releasing everything they owned to the “General Economy” of the church. But when anyone left, the church took it as its Christian obligation to give them back as much as they had brought in.

Because of the risk involved in this arrangement, both for the church and those joining, the believers accepted new members only after careful proving. “Better make the door coming in very small,” they said, “and the door going out very large, than the other way round.” At a meeting in Bethlehem they decided in 1742:

Applicants for membership, even those considered outstanding brothers, and who have spoken publicly in the congregations from which they came, must be tested, examined, and treated in an impartial way. Only if this is done with humility and discernment may the congregation keep itself pure. All denominations and sects strive to grow larger and stronger. But our rule must be to keep the door wide open for everyone wanting to leave, and to be very cautious in letting them in. It is more likely that our church will turn sick from being too large than from being too small.⁴⁹

Even after newcomers passed the congregation’s approval, the brothers used the lot to discern the Saviour’s will about receiving them. They also made sure that everyone knew, before joining, what to expect. In 1744 they put the rules of their General Economy into writing:

1. The Lord’s people shall serve him in two divisions: the Pilgergemein and the Ortsgemein. The pilgrims shall tell the good news of Christ to all. Those who stay home shall take care of the children, the lands, the buildings, and the livestock.
2. In the beginning, the pilgrims are to have the community at Bethlehem as their home base. But they shall move about like a cloud before the wind of the Lord so that all places may bear fruit. They shall establish small congregations wherever needful and possible.
3. At Bethlehem there is to be a Hausgemeine formed of representatives from every calling and division of labour (the builders, the educators, those who buy provisions, those who prepare food, those who see to the clothing, the sanitation, the record keeping, etc.) The Hausgemeine shall see to the needs of the whole congregation, and in particular the needs of the Pilgergemeine.
4. The single sisters shall have their own dwelling, as well as the single brothers, and they shall be organized in their respective choirs.

⁴⁸ Fredric Klees, *The Pennsylvania Dutch*, pg. 99

⁴⁹ *Diarium Bethlehem*, 31. Oktober, 1742

5. In America, where getting married is not so complicated, partners shall be found for the young people as soon as expedient.

6. The purchased lands [the Whitefield tract] shall be divided into six agricultural communities: Nazareth, Gnadenthal, Christiansbrunn, Friedenthal, Gnadenhöh, and Gnadenstadt.⁵⁰ At Bethlehem the brothers shall carry out their trades.

7. The Whitefield house at Nazareth shall become the nursery⁵¹ and school of the small children.

8. We shall use no denominational name other than *Evangelische Brüder* or *Brüdergemeine* (“evangelical brothers” or “community of brothers”).

9. Our purpose is not to make everyone Moravian. Not everyone we reach with the Gospel shall be expected or even encouraged to join our communities. But if another Ortsgemein takes shape it may follow our pattern.

10. We shall take the Gospel to the Indians in an apostolic way (without regard to denominations). Those who have become baptised into other groups shall be allowed to remain there, and we will concentrate on baptising those who are awakened through our work.

11. The Wyoming Valley shall not be forgotten.

12. The *Zusammenkünfte* [general meetings like the one held at Theobald Endt’s house in Germantown] shall continue to be open to all Christians. They shall continue to represent the Church of God in the Spirit.⁵²

Jacob John Sessler, a descendant of the first believers in Bethlehem wrote years later:

The only ties that bound them together were their promises, their good will and the sense of a mission that was peculiarly theirs. . . . Members donated their time and labour in exchange for nothing more than food, clothing, and shelter for themselves and their children, and received no other reward than the joy of seeing the Gospel preached and the salvation of their souls. . . . Material reward in the form of wages in such a spiritual enterprise as theirs was for them much beneath the holiness and dignity of their work. They belonged to no man and would accept no man’s wages, for as they said in the Brotherly Agreement of 1754, “We all belong to the Saviour. What we have belongs to him, and he shall dispose of it as pleases him.”⁵³

Enemies of the believers in Bethlehem accused them of living “as in a military academy” and suspected they were “papists” of one kind or another. But as long as the brothers and

⁵⁰ The last two of the six were never developed.

⁵¹ Children, after they turned eighteen months old, spent the day in nurseries, supervised by teams of sisters. When the congregation saw that this was not the best, the practice was discontinued and parents again assumed full responsibility for their own.

⁵² From the rules of the General Economy, adopted in 1744.

⁵³ Jacob John Sessler, *Communal Pietism*

sisters desired nothing but Christ and loved him, they found their Gemeinschaft a source of continual joy.

Only in true Gemeinschaft (community, fellowship) in Christ, the brothers believed, could true equality become theirs. Everyone equal before the Lamb. Equal in life and death, buried under stones of equal size lying flat on the ground. In equality and community the Saviour's Gemeine would become visible to all, like Heinrich Antes exclaimed on the day the first sea congregation arrived: "Today, at last, a visible church of the Lord can be recognised in Philadelphia!"

Peter Böhler, when the question of continuing the General Economy arose in 1758, declared:

Our communal housekeeping does more to promote the Saviour's cause than any gold mine he might have given us. If every one that takes part in it serves Christ, then it is for us an inexhaustible treasure. . . . I do not know whether our people would have held out against the spirit of worldliness if the Saviour had not counter-attacked it with our communal housekeeping. Considering this, you may easily guess how I feel about seeing it continue.⁵⁴

Community: Body and Soul

Making no distinction between their fellowship in the Spirit, and their daily work together, the Saviour's *Kreuzgemeine* (Community of the Cross) at Bethlehem handled both with great seriousness. A committee of brothers decided what to build and who worked where. Other committees decided what to eat, where and what to buy, how to make their clothes, who should care for the sick, and how to keep the settlement clean.

The believers worked seriously, but heaven and earth touched one another at Bethlehem. Worship flowed into work, and work into worship. With extra-ordinary joy the single brothers' choir celebrated the "Festival of the Tree Cutters" soon after their arrival. Following their love feast, eaten together, they marched to the music of trombones, axes on their shoulders, into the snowy woods. In a few years they cleared seven hundred acres and had most of it under cultivation. By the late 1750s nearly two thousand five hundred acres of cultivated fields surrounded Bethlehem and Nazareth.

The builders and carpenters, likewise set to work with music and a love feast, built seventeen community dwellings (some of them with dozens of rooms on three or more floors), forty-eight farm buildings, five schools, twenty manufacturing shops and stores, five mills, and two inns in a little over fifteen years. Every spring the farm brothers celebrated the Feast of the Sowers, and on the first day of harvest the whole community gathered before dawn for the Reapers' Love Feast. Those in charge handed out sickles and forks, then all marched in formation—to the music of a full brass band—to the fields. All day long they cut, tied, and stoked the grain while some played music, others shared Scriptures in breaks for rest and prayer, and the children brought water from the spring.

⁵⁴ March 9, 1758

Harvest days ended with young men playing trumpets, leading the singing congregation home as the sun went down.

Frequent feasts throughout the year celebrated the work of the spinning sisters (the grandmothers of the congregation), the dairy brothers, the smith and cart making brothers, the cooks and the washing sisters, and whoever else, from the oldest to the youngest at Bethlehem, took part in the General Economy. Every feast called for new songs, fitting decorations, and messages from those in charge. At the celebration of the stable brothers they sang:

May you be praised Jesus Christ, the Lord we love! We praise you for becoming man, you set over all things by God. You lay in a stable at Bethlehem, not only for Shem's chosen race, but for cursed Ham and Japheth's tribe as well.⁵⁵

Brother Josef wrote a song especially for the sisters:

Know sisters, the blessing of your ceaseless work for Christ. Driven by love, you spin and weave. You sew and wash with vigour. Now may the Saviour's grace and love, be yours in joy forever! You Christ, mover of hearts, the ones who milk, who wash, and reap, look to you. They wait on you and long for the blessing from the wound in your side. While milking, washing, or reaping, all they can see is you! We live for you on earth. We spend our time working for you, day by day, until we may go to see you!⁵⁶

Jacob John Sessler wrote:

As they made no distinction between secular and religious education, so they did not distinguish between secular and religious work. All work was religious. A religious spirit was put into the most menial tasks. Milking, spinning, washing, knitting, and all other occupations were services unto God, because the purpose of them was not to accumulate wealth but to support the itinerant preachers, teachers, and missionaries. As the apostle Paul worked with his hands that he might preach the gospel without cost to others, so the home congregation was diligent in its task as the chief servant of the pilgrim congregation. The stable caretaker was on a mission for the Lord as well as the missionary among the Indians.

Another reporter of life in the believers' community wrote:

At Bethlehem the brothers counted it an honour to chop wood for the Master's sake, and the fireman, Spangenberg [Brother Josef] said, felt his post as important "as if he were guarding the Ark of the Covenant."⁵⁷

Visitors to Bethlehem marvelled at the order in which everyone found something to do that fitted him or her exactly. Old men and boys, and sometimes women, herded cattle. A

⁵⁵ *Auf ein Liebesmahl der Stallbrüder in Bethlehem, 31. Dezember, 1753*

⁵⁶ L. T. Reichel, *The Early History of the Church of the United Brethren . . . in North America*, Nazareth, 1888

⁵⁷ Helmuth Erbe, *Bethlehem Pa., eine Kommunistische Herrnhuter Kolonie des 18 Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, 1929

visitor in 1761 reported waking up in the morning to the sound of two sisters driving “a hundred cows, a number of them with bells, a venerable goat and two she-goats, down the street.” And all young people learned trades that transformed Bethlehem into a model of industry on the Pennsylvania frontier. A little Dresden perhaps? Or a Leipzig? Only ten years after the founding of Bethlehem its residents practised two hundred and twenty-seven different trades. They wove linen, taught school, baked bread, dyed and bleached cloth, shod horses, bound books, tanned leather, butchered cattle and pigs, and made soap, nails, barrels, hats, shoes, clothing, furniture, pots, and nearly everything else a frontier settlement might need. Jacob John Sessler wrote:

Each trade had its masters and apprentices. They held regular meetings to control the quality of their products, to regulate prices, meet outside competition, and provide training. When outsiders came to buy wares, there was to be no bickering about prices. On the contrary, the prices set at the tradesmen’s meetings were to be strictly observed.

The General Economy had become a bee-hive of activity. The brothers wore clothes of fabric their own hands and machinery had woven, among which were to be found eleven qualities of linen. Their large pottery, the products of which were in great demand by outsiders, became famous. . . . Three sawmills converted rough-hewn timber into building materials. . . . The sisters did work suited to their abilities, such as baking, weaving, spinning, dyeing and tailoring. Since the economy was one large family the united strength of the group was exerted where the need was greatest. In busy seasons on the farms, some of the tradesmen left their shops to help in the harvest fields. And when members of the Pilgrim Congregation were not engaged, or were home for a while, they had to work wherever they could be of assistance.

Conscious of the Saviour’s presence among them, the believers at Bethlehem worked hard and kept an honest record of what they did. Every pound of butter, every egg, every leg of beef used in the choir houses got recorded. So did every bushel of grain harvested, and the number of lambs born in the spring. One visitor observed:

They mix the Saviour and his blood into their harrowing, mowing, washing, spinning, in short, into everything. The cattle yard becomes a temple of grace they conduct in a priestly manner.⁵⁸

Brother Josef wrote:

In our economy the spiritual and the physical are as closely united as a man’s body and his soul, and each has a strong influence upon the other. As soon as all is not well with a brother’s heart we notice it in his work. But when he is rejoicing in Jesus’ wounds, and his love to the Lamb is tender, one takes note of it in his conduct immediately.

Community: The Human Element

⁵⁸ Uttendörfer und Schmidt, *Die Brüder*, Gnadau, 1914

“Everyone shares the spring house at Bethlehem,” one visitor wrote. “Each family has its shelf, and even though they place no watch there and the door is not locked, everyone is sure to find his plate of butter or his bowl of milk exactly like he left it when he comes back.”⁵⁹

That the believers at Bethlehem, united through the Saviour’s blood, should treat one another kindly, could be expected. But not everything took place automatically. Some needed little reminders to keep relationships pleasant, as these announcements made at community meetings show:

No one shall dig through Adolf Meyer’s medicine cupboard when he is not around. . . . Whoever uses tools shall put them back where he got them. All brothers should try to use the tools more carefully. . . . The cows should be brought in early. The night watchman shall wake little Hans Tannenberger to be sure he gets up on time. . . . Sisters shall take off their stockings before coming into the Saal for footwashing. The way they do it now is not modest. . . . Brothers who sleep in Singstunde will get a written reminder from the choir leader.

Animals, the brothers agreed, should all be kept in fences, and they allowed only a few dogs in the community “as needed.” Brothers took turns cleaning streets. No peddlars could come to Bethlehem. No one had permission to stay out late, or loiter in the street. Parents were to keep their children at home and clean their chimneys regularly.

Every choir had its rules. Boys and girls should not mingle freely. No one should enter another’s room without a good reason, and two should never be in a room alone without a light. Idle talk, too much laughing, every sign of straying from Christ met with the prompt concern of brothers or sisters—usually those in charge. If their kind admonitions did not bring results, offenders appeared before the whole congregation to repent of their deeds or else (depending on how the lot fell) to say goodbye.

Within a year of their arrival at Bethlehem the brothers already had to deal with Matthias Hoffman for making vulgar remarks. “It was the brothers’ opinion that he should leave for a time,” the diary reports, “because he did not appreciate the advantages of living in the Saviour’s community enough.”

Even though outsiders thought it looked like “popish confession” the brothers and sisters at Bethlehem considered their monthly interviews one of those advantages. Living in responsibility one to another led them into freedom and peace. It propelled them outward with the good news of Christ and filled them with song. One writer described what happened:

Music was a must. The children in the choir houses ate their dinners off wooden trenchers, but they learned at an early age to play the violin, the viola da gamba, the flute or French horn, and to sing in a chorus. This was quite as important as the three R’s and even more so. The first settlers brought musical instruments with them. On

⁵⁹ Isaac Weld, 1796

January 25, 1744, a pinet, brought over on *The Little Strength* from London, reached Bethlehem. “In dulce Jubilo” was sung at a love feast on August 21, 1745, in thirteen different languages: Czech, German, Latin, Greek, English, French, Swedish, Dutch, Wendish, Gaelic, Welsh, Mohawk, and Mohican; and there were three persons there of three more nationalities, Danish, Polish, and Hungarian, who did not sing.⁶⁰

The Wheel and the Hinge

Exulting in the harmony of their diversity, and with no greater desire than to please the Lamb by bringing more souls to him, the believers at Bethlehem appointed brothers to leave on regular excursions in every direction—like the spokes of a wheel. The *Pilgerrad* (Pilgrim Wheel) they called it, and looked forward to the day when every branch congregation established through it (like Schoeneck and Lititz toward Lancaster, Bethel in Berks County, and Hebron in Lebanon County) would become the hubs of new wheels. Eventually, they hoped, wheels upon wheels would cover all America, as in Ezekiel’s vision.

At the same time, the community at Bethlehem saw itself as only one leaf of a hinge. All believers, its pilgrims taught, hinge on Jesus Christ, the “nail in the middle” of his church that holds it securely and around which every congregation must revolve. With this in mind they “wandered far and wide through the American colonies, reaching isolated parts of Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia no Christian minister had ever been seen. They penetrated the Alleghenies. They went as far north as Canajoharie in New York and Broadbay in Maine. They visited New Haven, Newport, Long Island, Staten Island, and nearby New Jersey.”⁶¹

“Concerning these pilgrims,” the Bishop Christian Friedrich Cammerhof wrote:

every one must be ready for service at all times. If our Saviour tells one of them to get up at 3:45 and go joyfully on his way, he must do so without hesitation. Nothing should keep him back from doing the Saviour’s will. On the other hand, if the Saviour tells any one to stay home and care for the farm, we thank him that he has chosen brothers to that work too. Their work and calling is a noble one too. The pilgrims’ work calls for a crossbearing character. They must be driven by nothing but the love of Christ. They must be ready to give up all other interests and economic pursuits for their calling.

Here in Bethlehem we cannot help but lay down our bodies, souls, and everything we have for the joy of Christ. We work on the foundation of what we feel in our hearts—a desire to do everything to serve the Lamb and his people. For this reason one sees so many busy hands in Bethlehem—in the blacksmith shop, at the wagon maker’s, in the carpenter’s shop, in the tannery, in the stables, and in countless other buildings and corners around the place. No one thinks, “I am doing this for me.” Even for the Indian brothers and sisters among us it would be a great punishment were we to tell them to work and live for themselves. Yes, and if anyone among us should think, “If I

⁶⁰ Fredric Klees, *The Pennsylvania Dutch*, pg. 103

⁶¹ *ibid.* pg. 98

would work this hard in the world I could live a comfortable and prosperous life,” he would have to be out of his mind and crazy.

If only you could be here and see what is happening! One week you would see the tradesmen deep in their work and with nice operations going. Several weeks or a month later you would ask: “What happened to the master tanner?” Oh, he has gone to Muddy Creek! “Where is the shoemaker that did such good work?” Out beyond the Susquehanna! “Where is the master weaver?” He has gone to Maryland and Virginia! “What are they doing there? Are they studying to improve their professions or have they gone to earn more money?” No, instead of that they are using up our money to go among totally unknown people to tell them the Lamb of God bled and died for them.

This last winter, right when we had the most weaving to do, Leonhard Schnell (our master weaver) suddenly left for a three hundred mile journey on foot to Canahojarie, not even knowing whether he would get to preach there or not. Right before harvest, Joseph Powell, our assistant farm director, left for Shamokin on the Susquehanna to build a house and blacksmith shop among the Indians. And we gave him our blessing with a thousand joys.⁶²

Two hundred and fifty-one years later I visited Shamokin again. . . .

⁶² *Cammerhof an Wilhelm Zander in Berbice, 21. Januar 1747*