

Handmaiden of the Lamb

The story of Anna Nitschmann,
Moravian shepherdess of souls



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Mike Atnip

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And a “Thank you” to Gerhard Kiel of Rothenburg, Germany, for supplying me with aerial photos of Herrnhut, and his permission to use them in this book!

The cover is a picture taken near Bethel, Pennsylvania, where the Shamokin Trail heads up over the Blue Mountain. Anna would have traveled this trail on her visit to the Native Americans. Near the top of the mountain, to the left of Anna’s head on the cover, is a spring bearing the name Pilgeruh—Pilgrim’s Rest. It was named by Count Zinzendorf himself as he traveled the trail to investigate mission opportunities among the First Nations in the hills beyond.

Please note that the translations of Anna’s hymns which were made by me have not been made in perfect rhythm and meter. I felt the message to be more important than smooth poetry, since we are looking into Anna’s heart. The original German is very good, poetically. My apologies to Anna for not being able to keep all the poetic beauty in the translations. I have scattered a few of her hymn texts throughout the book to give us a sample of her heart towards divine things.

—Mike Atnip

Any comments regarding this book may be sent to the author at:
atnips@gmail.com

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This book is dedicated to:

Melchior Nitschmann,
oldest brother of Anna.

Brother Melchior:

Only a tiny handful of the 6+ billion people on this earth even know that you ever existed. I never knew either, until I started researching your little sister Anna's story.

Without you, Melchior, this story would have been different. It was you who laid your hand upon young Susanna Kühnel and blessed her as you left the meeting in which they warned you and pleaded with you not to go back to Moravia. It was too dangerous, they said. You replied, "They may roast me or throw me in prison; I am sure of my calling."

Susanna was in that meeting, and saw your courage, love, and commitment, and left the room weeping after you laid your hand on her and blessed her. And thus began the so-called "Children's Revival" at Herrnhut, in which your little sister Anna surrendered her heart to the Savior.

And it was you, big brother, whom Anna heard on different occasions "praying at midnight" that she would turn from her folly. Anna heard you, whether you realized it or not, and was deeply affected ... because she could not deny that you walked with God.

So you left on your journey, never to return. They caught you evangelizing in Moravia and threw you into prison ... again. A few years before, as a young man of about 20, they had bound you so tight with ropes that the blood had squirted from your nose. But you survived, emigrated to Germany, and spent several years there.

When you died in prison, they buried you in a field with the "witches and arch-heretics" in an otherwise quiet little Moravian village. Your dust lies there, awaiting the summons to the final judgment. Your time on this earth—27 years—was indeed as but a vapor. But they were well spent, Melchior. When Count Zinzendorf heard the news of your death, he wrote, "Half my heart has been torn from me."

You have been forgotten by most, but your holy life has blessed me, 275 years after you were "buried under the gallows." But most important of all, Melchior, God has not forgotten and will reward you in the last great day. As the song says:

It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus.
Life's trials will seem so small, when we see Christ.
One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrow will erase.
So bravely run the race, 'til we see Christ.

You ran well, Melchior! Thank you for your example! Your running has inspired me to run faithful to the finish! —Mike Atnip

Partners of Thy Throne

What are our works but sin and death,
Till thou thy quickening Spirit breathe?
Thou giv'st the power thy grace to move:
O wondrous grace! O boundless love!

How can it be, thou heavenly King,
That thou shouldst us to glory bring;
Make slaves the partners of thy throne,
Decked with a never-fading crown?

Hence our hearts melt, our eyes o'erflow,
Our words are lost; nor will we know,
Nor will we think of aught beside,
My Lord, my Love is crucified!

First-born of many brethren thou;
To thee, lo! all our souls we bow;
To thee our hearts and hands we give;
Thine may we die, thine may we live!

John Nitschmann (1712-83) vv. 1-3 (Anna's brother)

Anna Nitschmann (1715-60) v. 4

tr. John Wesley (1703-91)

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Midnight visitor

Nine-year-old Anna Nitschmann dreamily awakened to the sound of low, but excited voices. Sleep fled quickly as she recognized one of the voices immediately—her dad’s voice!

It couldn’t be! He was in prison.

Snuggling back under her warm covers to keep out the fierce January cold, she felt a sting of almost madness for the unpleasant thoughts towards those who had jailed him for being an arch-heretic. But the heroic feelings towards her brave father won the moment, and peace returned to her sleepy heart.

There it was again! It *was* her dad! Back flew the covers, and with a bound Anna hit the floor running.

“Daddy!” she called as she swept the door aside. “How did you get here?”

“Shhhh,” whispered her father with an ear-to-ear smile ... but, grand as it was, it couldn’t hide the tears running on his cheek. “Don’t be too loud, or we will arouse the neighbors. It’s good to see you again, my daughter! Come and let me kiss you!”

Amid the excitement of the hour, David Nitschmann quickly

spilled the story of his escape. It was not his first time in jail, but his release this night was as miraculous as the Apostle Peter's. For four days and three nights he had been in solitary confinement, but was then placed in a room with the rest of his brethren in Christ. The others were chained two-by-two, but he was chained alone. Years later he would write about the escape, in the following words:

January 24, on a Thursday night, I said to my brethren, "I will take my leave of you tonight." David Schneider immediately said, "If you go, I cannot stay here. I want to go with you."

I said to him, "I won't tell you that you must come, but if you are sure, you can come with me." It stayed at that.

We waited until the eleventh hour of night. I was worried how my chains would be loosed. I gripped my knife¹ in my right hand, and with my left I took the lock, which was strong and new. As I gripped it, I noticed that the lock was already open. My eyes filled with tears of joy!

I said to David Schneider: "I can see that it is the Savior's will that we should go."

We took the irons off our feet in the room where we were, silently said farewell to the other Brethren, and searched over the courtyard to find a ladder. I went to the gate—which was closed every night with two separate doors—and there stood the first door open. I went out into the hall,² and there the other door stood open as well—which was the other sign that we should go forward. As we came out of the castle, we laid our irons by the wall and went through the garden, and then into my house, where I told my wife what she should do when I should send someone to pick her up. I then went in the night from the 24th to the 25th of January the five German miles³ to Oderberg, in Silesia,⁴ where we stayed three days. Thus I turned my back on my enemies, and the Savior rescued me from their land.⁵

The year was 1725. In just a few days, the message came from David as to how to proceed, and Anna (nee Schneider) the mother took her three children⁶ and fled Bohemia as well. Anna, the daugh-

1 Probably a table knife.

2 Probably referring to the short hallway between the two doors of a thick castle wall.

3 A German mile is approximately 4.5 English miles.

4 Silesia as an independent country no longer exists. Most of Silesia lies in southwest Poland, with small sections remaining in the northeastern sections of the Czech Republic.

5 Bethlehem Diary, Volume XVIII, 1758, 267-79. Although the first "midnight" scene in this book is the author's imagination, these words are David's.

6 The oldest, Melchior (to whom this book is dedicated), had already left some

ter, wrote of the momentous event, in later years:

My mother frequently said, "Let us trust in God; He will deliver us from the hands of men." Nor was her confidence put to shame. On February 5, about one o'clock in the morning, we left our village and escaped the vigilance of the spies,⁷ whose eyes were held that they did not see us. It was intensely cold, and the snow lay deep.

For a time, I began to repent of having left home; but I recalled to mind how often—while tending the flock in the field—I had besought the Lord to lead me out of this house of bondage, I regained my resignation and composure.

After three week's wanderings, we reached Herrnhut in safety, February 24 ...

A goodly heritage

Although young Anna could hardly comprehend it at the time of abandoning her native land, her roots ran deep into the old Bohemian Brethren. Her great-great-grandfather, Martin Schneider, had been a contemporary of Jan Amos Comenius, the famed "father of modern education" and last of the Bohemian Brethren bishops who had actually lived in Bohemia before persecution drove him to Poland. Jan had lived for a while at Fulneck in Moravia, where Anna's family had originated from.

As Jan Amos fled over the border into Silesia, he had stopped at the border on the pass in the mountains to utter his famous prayer that God would "preserve a hidden seed" in Moravia, a seed that would someday sprout and grow amid the degenerated Catholic Church.

Was that "seed," or at least a part of it, found in Martin Schneider, who remained in Moravia? His clandestine meetings, where the old hymns were sung and children taught non-Catholic doctrine, as well as other activities, caused him not a few spells in jail. He was almost burned at the stake, but a local lord pled for him and he was spared. He lived a long life, and his five sons kept the memory alive of the old teachings.

His grandson—Anna's grandfather—Samuel Schneider kept the light from being totally extinguished. Holding meetings in his home,

weeks earlier in search of religious freedom.

7 Any act suggesting preparation of leaving the area would have possibly meant a jail term for the mother. When they left, it was a total abandonment of everything they had, except what they could carry. No selling of goods or property, no giving away; the departure had to be "top secret."



Jan Amos Comenius was a well-known Bohemian Brethren bishop who prayed on the mountain pass as he escaped Catholic persecution [1628] that God would preserve a "hidden seed" in Moravia and Bohemia. Anna's great-great grandfather stayed in Moravia when Comenius fled, and out of his seed—approximately 100 years later—came several of the prominent leaders of The Renewed Moravian Church.

However, to break down the testimony of the Bohemian Brethren-remnant that did not flee, it is recorded that the strategy of the established Church was to bring about marriages of Catholics with the young people of the villages where there was a strong Brethren presence. And it had its intended effect. Secret meetings were betrayed. Some had to keep their Bibles hidden from their spouse. Some buried their Bibles in the garden or hid them in the eaves to keep the authorities from finding them. It appeared that perhaps the coming generations could totally lose what the forefathers had fought so hard to gain.

In such an atmosphere, Anna was born, on November 24, 1715,

he exhorted, warned, and comforted the people, then dismissed them with the following song, sometimes sang solo:

Depart ye that are blessed
And chosen in Christ,
Depart in joy and peace;
God direct all your steps.
Blessed be your outgoing,
Blessed be your incoming,
Blessed be all your doings,
Through Christ, God's Son.

Says one man who attended his meetings as a 6-year-old, "Samuel Schneider's fervent testimony and venerable appearance, I will never forget." When a Catholic priest stopped in to give him "final unction" on his deathbed, Samuel told him, "The Holy Ghost has anointed and sealed me to eternal life; the unction which you wish to give me is therefore unnecessary."

Little is written of Anna's grandmothers. But it is hard to imagine the family seeking worldlings for marriage partners.

at Kunwald,⁸ Bohemia, in the very same village where the Bohemian Brethren had begun its peril-filled journey about 260 years earlier. Her father had left his native Zauchental⁹ to try to stir up the remnant of the Bohemian Brethren in Kunwald. Holding meetings in his home, it seemed at times that all was in vain. But he pressed on.

Few details are given of Anna's childhood, but she wrote in her autobiography:

From my early childhood, the thought of God and divine things inspired me with reverential awe; and though I loved the world and felt almost tempted to join the ranks of its devotees, the unseen hand of my Heavenly Father mercifully preserved me.

On her father's side, the details are sparse. But a goodly heritage was surely hers. There were at least three David Nitschmanns in her time, all of them to become prominent in the Moravian Church: Her father, known as "father David Nitschmann";¹⁰ her first cousin, known as "David Nitschmann, Bishop" since he was the first bishop of the Renewed Moravian Church, as well as a missionary; and another distant cousin, "David Nitschmann the Syndic," since he presided over a council of the Moravian churches in later years.

Could it be mere consequence that three dedicated men—and there were other pious Nitschmanns in the Moravian churches—could come from an extended family, if the forefathers of that family were not pious? That could happen, but is unlikely. And so Anna, the little shepherd girl watching the flock in a grassy dale of Moravia was blessed with a goodly heritage on both her father's and her mother's side, even though she probably didn't appreciate it at the time.

The revival

Anna never knew her grandfather Samuel. He had died about five years before Anna ever saw the light of the sun peeping over the ridge in Kunwald. Her father continued to hold meetings in his home, but felt exasperated at times with the lack of results.

The years slipped by. But then Christian David came on the scene.

Christian had grown up solidly Catholic—falling upon his knees before every image and picture of The Virgin he happened upon—but without peace in his heart. Setting out on a journey that led him to Austria, Hungary, Poland, and Germany, he eventually found the

⁸ Also spelled, Kunvald, Kunewald, or Kunewalde

⁹ Now called Suchdol nad Odrou, Czech Republic

¹⁰ Count Zinzendorf unofficially adopted him as his father.

peace he sought, and felt the call to return to Moravia to share it ... even though he knew he was risking his life to do so. Coming in contact with young Count Zinzendorf, and setting the plight of the persecuted Moravian Brethren before him, the Count gave permission for persecuted Moravian refugees to settle on his land.

With that, David returned to Moravia—a 200-mile walk—and gathered the first group of people to escape to Germany. On May 26, 1722, at about 10 o'clock in the night, ten people forsook the land of their fathers and struck out for a land where they could worship freely. Christian David would eventually make ten such trips to help others escape.

In 1724, when Anna was but eight years old, her cousin David Nitschmann and Christian David showed up in Kunwald and took Anna's father back to Zauchental,¹¹ for a meeting. There Christian preached a strong message on the Beatitudes and prayed a most fervent prayer. Anna's father was touched! Resolving then and there to "become completely the Savior's," he returned home and shared the message with his family.

His entire family was moved, but especially his oldest son, Melchior. This was the beginning of a revival in the community. Three times a week meetings were held in the home, and grew in number until up to 200 crowded in the house. A historian gives this account of the revival:

Melchior Nitschmann, a young man twenty years of age, began to hold meetings. The people assembled at each other's houses to sing hymns and read the word of God; they were often engaged in these exercises by night as well as by day; and many persons, while this revival continued, allowed themselves scarcely any sleep. The shepherds sung hymns while they were tending their flocks; the servants at their work talked of nothing but the salvation of Jesus; in all the surrounding villages the sound of worldly music was no longer heard, and theatrical and dancing assemblies were entirely deserted. David Nitschmann (The Syndic), a weaver, eighteen years of age, with several others, went through every part of the country, declaring what had been done for their souls, and beseeching sinners to give themselves up to the love of the Lord Jesus; and thus the fire, which had been just kindled, was incessantly kept up. Even little children poured out fervent prayers to "Eternal Love," as they delighted to call the blessed God, and called upon their parents to come with them to the Friend of sinners. A young girl, twelve years of age, died with so

11 App. 75 miles away.

lively an assurance of Divine favor, with so complete a renunciation of the world, and such joyful anticipations of eternal glory, that her testimony produced the deepest impression on all around her. Little account was then made of this or that outward denomination; every one spoke of Jesus and the One he loved, of the love of the Father, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The meetings were forbidden by the authorities, on pain of steep fines. They continued on. They were forbidden on pain of death. They continued on. Anna called it “the great awakening.” She wrote:

I was powerfully stirred and began to pray in public assemblies. This was in the winter. During the summer months I tended my father’s flock, singing in the fields our old Moravian Brethrens hymns, such as ...

How amiable
Your habitations are,
Wherein assemble
The Christian people dear,
O Lord—Your praises to
remember.

While thus engaged, I joyfully looked forward to the day when we should again enjoy liberty of conscience. I spent my time mostly in solitude and avoided all bad company. When I saw the wickedness of those around me, I often wept and thought, ‘How can they go to heaven if they live so?’

My father and my older brother Melchior were frequently summoned before the magistrates and cast into prison on account of the meetings held at our house. I rejoiced at this, and regretted nothing more than that I was not permitted to share their bonds. I waited faithfully upon my father and often sang to him,—



Peter Chelcicky was instrumental in founding the Bohemian Brethren movement through his writings, even though he died before the group ever officially organized. From these Bohemian Brethren came the Renewed Moravian Church. Although many Moravian historians ignore Peter Chelcicky, without him (that is, God using him) there may not have ever been a Renewed Moravian Church 300 years later.

Bonds, and stripes, and tribulations,
 Are our honourable crowns;
 Shame we bear with exultation,
 Gloomy dungeons are our thrones.

One Sunday, 20-year-old Melchior gave a sermon. When he finished, a local authority came to the house and confiscated all the books. They started singing Luther's hymn, "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing ..." The authority demanded silence, but they sang on. After singing the same verse two or three times, the man who had collected the books got so scared that he fled, leaving some of the collected books behind him. After the ordeal, they simply banded together and bought new books.

A couple of weeks later, all the fathers involved in the meetings—about 20 in number—were called before the local authorities and thrown in prison. Anna's father and a couple of others were deprived of any food and water for three days. When their wives tried to bring them food, the authorities denied them entrance. But the men called down from an open window to tell them to return home and not to bother with food ... they didn't feel any hunger!

Realizing that things in Moravia were not getting any better as far as toleration, five of the young men in the revival took off on a journey to seek a place where they could worship God freely. Five young men—Anna's oldest brother Melchior, her cousin David Nitschmann (The Bishop), another cousin also named David Nitschmann (The Syndic), David Zeisberger, and John Toeltschig—headed out for Lissa¹² where they thought there was still a remnant of the old Bohemian Church. This decision to emigrate stemmed from a judge ordering them to quit having meetings, and advising them to take part instead in the drunken parties at the brew house. The judge was none other than John Toeltschig's own father!

So they left Moravia, singing as they went:

Blessed be the day when I must roam,
 Far from my country, friends and home,
 An exile poor and mean;
 My father's God will be my guide,
 Will angel guards for me provide,
 My soul in dangers screen.
 Himself will lead me to a spot
 Where, all my cares and griefs forgot,
 I shall enjoy sweet rest.

¹² Now called Leszno, Poland.

As pants for cooling streams the hart,
My thirsting soul, with longing looks,
To God, my refuge blest.

As they journeyed, they concluded that they might as well “swing by Herrnhut”¹³ on the way. Arriving at Herrnhut—at that time, three houses made up the whole settlement, and two of these were not finished yet—they were so moved by the spiritual atmosphere that they decided just to stop there. The day of their arrival, those already at Herrnhut were laying the cornerstone for a new building, and the story goes like this:

The Count delivered a striking discourse on the purpose for which the building was designed, and among other things said, that if the building did not answer the end for which he had erected it, namely, the glory of God, he hoped the Lord would destroy it, or consume it by fire from heaven. Watteville, whose heart had been peculiarly affected during the whole day, fell on his knees upon the foundation stone, and poured out a most fervent prayer, in which he laid open all the feelings, hopes, and resolutions which filled his soul: this prayer produced an extraordinary effect upon the hearers. The singing of the *Te Deum* closed the ceremony. Watteville placed under the foundation stone what remaining jewels he had, especially a ring, which had passed seven times through the fire, probably intending it as a token that the vanity of the world must now be forever buried.

The young men never made it to Lissa. Staying at Herrnhut was a major historical decision, although none of them realized it at the moment. These young men would play a major role in the missions and leadership of the Renewed Moravian Church at Herrnhut in the years and decades to follow.¹⁴ And, probably most important, it was

13 Despite the fact that Herrnhut was quite the ‘round about’ way to get to Lissa! I estimate it was 250 miles long that way, while directly it was about 150 miles.

14 Three of the five were named David Nitschmann. Anna’s brother Melchior (sometimes called David) was “buried under the gallows” as a 27-year-old martyr in Schildsburg (Now, Štítý) Moravia, where he had stopped to preach while on a mission trip to Austria. David Nitschmann (Bishop) was one of the first two Moravian missionaries (to the slaves in the West Indies), then returned and was ordained the first bishop of the Renewed Moravian Church and served as such in Herrnhut for many years. He was also a personal friend of John Wesley in Georgia and part of the group that influenced Wesley on the storm-tossed ship, telling him, “We are not afraid to die.” David Nitschmann (Syndic) spent time in America and Sri Lanka and serve in administrative positions in the church in later years. (Melchior) David Zeisberger was most likely a close relative of the father and famous son by the same name, missionaries in North America to the Indians. And John Toeltschig was among the first nine missionaries to Georgia, but later spent most of his life laboring on the British Isles. God give us more young men like these five!

these five young men who later withstood most firmly the pressure to become full-fledged Lutherans.¹⁵

Some weeks later, the scene at the beginning of this book occurred, and Anna's family quit Moravia as well. When the authorities realized that the two men had escaped, they ordered the wives to send someone to fetch them back. So David Hickel was sent to find them. Having no success, he returned, and was promptly thrown in jail and sentenced to be hanged himself as a collaborator. Throwing him in a cold hole, he was deprived of food and water for three days. Then, bringing him out, half dead, to a warmer place, they set a piece of bread and some dirty water before him.

For David, it was a signal to escape. Slowly opening the door, he saw that the guards were looking the other way, and so he walked out—in broad daylight—and fled for Herrnhut himself!

The persecution was wide-spread among those involved in the awakening. They were jailed, their books burned, some were made to stand in freezing water until they almost died, or left without clothes on a tower in the freezing weather. In one case the men were harnessed to a plow and made to work like an animal. Their property was confiscated and houses burned down. But they pressed on in faith. Eventually many of them would flee into Poland or Germany.

The flesh prevails

Arriving at the new settlement at Herrnhut, Anna's father stayed a week, but then found a job at the neighboring village of Berthelsdorf and moved the family there. Anna tells what happened next:

We lived there two years, during which time I lost all my good impressions and became a complete worldling. My parents and my brother Melchior, being deeply concerned on my account, resolved upon moving back to Herrnhut, which they did in 1727.

Anna didn't detail what happened to her at this point, but it is probably safe to surmise that she passed into womanhood during this time ... and temporarily succumbed to the desires that the increased hormones cause. Many a serious girl has gone through it. In their young age, they love the Lord and seek after righteousness. But puberty hits them like a whirlwind, and their former shamefacedness and sobriety disappears like an early frost on a late Summer morning.

Suddenly, the simple clothes of childhood days are too simple.

¹⁵ See Appendix A, concerning the theology of the Moravian Church.

Suddenly, it feels really, really nice to be noticed by young men. Now, acne on the face is almost as serious a matter as cancer itself. For reasons she cannot explain, there arises within her an inexplicable desire to reveal more of her legs ... and tighten the darts on her dress. The head covering starts sliding back, and much precious time is logged in front of a mirror.

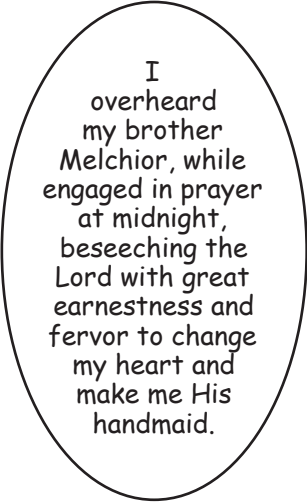
Yes, many a serious girl has been overtaken by the onslaught of puberty. Sadly, too many never recover.

In Anna's case, her fall was doubtless egged on by another terrible trap of youth: dissension in the church. Zinzendorf had opened the community to whoever felt oppressed and needed a place of refuge. And so they came, from about every doctrinal persuasion current in 18th-century Germany: Lutherans, Bohemian Brethren, Schwenkfelders, Reformed, Pietists, and an occasional wandering "prophet" of some off-beat stripe or another. About half of the approximately 300 settlers were Moravians, the other half from various parts of Germany.

Instead of unity amongst the refugees, things got "horrible," in the words of the Count. One of the men was now calling Rothe, the village pastor, "the False Prophet," and Zinzendorf himself was none other than "The Beast"! And besides theological discord, business competition set in among them. Instead of a brotherhood working together in one accord, many were acting just like the world around them in their business dealings, striving to gain a business advantage over his brother. Anna continues her story:

At first I felt far from comfortable in my new home, having no opportunity of gratifying my evil desires. I heard much talk about conversion, but chiefly from persons who were still in an unconverted state themselves. To such I frequently replied, 'Convert yourselves first, and then you may begin to teach me.'

Ouch! While the sincere reproofs for her worldliness by the community probably did reach Anna's heart—despite their hypocrisy and her retorts to try to stifle them—there was something else that moved her more. She writes:



I
overheard
my brother
Melchior, while
engaged in prayer
at midnight,
beseeching the
Lord with great
earnestness and
fervor to change
my heart and
make me His
handmaid.

Occasionally, however, I overheard my brother Melchior, while engaged in prayer at midnight, beseeching the Lord with great earnestness and fervor to change my heart and make me His handmaid. This touched my soul, for with respect to my brother I felt convinced that he was a true child of God.

Revival days

The year 1727 etched itself forever into the minds of the Herrnhut community. Theological discord and personal disharmony had prevailed for many months. Christian David even dug himself a little well and built a private hut a bit off to the side of the community, somewhat in the frame of mind of Jonah the prophet under the gourd, or Elijah complaining under the bush that he alone was left in Israel.

Most of the men from Moravia were firmly set on not becoming Lutherans, even telling that to Zinzendorf. They saw that their own Moravian church—although it had fallen and lay as it were in a pile of molding ruins in most cases—definitely had better discipline than the Lutheran Church did. They plainly let Zinzendorf know that if they could not continue the old Moravian discipline and practices, they would move on. God would open a door for them somewhere else.

On May 12, Zinzendorf, in his typical zest, sat the whole community down for a three-hour lecture. He then read out to them the “Manorial Injunctions and Prohibitions,” the rules they would have to live by if they wanted to stay on his property. Next, he set before them a number of “Statutes,” the rules for the voluntary religious society he envisioned, his “church within the church.” He was willing to let them continue as Moravian Brethren, if only they would agree to the basic tenets of the Augsburg Confession of Faith. In this way, they could continue as a “church within the church,” and the Lutheran Church would not raise a fuss about them being sectarians.¹⁶

The “Statutes” focused on the personal needs of the hour—at-

16 The original *Unitas Fratrum* (Bohemian Brethren) was not founded upon the theological framework of the Protestant Reformation, since it was born about 75 years before Martin Luther began his reform. Nor was the *Unitas Fratrum* a church centered upon “theology.” Rather, it was built—like the later Anabaptist movement—upon following Jesus. Here, the Moravians, who at this moment were probably focusing so intently upon their personal needs of the moment, let Protestant theology slip in the door by agreeing to the Augsburg Confession as the foundational theology of their church. It would be a major stumbling block in their later fall, but I do not want to interrupt Anna’s story at the moment, so will refer the reader to Appendix A for a deeper look at the theological problems of Lutheranism.

titudes and actions that were not Christ-like. Those living in the community needed to repent of a bickering spirit, and agree to live in harmony with each other, like Christians are supposed to. Each person was asked to commit himself entirely to God and the betterment of the community. Perhaps the most important sentence in the “Statutes” was the following:

He is not a true brother, who does not prove by his conduct that he really desires to be delivered from sin, to become every day more and more like God, more detached from all sinful affections, vanity, and self-will, and to walk as Jesus’ walked, and to bear his reproach.

Although there was no altar call—altar calls would not appear in church history until a century later—there was a call to repentance. One historian wrote:

On that day, the Count made a covenant with the people, in the presence of God. The brethren individually promised to belong entirely to the Savior. They were ashamed of their religious quarrels, and were unanimously disposed to bury them in oblivion. They also sincerely renounced self-love, self-will, disobedience, and individualism. They were desirous of becoming poor in spirit; none of them sought a preference above the rest; and each one wished to be taught by the Holy Spirit in all things; they were not only convinced, but carried away and overpowered by the operating grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The result was instantaneous. Peace drove out discord. Love prevailed over animosity. Humility squashed the former spiritual pride. The kingdom of God had come! It was revival time!

Summer of blessings

While many people erroneously look to the famous August 13 Communion service—which occurred a couple of months later—as the beginning of the Moravian revival, the *real* revival began on May 12, when self-centered living was repented of. Whenever and wherever self-love, self-will, disobedience, and free-thinking are renounced, and “belonging entirely to the Savior” and obeying Him are embraced—as it was on that day—revival will break out. And break out it did!

Meetings were held several times a day, starting a 5 a.m. On July 2 there were ten services in total between Herrnhut and neighboring Berthelsdorf. And since the chapel at Berthelsdorf could not contain all the people who showed up, about 1000 of them stood outside.



Location of Herrnhut in Germany

On July 22, Anna's brother Melchior and a few of the others began to hold special prayer meetings. These evolved into a more "prayer and sharing" sessions, and finally into a series of studies on the 1st Epistle of John on love. With Christian David's expositions on this book, remnants of the old antagonistic feelings melted away further yet.

On the 5th of August, the Count held an all-night prayer meeting and fellowship with about dozen of the brothers. The next day, God was "wonderfully manifested" in their singing meetings. Then, on Sunday the 10th, the minister at Berthelsdorf prostrated himself weeping and praying, at a meeting in Herrnhut. The whole congregation followed suit, and the remaining remnants of dissension in the congregation disappeared.

The next day, Pastor Rothe invited everyone to a Communion service to be held on Friday the 13th. Since it would be the first Communion service since the reconciliation had started in May, everyone agreed to observe it with greater solemnity, and everyone was to examine themselves closely before partaking.

Then came the so-called "great day."

August 13, 1727

This date is often called the birthdate of the Renewed Moravian Church. Many people seem to think that it was the beginning of the revival.

But they are wrong.

As they gathered that Friday morning for Communion, they were only commemorating what Christ had done in their hearts already. Great things had been happening in the community for three months now. Repentance, confessions, reconciliations, renunciation

of worldliness, prayer, Bible study ...

Now they were coming to remember what Christ had done.

The service started by singing the hymn, "Unbind me, O God, from all my bonds and fetters ..." Two sisters who had just been admitted to the church the previous day were then warmly welcomed by the minister. Then began the hymn, "My soul before Thee prostrate lies ..."

It was an emotional time. The words of the hymns sank deep, no doubt, and considering what all the community had been through, emotions could not contain themselves.

It was hard to distinguish between the singing and the weeping. Divine love prevailed, and when the wine and bread had been taken, all went home, totally broken before the Lamb. It was recorded that when they left the chapel, "they knew not whether they were in heaven or on earth."

Christian David wrote to a friend, about one year afterwards:

We now have had full experience that this is the true grace of God in which we stand; for it humbles us; gives us peace and liberty; encourages us in all our tribulations; teaches us patience with the defects and imperfections of others; makes us moderate in our words; renders us immovable against the assaults of our enemies; compassionate to the weak and erring, submissive to our superiors; firm and faithful in preaching the gospel; simple in our conduct; unaffected towards others; upright and sincere in our dealings with the brethren; careful in guiding and teaching souls; frank in reproving sin; mild in exhorting after the example of Christ and his apostles; scrupulous, as if we were under the law, in all our outward deportment; free and contented in heart; universal and impartial in our love to the saints; becoming all things to all men, according to the directions of the word of God; and ready to give an answer to everyone that asks of us a reason of the hope that is in us.

Yes, there were a lot of emotions at the Berthelsdorf chapel on August 13, 1727. But the emotions did not bring a revival. The emotions were simply the release of pent-up feelings of forgiveness, love—to Christ and to one another—and reconciliation. Zinzendorf had no use for mere emotionalism, that working up of emotions by music, clapping, or rhetoric. He wrote:

It is as easy to create religious excitement as it is to stir up the sensual passions; and the former often leads to the latter.

And so the famous Communion service of August 13, 1727 was not



Herrnhut in 1765. From a wasteland, the Moravians created a thriving missionary church and village in one generation.

the beginning of a revival. Neither was it a revved-up emotional shin-ding, pumped up by the band or the choir. It was simply the expression of having experienced three months of repentance, reconciliation, and fellowship with Jesus. It was not just a going-through-the-form “Communion Service”; it was remembering what Jesus had done to make it possible for humanity to experience new life, to experience real love to God and mankind.

And it was reality to them!

Susanna Kühnel

Ever since the May 12 meeting, a different spirit had prevailed in the community. Anna surely must have felt it, although she still had not come to experience it in her own heart. Besides this new spirit of humility flowing around her, another powerful influence gripped her: an 11-year-old friend of hers was seeking Christ.

Susanna Kühnel lost her mother in death in May of that year; but mother died not in vain. Her little daughter was so taken by her joyful departure that she spent the next three nights in fervent prayer and seeking. The weeks passed by, and finally, at 1 a.m. on August 6—a week before the famous Communion service—she called out to her father in the other room:¹⁷ “Now, Father, I am become a child of God,

17 Unbeknownst to her, he had heard everything going on previously, so he knew of her seeking God.

and I know also how my mother felt and still feels!” But not only did she testify to her father that early morning, the whole next day she testified to her friends, forgetting to eat anything the whole day.

Anna Nitschmann is listed as one of six girls moved by Susanna’s testimony. Four days after the moving Communion service, Anna surrendered to Christ, along with several other youth.

Peace at last!

Melchior’s midnight prayers and Susanna’s testifying found good soil. Anna tells the story:

At that time, a great awakening took place in the whole congregation, more especially amongst the children, who often passed the night in the fields and in the forests of the Hutberg [seeking god]. I became anxiously concerned, and thought, ‘What a sinful creature I am!’

Our Savior placed in a strong light before my eyes the grace which He had bestowed upon me from my infancy, and the unfaithfulness with which I had repaid His love. My heart melted within me. I shed many tears. I began to seek the Savior with all my heart, and earnestly implored His forgiveness. And He blotted out all my debt, though I could scarcely believe it at the time, thinking it was too soon to expect such a blessing. Yet I felt confidence in him, and enjoyed free access to the throne of grace.

But Susanna’s testimony did not influence just the other girls. Unknowingly, she was testifying to the boys. Jacob Liebach, one of ten orphan boys living at the community when these events took place, tells the story:

At the time when Susanna Kühnel began to be under the special and powerful operations of the Holy Ghost, and used to kneel down under the trees in her father’s garden, particularly in the evening and at night, entreating the Lord with cries and tears to have mercy upon her, and to save her soul from death, we boys, who were near neighbors of Frederick Kühnel, heard, when going to bed, her earnest entreaties. This touched our hearts so, that we could no more go to bed in the same indifferent frame of mind, in reference to spiritual things as before, and we requested our overseers to take us for a walk on the following evenings. Thus, till the end of August, instead of going to bed at the usual hour, we went into the fields and woods, where we prostrated ourselves before the Lord, and implored Him to be merciful to us, and save us. Our schoolmaster was often present on these occasions, and when he had concluded his prayer and we were on the point of returning home, most of us again sought a re-

tired place, and, either singly or two together, kneeled down and prayed to the Lord. Many are the particular spots in the vicinity of Herrnhut which we in prayer bedewed with our tears.

During the next couple of weeks, many of the older children and youth consecrated their lives to the kingdom of God, and many of these ended up being missionaries and pillars in the church in the coming decades.

Birth of the love feast

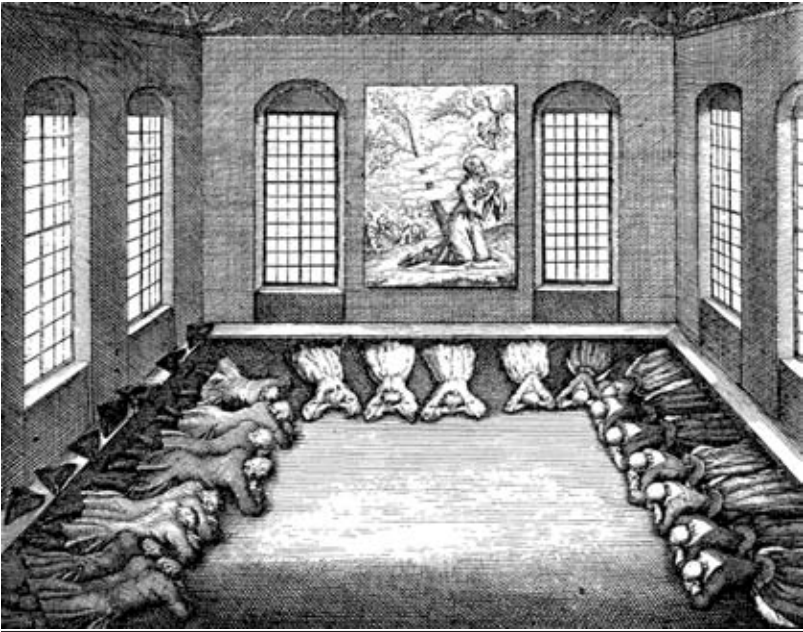
The evening after the great Communion service, most of the members of the community had gathered, without any forethought, into about seven groups, talking, sharing, singing, and praying. Zinzendorf, wanting to bless them, but not wanting to break up their fellowship, sent food from his own kitchen to each of the groups. It was a simple meal ... some buns and coffee. And thus began the famous “love feast” tradition of the Moravians.

Upon hearing the word “feast,” many people think of an elaborate meal. But Moravian love feasts were quite simple on the food end: it was always buns and coffee or tea. The “feast” was in the spiritual realm!

Love feasts for visitors, love feasts for work crews going out to the woods, love feasts when they got back from the woods, love feasts at marriages, love feasts for this, and love feasts for that. But no matter the occasion, it was always buns and coffee ... and fellowship about spiritual things. Every time.

Usually there was singing, and sometimes just singing. But most times there was a short devotional given by one of the brothers, or in the case of a sisters-only love feast, one of the sisters would share. The “watchword” that had been given that morning might be expounded upon; or even some practical advice or encouragement might be offered to a work crew departing for a project. But it was not a chit-chat time. It was solidly spiritual discussion ... with buns and coffee or tea.

Take a group of people that are 100% dedicated to Christ, put them in a room, and what will come out of that meeting? The buns and coffee was only to give the body a little refreshment while the spirit was nourished in the fellowship of the Spirit. The physical food in no way, shape, nor form received any attention. *They feasted on the love!* Such was an early Moravian love feast, of which Anna must have partaken hundreds, if not thousands, of times in her life.



A Moravian Brethren prayer meeting.

The 100-year prayer chain

The prayer chain, another famous Moravian tradition, was born in the days after the Communion service of August 13, 1727. On August 23, 14 of the men got together and proposed to start an around-the-clock intercession. Lots were drawn as to the hour each one would spend in prayer, and off they went. Within a couple of days, the number of intercessors had increased to 72, with both the brothers and the sisters each having enough participants to have a separate prayer chain.

This custom prevailed at Herrnhut for over 100 years, so that it has been called the world's longest prayer meeting. But it really wasn't a prayer meeting of people gathering together to pray, rather it was each person taking a turn for one hour at a time, to "not let the flame of prayer go out."

This custom was also taken up in other places wherever a larger congregation of Moravians was started, so that there were actually a number of prayer chains going on at one time in different parts of the globe. Anna surely took her part in this prayer chain at Herrnhut, and it is recorded in the records at Bethlehem, PA that her appointed hour

was at 2 p.m. while she was in that community. As the years slipped by, all of the congregations slowly turned towards having what we might term “regular” prayer meetings, and the flames of the prayer chains flickered out.

Life at Herrnhut

Before continuing Anna’s story, a look into the life of the Herrnhut community would serve us well, to acquaint ourselves with the atmosphere in which Anna began her new life in Christ. Many people today admire the Moravians for the great Communion service of August 13, for the 100-year prayer chain, and the later worldwide mission outreach. But few people really know the context from which those fruits sprang forth. For some reason, the holiness, the orderliness, and the submission of one to another of the Moravian brethren are almost ignored; as if the fruits came *in spite of* the roots, instead of *because of* the roots.

Hard work

Laziness was not allowed in Herrnhut. Those who came to eat, but refused to work, were promptly sent on their way. And what did “work” mean? It meant 16 hours of work and/or ministry every work day, leaving three hours for meals and five hours for sleep.

Yes, 16 hours a day working, and five hours for sleeping ... every day!

The day started with a meeting at 4 a.m. in the summer, and 5 a.m. in the winter. It ended with a singing meeting in the evening.

Says the old statute book of the *Unitas Fratrum*, which was the name of the earlier Moravian Church:

... teach them to shun idleness as the poison of youth.

Holiness

One person described the life at Herrnhut in the following terms:

They knew how to content themselves with extremely frugal diet, small dwellings, and the mere necessities of furniture. Their attire was very plain, and on working-days the brethren attended the meetings in the clothes they wore in their workshops, and the sisters in the dress which they used in the house. In short, their moderation and constant labor, to which they were accustomed to from their childhood, their confidence in God—added together with the beneficence of their richer brethren—furnished enough resources that none of them ever lacked the necessities of life. At the same time, none enjoyed life’s superfluities. Any-

one accustomed to seeking his own ease, desirous of amassing riches, or indisposed to follow the Savior through poverty and strict economy would have been soon recognized as a person unfit to belong to this society.

The old discipline of the *Unitas Fratrum* laid out the following guidelines:

Worldly entertainments, drunkenness, dancing, swearing, frivolous talk, gambling, and the like, they should neither tolerate in their houses, nor allow elsewhere. Fathers of families should not frequent taverns and public houses, nor spend their time in idleness, drinking, or playing, nor be absent from home at night; but being occupied with their proper business, keep watch over their dependents.

There were no youth groups going on outings to the forest or beating around a dumb volleyball. Only children played games, and these were limited to family time. Once the child “became a man/woman,” childish things were expected to be put away and the new young man/woman was expected to put their hand to the plow and not look back. This step into adulthood was expected to happen in the early teens, if not before.

Writes one historian:

No public buffoon ever cracked his jokes at Herrnhut. No tight-rope dancer poised on giddy height. No barrel-dancer rolled his empty barrel. No lotteries swindled the simple. No juggler mystified the children. No cheap-jack cheated the innocent maidens. No quack-doctor sold his nasty pills. No melancholy bear made his feeble attempt to dance.

For the social joys of private life the laws were stricter still. At Herrnhut, ran one comprehensive clause, there were to be no dances whatever, no wedding breakfasts, no christening bumpers, no drinking parties, no funeral feasts, and no games like

The Single Eye

An old Bohemian Brethren song

Simple mind, thou grace's wonder!
Deepest wisdom, greatest might,
Fairest jewel, love's defender,
Work that God alone can make.

Liberty does walk in fetters,
Riches are but empty wind,
Defaced soon shall beauty be,
When we're not of simple mind.

When simplicity we cherish,
We've a whole and perfect light;
But that view away will vanish,
Soon as double grows our sight.

He alone who builds on Jesus,
And in Him does all possess;
He is built on the foundation;
Is a child of grace well blessed.

those played in the surrounding villages. No bride at Herrnhut ever carried a bouquet. No sponsor ever gave the new baby a mug or a silver spoon.

John Wesley wrote concerning them, “The Moravians have no diversion but such as are proper for holy people.”

Dress

Dress was uniform in Herrnhut. That meant that every man dressed in the same clothes as the other. Known as “Blackcoats” by the American Indians, every Moravian brother wore the same color and cut of clothes. And every woman dressed in the same style dress as the others. The only distinction among the women was the ribbon that held on their head covering, which was of a different color according to their age or marital status: children red, older girls light red, single sisters¹⁸ pink, married women blue, and widows white.

This gave a lot of freedom to Anna and the other women. There were no worries, day-dreaming, or fretting about which color of dress to wear for the day, who had the prettiest material, how the cut should be, how low the hem Yes, the uniformity freed Anna and the other sisters from having to waste time on such frivolities. When her dress wore out, Anna already knew what pattern the next one would be, and what the material would look like. From neck to ankle to elbow, everything was modestly covered, without the first sign of lace, ruffles, or unnecessary adornments.

Anna’s head covering was the stock Moravian style, with the only distinction between hers and the other sisters being the ¼” tall embroidered stitching of her initials in one corner, so it could be identified from the others. Moravian veils covered the hairline and the ears, solid white, and tied on with the colored ribbon designated to her group.

After reading more than a 1000 pages¹⁹ of Moravian Church history to compile this booklet, I have yet to find that any of the men or women ever complained about it during the first years. Their hearts were set on higher matters, and personal preferences to dress melted in the light of the opportunity to be a part of a consecrated brotherhood.

Orderliness

Everything about Herrnhut spoke of order. The fields were well-

18 Sisters joined the single sister’s group at about age 18.

19 Obviously, many of these were “sped-read”!



The typical Moravian headcovering and dress. Moravian head coverings were known as Schnepfen Haube (Snipe's Head) caps because of the point that was formed by the bottom layer on the forehead. In later coverings, the top layer was not as opaque, making the bottom layer show through in the shape of a snipe's beak. See page 63 for an example.

kept, the fences mended, the buildings maintained, the streets swept clean; yet nothing spoke of vanity, of trying to impress the eyes of visitors or neighbors. There were leaders chosen for every job, and everyone had a job.

No member of Herrnhut was allowed to leave on a trip without notifying the appropriate overseer. And, no one was allowed to take in a visitor overnight without permission. This was to cut out the visits of imprudent folks and vagrant salesmen who came to ply their worthless wares to the unwary.

Brotherhood

If goods could be bought within the community, then they were not to be bought from the outside. Why not give the brethren preference in business? And no one was to start a business without due counsel and permission. And if two were in the same business, they were not to make competition with each other. After all, are not Christians supposed to love and care for one another?

Again we turn to the old *Unitas Fratrum* discipline to find these two points of advice:

No one should hastily appeal to Courts of Law, but disputes which arise between those who are partakers of the faith should rather be amicably settled, either before the lay elders, or else by chosen arbitrators.

If two brothers had a business dispute, they had to settle the matter within a week. If they did not do so, or they went to a court of law, they were both expelled from the brotherhood. Concerning interest, it is recorded:

They should avoid disreputable and suspicious ways of gaining a livelihood; altogether abstain from interest and usury, on account of the threatenings of God against it, and the various iniquities that go along with it.

Church discipline

Visible sin did not get winked at in Herrnhut. There were three steps of church discipline, but the final one was excommunication. Adultery, fist fighting, and drunkenness were dealt with firmly. Guilty ones were expelled from the community, and not allowed re-entry until certain proof was manifested that thorough repentance had occurred.

But before the 'ultimate' of excommunication and expulsion from the community occurred, plenty of rebuke, pleading, and teaching

were administered. The goal was a pure congregation, but reconciliation and unity were simultaneously sought for.

The result?

At one point, Herrnhut had about 600 residents. But, 70 of their number were doing missions/evangelism to one part of the world or other. That meant over 10% of the congregation was dedicated solely to the work of the Gospel—not counting those involved in ministering locally!

The whole community was consecrated to a cause, the cause of Jesus Christ. No one was to make a decision based on his own good, but on the good of the whole. Those who could not throw their life into the direction and goal of the community were simply not permitted to live there. There was a *reason* for living the way they lived, and each of the above-mentioned aspects only contributed to the ability to press toward the goal. Holiness (simplicity and economy in food, dress, and housing); orderliness; and righteous dealings among themselves were like the gears of a great God-glorifying machine. Without each of those gears in place, “the machine” would have surely soon quit functioning! And if it quit functioning, God would not be glorified. Therefore, it must function, and each gear must take its place!

One historian writes:

In the Zinzendorfan community, egotism became an oblation to a high spiritual purpose; the inner life of its people derived its sustenance from a pure, simple, and active faith, and all their actions were made subservient to spiritual ends. A total surrender of egotism was, accordingly, the first step to membership in this people, fashioned after the old apostolic times.

By the end of the fateful year of 1727, Herrnhut had grown to include 37 houses, with 300 church members; 200 of them were immigrants from Moravia.

Back to Anna ...

After turning her back to the world and surrendering to the will of Christ, and the subsequent peace, Anna and nine other young girls formed a private little group amongst themselves, for prayer and service. This group of young pre-teen and early teenage girls ordered their accountability amongst themselves in the same manner as the older ones, and perhaps some may have smiled and considered it

play. But they were dead serious. Anna shares how it went:

Sometimes indeed, doubts arose in my mind as to whether Jesus was *my* Savior, and whether I was so fully assured of this as to be ready to lay down my life for His sake, for I did not at all times experience this full assurance. I sought the Lord in earnest prayer; nor did I rest till my pardon was sealed, and I felt He was truly mine and I was His, and should ever remain His property. Oh, what did I enjoy in those blissful moments! How did my heart burn with love to Him! How I longed to win souls for my Savior.

Overwhelmed with gratitude and love, my heart glowed with a fervent desire to serve the Lord. It was as if the world could no longer contain me. Everything earthly appeared to me unworthy of notice. Eternity was the sole object of my thoughts and aspirations. The work of guiding the souls of others and attending to their spiritual concerns brought me down in some degree from these soaring heights. I went to my work with a cheerful heart, and it was my greatest pleasure to watch the gradual progress of the souls entrusted to my charge. In the congregation I was as yet but little known, not being possessed of the gifts calculated to attract notice. I remained in the background and labored amongst the older girls, nine in number. We had our regular offices and arrangements—elders, overseer, exhorters, sick nurses. I filled the office of exhorter. We treated all our little concerns with great seriousness; nor did the Savior withhold His blessing from our feeble efforts.

And so it went with Anna as it does for many young people. Doubts ... accusatory darts from Satan, just like he did to Jesus himself: "*If thou be the son of God ...*"

If thou be???

If!

God—yes, the very Father himself—had just declared some forty days earlier than Satan's temptation of Jesus, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well-pleased." If God said Jesus was His son, Jesus was under absolutely no obligation whatsoever to prove it to Satan, God, the world, or Himself. Satan's words were only a snare to get Jesus to doubt what God had said.

And so the sons and daughters of God are still accused, and doubts are thrown at them in their earliest days, causing many to stumble. Yes, it is true, some people claim conversions who have not fully surrendered to Christ, and God is calling them to take up the cross and walk in obedience to Christ. But, dear fully-surrendered young



Anna Nitschmann, age unknown, but probably in her late teens or twenties. This painting is in the archives at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The crinkles have been left in this picture to show the actual condition of the painting. The front cover has the same picture, in color. Note the red ribbon, which indicates that Anna is part of the Young Girls (basically teenagers) choir. However, the color may have darkened from pink (Single Sisters) since the painting was created.

sister or brother, don't let an emotional downturn become a fiery dart of doubt! Everyone has ups and downs in their emotions, even after becoming children of God. While we all enjoy "up" feelings, "down" feelings are as much a part of life as cold, rainy weather is. Rejoice! The sun is shining behind the dark cloud that drops down the much-needed rain! Ever wonder what life would be like if there were no dreary, rainy days? Go visit the Atacama Desert in northern Chile if you care to know!²⁰

When God convicts, He is specific. Your sin will be made clear to you, if you have any. But if the doubt in your mind is caused by a vague feeling and some foggy thought that "something" must be wrong, just ask yourself why the one accusing you does not clearly show you just what that "something" is.

Anna experienced doubts in her young days, but God brought her through to a productive life.

The "Choir" system begins

In 1730, under the leadership of Anna, a "Young Sister's Choir"²¹ moved into another building at Herrnhut, and separate groups for boys and girls, young married and older married couples, widows, and widowers were also soon organized. Children moved from their parents' quarters into their respective group houses at an early age, and from there into the single brothers and sisters choirs at maturity (around fourteen). This arrangement came from the belief that Christ looks different and means different things to various groups of people. Young men, for instance, see him as an example of endurance and a model of wisdom, while older widows may value him as a friend and helper. Every group, the Moravians believed, gets the most out of fellowship with Christ if among others in the same situation they are.²²

20 The driest place known on Earth, with only about 1 millimeter of rain per year. The following was written in 1569: "Towards Atacama, near the deserted coast, you see a land without men, where there is not a bird, not a beast, nor a tree, nor any vegetation." Four and a half centuries later the climate there has not changed. It's *still* a desert. Praise God for rainy days!

21 When one sees the word "choir" in Moravian writings, it is to be remembered that it is not referring to a singing group. Rather, it was simply a German way to say "group." To avoid confusion, I have purposely refrained from using "choir" in this book, except occasionally to remind the reader of how it is usually expressed.

22 A doctrine I am not convinced of myself. Neither am I convinced of the good in removing children from the atmosphere of the family at a young age. But that is how it was done among the Moravians, so I leave these facts in the story to give a feel of Anna's atmosphere.

Anna the Eldress

Along with the “choir” system came a framework of accountability. Each separate group had a leader, visitors of the sick, exhorters, and other offices. The ministers of the congregation took oversight of the whole system, and kept close contact with the leader of each group. The “choir” system did not take away the minister’s personal contact with the individuals, but it did spread the accountability out more.

The brothers decided that they would like to have a designated older brother to counsel them in their spiritual conduct. This “elder” was not an ordained man as we tend to think of today, he was simply an “older” brother—although that meant in experience, not necessarily age, as we shall soon see—who would take it upon himself to get to know each brother personally to be able to advise him in his walk with Christ. This “elder” was not authorized to baptize or give communion; he was simply “big brother” who would walk alongside the younger brothers as they came into difficulties in their Christian experience. Today, we might call such a person a “counselor.”

Not long after the brothers had their “Elder,” the sisters asked if they could not have an “Eldress” to help them along too. The brotherhood felt good about the idea, and four sister’s names were put in the lot.

When Anna’s name was suggested to be put into the lot, there seemed to have been a couple of the sisters who were dealing with feelings of jealousy towards her. Seeing her deep spiritual interest and commitment, Anna had been allowed to be involved in some meetings with a sort of “inner group” of people that were especially close to the Zinzendorf family. It is likely that her participation also had to do with a special closeness that her older brother Melchior had with the Count, but Anna certainly had no spiritual pride about it. She was simply sold out for her Savior, and as one witness later wrote, “she regularly spent day and night in prayer.”

The sisters who were battling with jealousy suggested her name, thinking that Anna would surely never be selected, and she would thus be “set down a notch” in what they thought was her “pride.” Zinzendorf argued against putting her name in, sensing a plot among some of the women, and thinking that such a young lady would indeed be ruined if put into a position too early. When the sisters refused to withdraw Anna’s name, it is said Zinzendorf left the room in

disgust. It was thus left up to his wife to draw the lot.

To everyone's surprise, Anna's name was drawn from the container! A historian tells us what happened next:

The consternation of the schemers may be imagined; no one present was willing to tell Anna what had happened;²³ so the next day Count Zinzendorf had to send her the official notification. He says that he sent her "a sharp letter,"²⁴ hoping that she would refuse to serve, but that she accepted in "a truly Moravian fashion," quietly and humbly, believing that since the Lord had spoken, through the "lot,"²⁵ it was her duty to obey.

Anna gave her point of view in the following words:

On March 17, 1730, I was chosen Eldress of the congregation by lot, contrary to the expectations of most, if not all, the members of the church, and certainly to my own deep humiliation. Being at that time in a very child-like, obedient frame of mind, I did not raise many objections, but said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it according Thy word.' I accepted the appointment,



Did Anna's hands work this spinning wheel? Possibly, but more likely not this particular one. Her position of Chief Eldress did not bring her any income, so she earned her living sometimes by spinning. This particular spinning wheel is in the *Gemein Haus* at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

23 She wasn't present, and may not have even known that she was being considered for the position.

24 He advised her to not accept the position. When chosen by lot, the person chosen had the right to decline, but no one else could interfere with the decision. See next footnote and Appendix B.

25 The thought is that if everyone agrees to use the lot to decide a matter, then afterwards they "argue" against what the lot revealed, why even use the lot? Anna probably saw it as a matter of not arguing against God's choice. Thus she had little reason to not submit and humbly accept what she had been called to. It is to be remembered also that in her time and situation, a 14-year-old girl was generally more mature than the average 14-year-old of today.

trusting in my ever-faithful Friend, who, I felt assured, would help me through all my difficulties and ‘graciously regard the low estate of His handmaiden.’

She wrote the following letter to the congregation:

I know not what our Savior’s purposes may be in leading me thus, and I feel my unworthiness. I desire, however, to be obedient to our Savior, and hope the congregation will be satisfied. I desire to be nothing, only to please the Lord, to pray to Him without ceasing, and to follow in His footsteps. May He gird His poor handmaid with strength so to walk even as He walked. May our faithful Savior enable me to copy His sacred example in watchfulness and prayer! Signed—Anna Nitschmann

The good child

Zinzendorf, the perpetual poet, put the occasion to verse in later years with the following words:

With simple faith she heard the call,
Though her surprise was seen by all;
And, ere man dreamt it, she was known
As *the good child* by everyone.

As the little poem says, Anna’s sweet attitude, humility, compassion, modesty, and wisdom soon won even the hearts of those who had been battling with jealousy. It was said of her that “when she spoke or prayed or sang, all hearts stood open to her.”

Meanwhile, Anna earned her living by spinning. The position of Eldress had no monetary support with it. Thus she lived for the next couple of years, spinning wool and counseling the sisters, most of whom were older than her in physical age.

Consecrated handmaids of the Lord

As is common in most true revivals, the Herrnhut community began to realize that choosing marriage partners based on emotional bonds formed from social mingling of the youth was simply not the route to take. Several methods were tried to stop the scourge, but with varying success. It was finally Anna and 17 other young ladies who took the required step, with Anna being one of the main instigators. Anna tells how it happened:

On the 4th of May, 1730, all the single sisters, eighteen in number, who loved the Lord Jesus, were assembled at a love feast²⁶ in the house of David Nitschmann the Weaver [The Syndic]. On

26 One can see the solemnity of Moravian love feasts. These young ladies were not chit-chatting about scrapbooking that day ...

that occasion they were clearly led to discern the duties and obligations of what it really meant to be a member of the Single Sisters group, and how they should honor the Lord and be a source of joy to the congregation. Therefore we formed a covenant to walk as true virgins of the Lamb.

Oh! How agreeable this was to me, for before this already, everything was disagreeable to me that was not pleasing to the Bridegroom of the soul. And as I now had more companions who were of the same mind with me, it can be imagined that this was a great spiritual joy to me.

I vowed inviolable fidelity to my Savior. The love of Jesus filled my heart and stifled every other emotion. The words which at that time were so deeply impressed upon my heart were:

Oh, thou Bridegroom of the Soul,
Should our souls
Who Thee knew, who Thee name
Follow any other Star?
This poor creature is much too small!
Our spirit desires the King,
For our souls are the Lord's.

This was my inmost feeling, and I vowed that I would be faithful to the Bridegroom. What experience of His great love toward me I had, I cannot describe. Go tell what the beloved Lamb has done, ye who tell of His deeds! My eyes flowed tears and my innermost desires and thoughts were, "You alone are the Lamb." I was dying for love, yet I still lived!

My heart was excited to cry out to my companions:

You daughter of Jerusalem, love with me;
O, love the King with all you have,
And break out with joy and shouting.
Sing of the splendor, reflect on His might;
His blessed kingdom belongs to you!
Oh! If only my companions and I
Could be marked maidens in heart, arm, and forehead.
But the Bridegroom's aspect and form is murky.
How gladly we would submit ourselves to You, lovely Lord!

Part of the pledge that the sisters made that day was to not consider any prospect of marriage unless Christ and the congregation initiated it. They were done forever with determining their marriage partners by allowing emotional attachments to form from their social contacts with young men. Not that they totally cut off social contact between the genders, but that they did not choose marriage partners based on

emotions stirred by social contact with the opposite gender.

On that day, none of them probably realized the importance of this solemn commitment. But out of that group of 18 young ladies, the majority would become missionaries to various parts of the globe in the coming years.

The fall

Zinzendorf ended up being right after all. He feared that giving such a young girl—in spite of the fact that she was extremely sincere and dedicated—would ruin her. And it did ... almost. Anna writes:

Our Savior watched over me with a mother's care, especially during the first two years of my office, when I was but a child. I lived more in heaven than on earth. The glories of the heavenly Zion filled my soul, and I tasted richly the powers of the world to come.

But ... she continues later in her autobiography:

Then, however, my happiness suffered an abatement, owing to a self-willed and distrustful spirit, which I did not immediately discern to be such, and for which, consequently, I did not humble myself before the Lord.

This threw my mind into a state of great confusion. My brothers and my sisters censured me sharply, which was good for me, though I did not think so at the time. My sister [in Christ], Anna Schindler, with whom I had been on terms of the closest intimacy from the time of her arrival in 1729, went even so far as to say that if I did not soon return from the error of my ways, I would end up like Miriam (Numbers 12).

At first, this served only to deepen my inward darkness; but by following the good advice she gave me, I was gradually restored to light and peace. Yet I lost something of my simplicity, which I was not aware of at first, but which I have frequently felt since and deeply mourned over. Thus the third year of my office was, consequently, a season of trial.

Anna does not detail what is meant by “a self-willed and distrustful spirit,” but we can praise God for faithful brothers and sisters who helped to restore her, even though it did cost some stern rebukes to a 17-year-old whose position was getting a bit to her head.

The Single Sisters group

Up until this time, it seems Anna had lived with her parents. But upon reaching 17 and half years of age, she took her place in the Single Sisters group. She writes:

Deeply Moved

Anna Nitschmann (1715-60) UPSALA, II
8.8.8.8 Trochaic
M.M. 100 Johann Crueger, 1649

1. Deep - ly moved and du - ly heed - ing, My good Shep - herd's kind - ly lead - ing,
Bowed with re - ver - ence be - fore Him, I would praise Him and a - dore Him.

2. Grace re - newed be - stowed up - on me, With new zeal, my Sav - ior crown me,
So that I may serve Thee sole - ly; Thy a - tone - ment make me ho - ly.

On the 26th of January, 1733, I moved into the sisters' house together with 13 single sisters. I felt truly happy. We lived with each other in love and holy fellowship, and spent many a night in social prayer. At first, we 'had all things in common,' but after a while suspicion found its way into our circle, and our harmony was disturbed. This caused me much pain. I did what I could to stop the progress of this hurtful spirit; but being myself an object of distrust with some, I was frequently compelled to be silent and to lay my troubles before the Lord in prayer.

In May, I was seized with a dangerous illness. I could not but feel deeply humbled on recalling to mind the many acts of unfaithfulness of which I had been guilty. Yet I felt assured that our Savior had forgiven me all, and could look forward cheerfully to my departure.

On being restored to health, I renewed my vows of fidelity to the Lord, promising to consecrate every drop of my life's blood to His service. I enjoyed a blessed season of grace. I felt that our Savior loved me, and I loved Him fervently in return. I was in a state of self-abasement, and felt powerfully the drawings of divine grace.

In June, my beloved sister, Sophia Elizabeth Hentschel, departed this life very suddenly and happily. On the 17th of that month, our prayer-day, she was attending a betrothal when—during the singing of a verse—she rose from her seat, went to her room, lay down, and in a few hours fell asleep in Jesus. On witnessing her peaceful end, I felt a longing desire to depart and be with Christ.

To marry or not to marry

During this time, Sophia Hentschel and Anna were the two sisters under consideration to be married to John Nitschmann.²⁷ There

²⁷ Probably a distant cousin of Anna. As mentioned earlier, there were several

was “much discussion” about which one he should take, but when Sophia suddenly passed away, the choice obviously narrowed down to Anna. Anna, however, simply felt no desire for marriage at this point. She explains:

They asked the bridegroom and he agreed to back out since I was not content with it, because I believed that marriage was no business for me. So I was quickly freed from it. At that time, my frame of mind was along these lines:

The bride can find rest nowhere;
she now has to do with beauty and hair.

Obviously, a spiritual-minded bride can overcome the natural desires for “beauty and hair,” but for Anna, she simply wanted to be freed from the temporal cares that married life brings with it. She longed to “care for the things of the Lord” as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:34.

Dark days of spiritual adolescence

Anna then explains what she experienced soon afterward:

The sight of Him has filled me with an intense longing; my heart leaped and I loved Him. Tears flowed day and night for Him. My life-song was of marriage to Christ; I labored to be assured that He was my bridegroom and that I was His bride, and that I might know His heart. How should I count grief and pain? As nothing! My Bridegroom pointed out to me that it was not suitable that the Bride should also be without stripes.

He then showed me my wretchedness and nakedness. I became annoyed at seeing others appear joyful, and accounted it to their foolishness, because I spent most of my time crying. The simplest actions that I saw and heard from my brothers and sisters appeared to me as trifling things. So many things in myself became grey.

I often thought that He had totally forgotten me, and I became like a bashful deer before the Savior and before my brothers and sisters. I thought that I had become unfaithful to Him and became fearful, so much so that I inwardly and outwardly lost strength.

What I didn’t realize was that I was passing through spiritual adolescence, and I was leaving youthfulness which meant many trials.

I tried to get myself out by will power, with a lot of efforts; but that didn’t work. The Savior wanted me to learn to know myself

Master of Our Rudder

(Du erstgebórner Bruder)

-Anna Nitschmann

You, Firstborn brother,
Be Master of our rudder,
As we pass upon life's sea.
You have our hearts and hands,
And will guide us to the end,
That we your true disciples be.

And to this we say amen!
Glorify your Name,
In each and every soul!
Use us as You see best,
While in Your wounds we rest,
O Crucified Immanuel!

Kindle Your Fire in Us

(Dram flehen wir hier, o Jesu, zu dir)

-Anna Nitschmann (1738)

Therefore flee we to you, Jesus
Kindle your fire in us,
We who are branches of You.

Together we pull in one yoke;
You harness us in,
And we offer each other a helping hand.

So give us today a heart to fight
A brave heart and a true;
A lamb while in the house, but a bold lion without.

A joyful heart, in sorrow and grief;
Our actions and spirit,
Demonstrations of Your holy character are.

Love refuses nothing, it fixes itself on One!
Yes, far and near and everywhere,
To the service of the invincible Lord!

as a poor little sinner and become a “little sinner in my own eyes,” but it was hard since I considered myself pure and good.

In the end—after much imploring to Him—the Savior revealed to me that He was thinking of me and loved me, and had thrown me in the crucible and refined me that I should become pure gold, and that this road was good for me.

I then became ashamed of myself for my impatience, and that I had not yielded myself to the Master who knew where the road would take me ...

So many times I had said to myself, “Oh Lord, where are my former strength and simplicity, of which I have lost a part?” O my Beloved! What I have experienced in these two years. I cannot say it nor write it out. During this time my position as Eldress was very difficult and I wished to resign and turn it over to a more qualified sister, of which there were many. I learned to know myself, and it would have been very easy for me to leave the fellowship; but my position bound me to the community. And mercy was given to me to love and honor my brothers and sisters for their sake. That is NOT my nature, but grace!

Overcoming the darkness

It is hard to determine just exactly what Anna went through during this time, but it sounds hauntingly similar to what we might today term as a low-grade “clinical depression.” For a year she lived by herself in a little room. She then tells of her steps out of those sad times:

I decided that I would serve Him and the church, so long as He would need me to, because I knew that to serve Him was a gift of grace. I then labored in the simple and child-like manner, cost as it did. My honest desire was to die to self and live to Him, who died and is resurrected.

It was He, however, whom my soul had chosen and Him on whom they trust and desire, that I desired to be molded into His image. ... The Lord humbled me truly, and my soul loved Him for humbling me, and I was pleased to be able to sing, “It is well with me, for I have overcome all things!”

To marry or not to marry, again ...

Before she was twenty, she had turned down another offer for marriage, this time to Leonard Dober. Leonard was the famous first missionary sent out by the Moravian Brethren. Although David Nitschmann [The Bishop] went along with him to St. Thomas, David



St. Thomas, now a part of the US Virgin Islands, was the destination of the first missionaries sent out by the Renewed Moravian Church. Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann [The Bishop] were the two men, although David never planned to stay (and was there only months), and Leonard only spent two years and returned to Europe for the rest of his life. David was Anna's cousin, and Leonard almost became her husband.

only went to help Leonard get established, and after a few months returned to Europe. Leonard was left alone to work among the enslaved Africans on the Caribbean isle of St. Thomas. At first he worked for and lived among the rich landowners, but eventually he moved into a little hut to be close to the slaves, who were his intended mission target. After some months, a ship with more Moravians came, along with the news that Leonard had been elected Chief Elder at Herrnhut, and was to return to Europe.

So he boarded the ship on its return voyage—after about two years on the island—and returned to Europe to finish his life there.

Not too long after returning to Herrnhut, the congregation thought that it would be great if the Chief Elder and the Chief Eldress would marry. Why not? Couldn't they be more useful as a team?

As it turned out, Anna was torn. She admired Leonard as a man of God. But she just could not see herself as married. Then a letter came

from Leonard, indicating that he was willing, but not just exactly fully persuaded that was what he really wanted.

It was a relief to Anna, and they both notified the congregation by a letter that they would like to be excused from the match. The congregation accepted their request, and the marriage was called off. Anna wrote, “Christ was everything to me.” Her frame of mind is revealed by another sentence in the same writing: “For Christ, I refused the whole world, much less a man.”

Anna didn’t consider marriage a sin by any means, and certainly not to a man of the caliber of Leonard Dober. If Christ specifically called her to marriage, she would of course obey. But for her, marriage to the Lamb was her calling ... and she really had no desire for anything else.²⁸

While speaking of marriage ...

All marriages among the early Renewed Moravian Church had to pass through the lot. Three options were given in the lot: “Yes,” “No,” and “Wait.” Some modern stories would have it that marriage candidates were not given the option of choosing whom they would marry. While some marriages were arranged, not all were, and if a brother had a preference, he could make that known and if the sister agreed, it proceeded to the lot. That said, quite a number of marriages seem to have been “arranged” along the lines of the following method, taken from a history book:

If a man wanted to marry, he told it to the Elder of the brethren, who told it to the minister, who told it to the Eldress of the sisters. The community believed in a special providence and that all matches are made in heaven. So, the candidate for matrimony was brought before a box of ballots from which his trembling hand was allowed to draw the name of an unmarried female. If both parties were satisfied and agreed to come together, they were married in church within a week.

Sound scary? While I don’t personally promote such a method, there are a couple of points to make about it.

First, this was the atmosphere in which Anna labored, and be-

²⁸ Leonard later married another sister (Anna Schindler, one of Anna Nitschmann’s closest friends, the one who had rebuked her for her pride as a young Eldress) in 1741, and spent a useful life as a missionary in the Netherlands, England, and Silesia. When his first wife died after two years, he married Anne Engel, and was later made a bishop in the Moravian church, dying at Herrnhut in 1766. And, no, he never sold himself into slavery, as many people falsely believe. In fact, he spent only two years in the West Indies. But he did say he was *willing* to sell himself as a slave, if that is what it would have taken to reach the people.

ing Chief Eldress, she would have been partly responsible as to which names could have been put into the “box of ballots.” When a sister felt called to marriage, she would have notified the Eldress, and the Eldress would have to decide if the sister was actually ready for such a step, in her spiritual life.

Secondly, although it sounds almost barbaric to our Americanized, independent minds, people who wanted to join the Moravian congregations knew that they were committing themselves to the oversight of the brotherhood. No couples were engaged in the community without consent from the elders, and the consent of the Lord through the lot. Marriage was not a self-determined event; marriage was a brotherhood event. If you did not like the way the Moravian community handled marriage, you simply had the choice to not join!

Thirdly, such a method ensures a complete resignation to something and/or someone outside of the marriage applicant at the time of choosing a partner. While a complete resignation to God can happen within the context of typical modern courting/dating practices, the Moravian method pretty well exterminated any selfish motives in choosing a partner. And remember, a man could name a preference in his choice of a partner, but many Moravians still chose to use the “ballot box.” And, the lady could refuse. That said, it seems very few couples did refuse. They were resigned to accept a *will outside of their own selfish will*. That was the key and focus in choosing a partner.

Fourthly, with very few exceptions, Moravian marriages made through the ballot method were enduring and stable. Enduring marriages are not made in the “perfect” selection, but in the commitment to make it work, “for better or for worse.” If one stops to consider the ramifications of such a method, [theoretically] only those who had surrendered their will to God would be willing to accept such a method, and people with a will surrendered to God generally make



So the candidate for matrimony was brought before a box of ballots from which his trembling hand was allowed to draw the name of an unmarried female.

"Juliana shall not marry any one yet..."

(An example of Moravian marriage by lot)

When George Waschke proposed the idea of marrying Juliana Jaeschke in the new Moravian settlement of Savannah, Georgia in 1736, Juliana balked. She preferred George Haberland.

This obviously presented a bit of uncomfortable feelings, for they were all living as a community in close quarters, due to the newness of the settlement (less than two years old). The lot had already forbidden a marriage between her and Peter Rose.

So the question was put to the lot about who Julianna should marry, and the lot came out saying, "Juliana shall not marry any one yet."

So no marriage took place for Julianna ... until later the lot and she and George Waschke all agreed to a marriage. So George and Julianna were promptly married, and ended up having seven children together.

good marriage partners! One could, in fact, view such a method as a way to filter out unsundered wills!

And lastly, the great Moravian revivals and missionary enterprise happened in the context of ballot marriages. Single men on the mission field were known to accept the partner selected back home, finally getting to know his partner when she was shipped to meet him on the field! And vice-versa; the sisters would get to know their husband-to-be when he picked her up at the port (although probably most of them knew the man—or at least his reputation—somewhat beforehand). Most Moravians would have seen it as a resignation to the will of God concerning their life, a removing of their own hands from the steering wheel and letting Him take control. God was not the co-pilot, He was Pilot with everyone else a passenger!

Again, I am not saying we should use this method ... but I have to say that it did work, and the results were positive overall. Pondering over the whole scheme should help us consider what it takes to make and keep a happy marriage. Certainly, it is not our choosing of "the perfect one" that makes a marriage happy and lasting and God-glorifying!

And so, with a pledge to make sure the married sisters would not be neglected in her duties as Eldress, Anna thanked the Saviour that she could remain single. She wrote:

It's like this with me; The Father can choose if the child should marry or remain single. I will do nothing about it. At this time, I wrote the following song:

In the first day of mercy,
 One is carried by the Lamb;
 But to the end of his going
 One dares to march with Him.

Sometimes through thorns and hedges,
 But we're never stuck alone;
 Though malicious be the terror,
 Our flag triumphant blows.

Let us ever praise our Duke,
 Thank Him, yes, for the trials,
 Even though they seem countless
 As we go the many miles.

We still have some to pass through,
 Yet He knows how to defend,
 And shall spare no effort ever,
 Until we reach the final land.

Love, then, is our daily choice,
 His silent seal on us,
 Giving of His bounteous richness,
 Grace and strength to match our needs.

We shall ever ask of You then,
 Courage, King, in all,
 Let the watchword ring eternal,
 "He with us, and we with Him!"

"No" to the cloistered life!

Anna was drawn to "the secret of the Lord," which is promised to be "with them that fear him." This "secret" has been translated as "comunion íntima" in Spanish Bibles: the *intimate communion*. This intimate relation with Jehovah was Anna's heart song and goal, as shown in the last line of the above song.

But she passed through an interesting experience, a by-way that would have ultimately taken her astray from the very communion she longed for: the by-way of cloistered mysticism. Anna wrote:

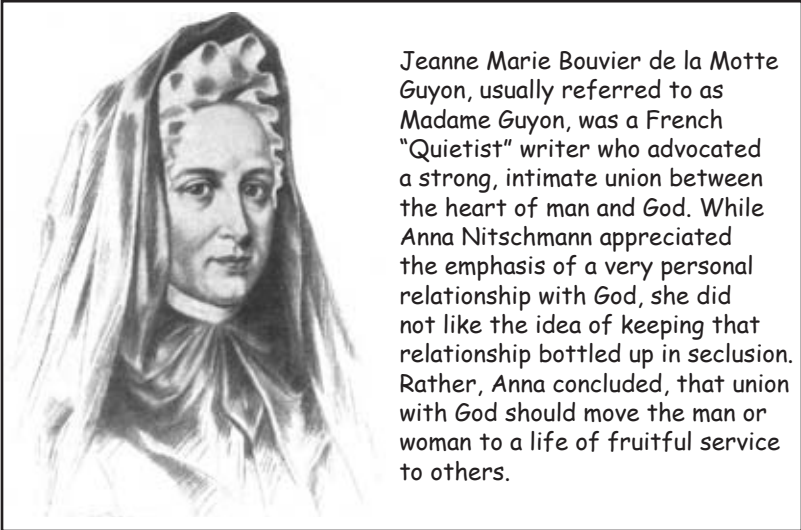
On my 20th birthday, the Saviour of my soul revealed to me what I had so longed for; he flooded my soul with greater grace, like it speaks of in the first chapter of Song of Songs. The Count [Zinzendorf] sent me a song that was like the voice of a friend to my heart. It went like this:

What shall I say, my beloved Man,
 You whom I have so many times sought,

And now that before you I stand,
I must ask, where can I find you out?

Shortly before this, some brethren had encouraged me to read the writings of Madame Guyon and Saint Teresa. I did that, and those of Saint Teresa particularly struck me well. I wanted to walk that way; it was attractive and good, and there were many good truths in their writings. But ... they lacked the central point, which all others are dependent upon: the ransom price, the reconciliation for our sins.

Life in a monastery is not my calling, even though it appeals to me very much. I am the bride of the Lamb, and I shall continue



in this beautiful calling. Gradually I began to realize that to sit all shut up to myself was not the calling of a soldier of Christ. Thus the Savior made it clear to me, even though for a quarter of a year I entertained some fancy thoughts about a cloistered life, of which I am now ashamed and humbled. So I had my difficulties; but He who loved my soul led me to see that the best way was to walk in the simplicity of a little child.

In this manner, Anna learned an important lesson about fellowship: the intimate communion is supposed to be both vertical (with God) and horizontal (with man). It was this vertical *and* horizontal fellowship that made the Moravian Brethren stand out from other Pietists. While others were content to know God in their hearts, separated from others, the Moravians built strong communities of believers, and then reached their united hands out to the lost souls

Though I Earth and Ashes Be

(Das ist's, verwundte Liebe)

-Anna Nitschmann

You, Wounded Love,
Are He who quickens me,
When I ponder the motivation,
That moved You to die for me!
All of my salvation,
Springs from Your holy blood—
Now and to eternity!

I will give a testimony,
So long as I shall live,
With a deep humiliation,
Though I earth and ashes be.
I forever am reminded,
How it cost You all Your blood—
That I released could be!

I can ne'er e'er forget,
What a sinner I have been,
I cannot even grasp it,
Yet ... my heart does live within!
You now are my Kind Leader,
So I will gladly serve You now—
Receive, Lord, Your reward!

Oh, may it be engraven,
As a motive on my heart,
And moved by Your true love,
May I witness with my mouth.
That until that last great day,
Upon my sinful brow—
May be seen Your love seal!

around them, to pull them into the intimate communion.

Looking at the horizontal fellowship even closer, we see that the Moravians were *more* than a group of believers who met together regularly to exhort one another to a closer walk with God. They themselves were bound together one to another, and the fellowship that each experienced with God was also experienced corporately with God. In other words, instead of merely 10 believers having 10 relationships with God (which they did), they *also* experienced God in the form of 10 believers melted together in unity who experienced *one relationship with Him as a body*.

And so Jesus' prayer, "that they may be one," was answered!

Pilgrim congregation

At this point, Anna's life and ministry took a turn. It all began with the Count.

Count Zinzendorf was born into one of the most eminent political families in Europe. He himself was one of the King's counselors. But about the time of the 1727 revival at Hernnhut, Ludwig (as he sometimes liked to be called, to take away the prestige of being called "Count") had laid down political pursuits to dedicate himself to spiritual things.

Eventually, his acceptance of the Moravian exiles and his radical ideas began to worry some of his neighbors. Foreseeing a clash, and desiring to even further alienate himself from politics and money-making, he put all his lands into the name of his wife and refused to accept any income from them.

Deeding everything to his wife helped him in two ways. First, his wife was actually a better manager than he was. Zinzendorf was not a very "practical" person when it came to managing land or business. Dorothy his wife was a very pious lady, like Ludwig, but she had the ability to manage a farm and make it productive, which Ludwig could probably do if a brainstorm of some sort or another didn't interrupt his plans! But the multiplicity of his brainstorms did seem to take away from practical management capabilities ...

Secondly, the nobility "let him off the hook" since Dorothy was from the upper class also. If he had tried to deed the lands to the serfs, it would have probably never been allowed, even though Ludwig would have been the type to do just that.

To shorten the story, it suffices to say that neighbors brought

charges against Ludwig that essentially forced him to be an exile from his properties (although legally they were not even his anymore) for the following 20 years.

The Zinzendorf family was away from home when the ruling came, but soon Dorothy came back to Herrnhut, alone of course. At this point, Anna's life took a different course. She was called to help Ludwig in exile. His brainstorm—he never seemed to run out of grand ideas!—for his new dilemma? Create a Pilgrim congregation, a mobile congregation that would roam Europe and make converts wherever it happened to settle! No, not just an evangelist or two, but essentially a whole congregation that moved about from place to place.

Along with the banishment of the Count came the decree that no more refugees would be allowed to settle at Herrnhut. This occasioned a conference of the Brethren, in which a grand plan of colonization mixed with mission work formed itself. While the Moravians did have missions as an impetus to their “going into all the world,” many of their mission stations were actually a combination of colonization and missions. When looking for places to settle the many refugees—who kept coming from Moravia and Bohemia on a regular basis—they also looked for places in which to start a mission outreach.

Ronneburg Castle

Grand ideas are grand ideas, but some of them just don't work. But with Ludwig, it is said that once he had formed a grand idea, he would do whatever it took to make it happen, impractical as the idea actually was. He once stated that he would “borrow all the gold in Europe, if that is what it would take” to make one of his plans go through.

Anna tells the story of the formation of the Pilgrim Congregation with these words:

We proceeded, by way of Frankfort-on-the-Maine, to Marienborn. There we were, eleven of us, as in a prison, and knew not what to do. Everything seemed against us. Our Savior had led us into a dreary wilderness [literally speaking].

The castle of Marienborn and the adjoining forest bear witness to the tears, sighs, and prayers, in which I unburdened my mind before the Lord. Two weeks later we began to live in the castle of Ronneburg, which was rented by a number of poor people of different religions and sects. Our object was to proclaim the



Ronneburg Castle was built in the 1200s and survives to this day. But when Count Zinzendorf first rented it for a dwelling place for his "Pilgrim Congregation," it had been in disrepair for about 80 years, inhabited by Gypsies, Jews, and other poor people, as well as bats and rats and owls. The roofs leaked, the windows would not shut, and the staircases were rotted. But Anna settled in and began a work of evangelization among the children in the neighborhood.

Saviour to these poor, degraded souls, and to improve their living conditions. On moving into the castle, our cash did not exceed the sum of twopence, since the Count declined to receive anything from his estates, lest the Lord's work be hampered. Our Savior, however, cared for us so faithfully as to give us, without borrowing or making collections, not only enough for our needs, but even so much that we could assist others.

When we first arrived there, things were far from encouraging. The house in which we had fixed our abode was the habitation of owls and bats.²⁹ Under these circumstances, I composed myself and thought, 'Now we must *believe*. God has not brought us here for no reason.'

29 The castle had burned about 100 years earlier, and then ransacked by invaders about 20 years after that. Now, 80 years later, they move into this place which was described by another with these words: "no door or window of the castle would close, no stairway was safe to use, and the place was infested with mice and rats."

Continuing her story, Anna reveals her role in the Pilgrim Congregation. She was in her early 20s, with little experience in evangelizing. However, she immediately fell into her role of reaching out to the ladies and children in the neighborhood:

I endeavored to make myself acquainted with the poor people, and soon gained the confidences of the girls. Their parents entrusted them to me for instruction, which gave me a good opportunity of impressing the Savior's love upon their tender hearts. Nor were my labors among them entirely in vain. In my work with the girls, I also got to know many souls who were sincerely seeking the Savior.

The Count's prayer meetings were numerous attended. The Lord began to show us that He was with us. I regained my usual cheerfulness and my heart was in my work. The troubles and inconveniences to which we were exposed proved an easy burden. Thus I labored for six months with my brethren and sisters.

Then came the crash. The manager of the castle got upset at the work they were doing and suddenly ordered them off the property. Anna writes:

We obeyed without the least opposition or protest. Soon after, however, our adversary was truly converted to the Lord, and with a penitent heart asked that some of our brethren please return.

On the road

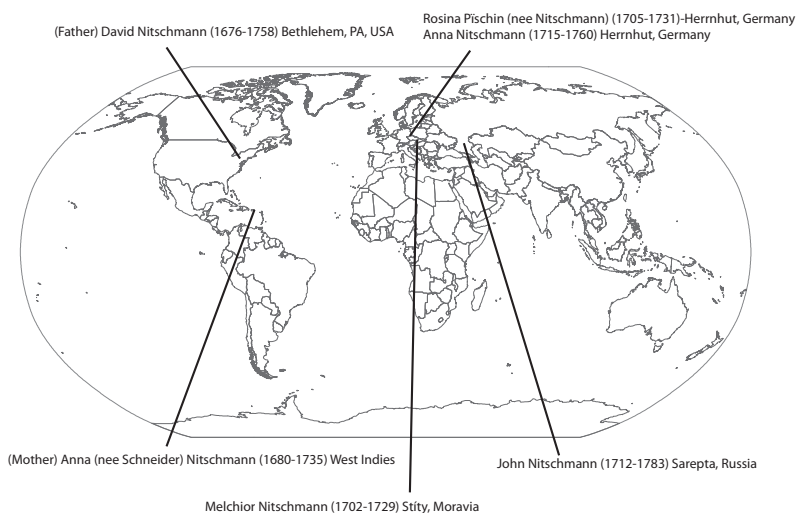
For the next season of her life, Anna travelled with Dorothy, the Countess, to Holland, France, and England. Since she did not know the languages in these countries, she had little chance to share with others, and spent much time alone, meditating, or as she phrased it, "reviewing our Savior's dealings with my soul."

A paragraph in her "Lebenslauf"³⁰ reveals another aspect of Anna's life that we have not covered much since her early days—her family:

During my stay in England, my father returned to Herrnhut from the West Indies, where my mother had departed this life.³¹ My brother Melchior lies buried under the gallows in Bohemia. He closed his life in 1729, in the prison of Schildberg, for the Lord Jesus' sake. He was a true servant of the Lord, and his name

30 Literally, "Life's course," the word generally used for biography. She wrote the original part as a young lady, then several sections were added later.

31 They were part of an ill-fated colony/mission, in which 10 of the 18 members of the group died soon after arrival. Reinforcements were sent to replace them, but several of these also died, including the doctor, who succumbed first. See Appendix C for the staggering death rate in the early colonies/missions.



Anna's family of six died scattered over the world as missionaries and colonists for the Renewed Moravian Church.

is cherished by many in blessed remembrance. My sister lies buried on the Hutberg.³² My only surviving brother, John, has lately returned from the Lapland Mission, and is now laboring at the Ronneburg. May we all meet one day before the throne of the Lamb!

And so the little family was scattered over the face of the earth, like seed upon the land. Her father would die and be buried at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and John would end up—after becoming the third bishop of the Moravian Brethren—leaving his bones in the soil of Sarepta, Russia.

The little Moravian family of six ended up buried in five different countries on three different continents—truly seed for the Savior's kingdom!

To America

The people of Pennsylvania are so contrary and set in their own opinions, wrote August Gottlieb Spangenburg to Ludwig, that the only way to reach them for Christ would be through their women. And there would be no other person more qualified for such a work, as Anna Nitschmann, he finished.

³² The Herrnhut cemetery. Her husband, George Piesch, was later a missionary to Surinam, South America.

With this recommendation, Anna was sent to America with a charge to work among the ladies in the colony of Pennsylvania.

Spangenberg had come to America to visit with some followers of Caspar Schwenckfeld who at one time had settled at Herrnhut, but left after being unable to unite there due to doctrinal differences. While on his visit, he took notice of the many German people settling in Pennsylvania, and wanted to evangelize them. But as noted, he felt hindered, and so thought that perhaps those “stubborn” folks could be converted through the female side of the population.

So it was, then, that Anna was chosen to accompany her father and famous cousin David [The Bishop] to America, and off they went!

A short stay in Holland, a couple of weeks in England, and then on board the ship. Then ... seven weeks in the English Channel.

Stop now, and wait seven weeks to continue reading this story, never leaving your house, and you will get a feel of what it means to “wait seven weeks in the Channel”! Anna does not say what detained them, but when they finally arrived in Philadelphia, 17 weeks had passed.

Let’s pause a moment in our story and reflect. In our day, if we had to wait 17 hours on a flight, or—horror of horrors!—17 days, we would feel scandalized.

Those 17 weeks were most likely time spent in spiritual preparation for the upcoming work she was to undertake. Has our “hurry up and get there as fast as you can” society robbed us of something? How is it that people in days of yore seemed to have more spiritual power than we do? And yet, they were “handicapped” by slow travel times and lack of communication.

Who has been handicapped???

Pennsylvania

Arriving in North America, Anna worked from the base of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. At the time of her coming, however, Bethlehem didn’t exist. The Moravian Brethren who were already in Pennsylvania had been working for the famous British evangelist George Whitefield, building an orphanage/school for African boys, at Nazareth, Pennsylvania. When George banished them from his property over a doctrinal dispute concerning predestination, the Moravians went looking for their own land. Whitefield then relented enough to allow them to winter on his property. With winter approaching, and

the stone walls of the orphanage only laid up to the bottom of the windows, the Moravians quickly threw together two wood buildings to winter in on Whitefield's property. In December, Anna and those in her group arrived.

So there they were, about a dozen and a half in number, with two temporary houses to live in. There were no options, except community of goods! For their Christmas Eve Love Feast, it was corncakes and a drink of roasted rye, a little departure from the usual buns and coffee. But the deviation probably had to do with the lack of such nice things as flour and coffee beans.

This first 20' by 40' house in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania sheltered all 18—plus the livestock—of the Moravian missionary colonists until more lodging could be built. Despite cramped quarters, they were united and happy in Christian love.



THE FIRST HOUSE OF BETHLEHEM, 1741.

But they were happy. They were united in a common vision. Zinzendorf, the eternal dreamer, had shared a vision with them of a great American mission enterprise, in which itinerant preachers would be sent out from a center, schools started for the poor throughout the land ...

And they caught the dream. So living huddled in two temporary houses in primitive conditions probably didn't even strike them as odd. In fact, some of them could remember worse days, like when Anna's father had to escape from his jail in mid-winter and flee on a cold Bohemian night. Now, they were here of their own free will, among brethren of the same vision. Could they complain?

Two days before that Christmas Eve love feast, a few of the men—the 16-year-old famous "apostle of the Indians," David Zeisberger, being one of them—shouldered axes and walked the ten miles to start clearing land for their new home. The snow was knee-deep ...

By March, the log walls were up in their 20'X40' foot dwelling, one-story with a room in the attic for beds. It was divided into two sections, the larger for living quarters, and the smaller for the cattle. And, since all must stay there, it was community of goods again, with a lady's section, and a men's section. The only married couple

there, David Zeisberger Sr. and his wife Anna, lived in the respective men's and women's section.³³

It was in this first house that the inspiration arose to give the place a name, the following Christmas Eve. It was a Sunday, a day of Communion, which was still going on at 9 p.m. As they were rejoicing, Ludwig—who had arrived in America a couple weeks earlier—suddenly got up and led the rest of them into the section of the house where the cattle were, singing an Epiphany song:³⁴

Jesus call Thou me
From the world to flee,
To Thee hasting;
Without resting;
Jesus call Thou me.

Not Jerusalem,
Rather Bethlehem
Gave us that which
Maketh life rich;
Not Jerusalem.

Honored Bethlehem,
Pleasant I esteem;
From thee springeth
He which saveth;
Honored Bethlehem.

Thou no more of right
Art called "least in might";
Unto all men,
Ev'n the heathen,
Bring'st thou health and light

Point me out the star,
Which my course, afar,
Guides from pagan
Ways forsaken;
Point me out the star.

That settled it! The cattle, the lonely and lowly atmosphere of the mission, the mangers ... everyone agreed the fledgling, humble community in the wilds of America would be called after "lowly"

33 There were four women, the rest were men. It is easy to imagine that the ladies were the cooks for the work crew.

34 Very typical of the Count. He had the ability to compose a song off the top of his head, and sometimes would make up a song to fit the occasion during a meeting, singing it in such a way that a visitor would not know he was composing it as he went. On this occasion, he did not compose the song, but sang one he knew.



The Ephrata Cloister, located at Ephrata, Pennsylvania, was the home of a German-speaking group of Pietists who lived communally. While this group had much in common with the Moravian Brethren, Anna Nitschmann challenged some of the sisters there for having deserted their families and joining The Cloister.

Bethlehem, not exalted Jerusalem!³⁵

Anna wrote in a letter concerning the early days at Bethlehem, while still there:

I cannot describe to you the pleasing state of Bethlehem. I have never felt so happy in all my life as I do here. During a month, we were all together, during the time when the brothers and sisters first came here, and were then formed into a church. We loved one another like children. It is the Lamb of God that thus makes us sinners into blessed children of grace.

Many of those huddled together in that 20'X40' shelter had escaped with their lives from Moravia, seeking freedom of worship. Now here they were, some fifteen years later, on the frontiers of America with a vision to spread the Gospel to men and women of various "races": red, white, and black. Where else could a young sister consecrated to the Savior have more desired to be?

Anna the evangelist

When April burst the bonds of winter, Anna and Johanna Sophia Molther began the first of several evangelizing forays into the Ger-

35 Not to mention that Ludwig—as well as many other Europeans—was pretty convinced that the American Indians were part of the 10 "lost tribes" of Israel. Bethlehem was the beginnings of the mission to announce their Messiah to them (in his eyes)!

man settlements of southeast Pennsylvania. Johanna Molther³⁶ was from the nobility, but had laid her high position aside for the sake of the Gospel. So the two young ladies, former princess and lowly Moravian shepherdess, sallied forth to speak to the ladies and girls scattered across the frontiers in their log cabins. They would help with the household duties, visiting and sharing about the Savior. Few details of these visits are extant, but one historian notes that “many” dedicated girls became a part of the Moravian church in the following years due to the witness of the two young ladies.

During this time, Anna visited the Ephrata Cloister at least once, maybe more. This was a branch of the German Baptist Brethren, living communally at Ephrata, Pennsylvania. While the “seventh-dayers”—the name given them for their keeping Saturday as the Sabbath—had some good points, there were some questionable ones. And Anna clashed with one of these big question marks: some of the ladies there had deserted their husbands and families so they could join The Cloister. It is recorded that she “enjoyed much love” among them till she questioned them about their marital obligations. With that, a “guard” was placed with Anna to make sure no one could have a private conversation with her until she left. The cloistered ladies seem to have disobeyed the orders and talked with her anyway.

Anna described her evangelistic travels, which extended down into Maryland, like this:

I did peasant work wherever I went, and got to know many souls in the land; and won not a few for the Savior. My conduct with them was tender and intimate while I traveled through the woods.

Into the wilderness

Although southeast Pennsylvania was frontier, Bethlehem was not in the *real* wilderness, being situated at the foot of the Blue Mountain³⁷—the official line at that time between the Europeans and the Indian nations. In 1740, only a few adventurous Europeans had travelled much beyond the Blue Mountain. But Anna *was* adventurous!

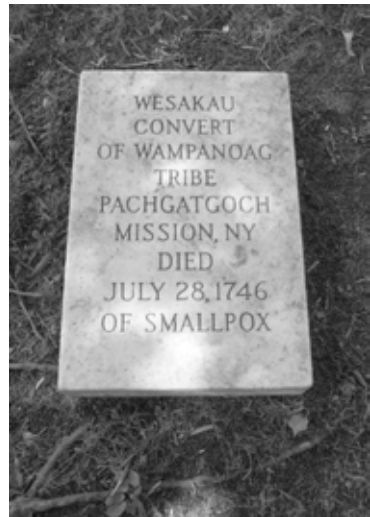
³⁶ Johanna was wife of Philip Henry Molther. He was supposed to have come along to America, but missed his ship in London. So Johanna began her mission work with her husband still on the other side of the ocean. Philip was also the famous person with whom John Wesley had butted heads in London over theological issues, resulting in a division between the Methodists and Moravians.

³⁷ The first big mountain of the Appalachians, rising up from the plain that covers southeastern Pennsylvania.

Three times the Count—who tried to hide his aristocracy from the Americans by never referring to himself with the title of Count³⁸—took journeys into Indian lands, to feel out mission opportunities among them. Anna was one of those chosen to travel with the group, along with Ludwig's daughter Benigna on the first two trips, who was still a teenager.

The first trip was to the neighboring areas of Bethlehem. Next was a trip to Chekomeko, in New York State, not far from the Connecticut border. It was on their return that a zealous man, perhaps to spite Ludwig, arrested him for breaking the Sabbath. Ludwig had been dictating a letter to a friend on a Sunday afternoon, and Puri-

Although Anna did not see any conversions on her trips into the Indian territories while in America, gravestones like this one are scattered across God's Acre in Bethlehem. Moravian Brethren Indians, Africans, English, and Germans—and possibly an Eskimo or two—were buried there, without preference to nationality. The dead were laid in the order they died, thus the stones create a mosaic of personalities, from bishops to little-known people like Wesakau of the Wampanoag tribe, everyone equal in God's sight.



tan law forbade working on the Sabbath! Ludwig paid the fine and moved on the next day.

Around the 28th of September, the big trip was planned. Following several months of planning, the group set out for the interior of the Indian territory. With pack horses heavily loaded (one with nothing but Ludwig's writing supplies and the books he planned to read) they followed the Shamokin trail. North and west over the Blue Mountain—the Count named some of the mountains on the way—five days through silent valleys, and across the last high ridge before the Susquehanna, they made their way. Describing their descent from there, Ludwig wrote:

38 He even went so far as to initiate proceedings for a legal renunciation of his titles, but was persuaded not to go through with it by his friends. In spite of trying to travel *incognito* in America, basically everyone knew who he was.



When Anna returned to Europe, she never saw her father again. He died at Bethlehem about 15 years later, a very foundational figure in the community there.

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 Boehler onto Conrad's. In this way, we all kept each other from slipping and the Savior helped us safely down.

It was at this place, now Sunbury, Pennsylvania, that a native shelter of bark was made for Ludwig. The once powerful European politician slept inside, and commented that it was "the best place he had ever slept"! And when a curious Indian kept investigating one of his buttons, Ludwig tore it off and offered it to the man. This proved to be Ludwig's undoing—for others then came and wanted "souvenirs." The gracious Count

soon had given away all his buttons and buckles and had to tie his clothes on with strings! But he was happy to do so.

After visiting famous old chief Shikellamy, they moved on up the Susquehanna to visit another well known village; that of Madame Montour. Madame Montour was of French Canadian descent, but had joined the Native peoples and adopted their lifestyle. Anna had the privilege speaking heart to heart to this older lady, who confessed to Anna that she would like to leave the Indian lifestyle.

From there, the mission band took a hike cross-country to the Wyoming³⁹ Valley, at present-day Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The group was perhaps the first Europeans to have visited the valley. The natives here were not so friendly, even though they camped for 10 days among them. It was here that Ludwig pitched his tent on a snake den, and had a snake crawl over his legs and into his papers as he was writing, all without the absorbed Count being aware of it.

³⁹ The name Wyoming is adapted from an Indian word that means "flat lands." The Wyoming Valley was a broad, grassy valley.

And it was here that his murder was planned by the natives. But the plans were interrupted, and the scouting party of missionaries finally hiked overland back to Bethlehem. Ludwig was normally very charitable towards the “heathen.” But some of the ones he encountered here left a pretty sour taste in his mouth, which he remembered for years to come.

The Church of the Spirit

Although Anna was not too much personally involved in the following scheme, the fallout from it did affect her. It was another of Ludwig’s dreams that didn’t quite fly. He envisioned a unified church in the new world, instead of the divisions which prevailed in Europe.

So he, with the help of others, began a series of meetings designed to unite the various non-conformist groups in Pennsylvania, as well as the Lutheran and Reformed churches. Initially, many people came to the unification meetings—Lutherans, Reformed, Schwenkfelders, Quakers, Mennonites, German Baptist Brethren, Ephrata Cloisterites, and a few individualists of other stripes.

But by the third meeting, most of the groups were done with the unification effort. Eventually, only some Lutherans and Reformed remained with the Moravians. Some saw it as a grand scheme by Zinzendorf to have one church, but only if Zinzendorf were at the head. It is hard to say if Ludwig really was striving for that, but his natural gifts of leadership (people just seemed to follow him so easily) and his natural stepping into a leadership roll seemed to put him at the head of any project he was around.

But the “Church of the Spirit” in America that he schemed up did not materialize. He soon returned to Europe—after about two years in America—seemingly a bit hurt and disappointed with the failure of his plan. It was determined that Anna should return to Europe with Zinzendorf’s group, so Anna sailed with them. When she bid farewell to her father, it was probably the last time she ever saw him, as he spent the rest of his days at Bethlehem.

The Sifting Time

Next came the darkest days of the early Renewed Moravian Church. About 20 years had passed since they had humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God and experienced a strong revival. Many of those in the early revival had passed on, and many of the others were scattered around the globe in various colonization

and mission projects. New faces were appearing in their midst and the old Bohemian “martyr” spirit was waning. In its place came the temptation to seek spirituality in emotion and outward display. Historians call it “the Sifting Time.”

As mentioned above, Ludwig had returned to Europe, seemingly brooding over the failure of his unification scheme. In his mind, the divisions among Christians were over a multiplicity of theological disputes concerning salvation and sanctification. In his mind, the way to solve that problem was to believe that a man was saved by the blood and wounds of Jesus. And ... stop at that. In other words, whoever believes that the blood and wounds of Jesus saves a man is a brother.



Moravian sisters at a feetwashing service. A minister in the background reads the liturgy.

Such words sound great at first. Why argue doctrine? But ... the Lutherans believed that they were saved by the blood of Jesus. Yet, they had no qualms about taking up arms and killing. Reformed Churches believed that men are “saved by the blood.” But they swore oaths and united church and state. Could—or should—a serious Moravian Brethren, who practiced the Sermon on the Mount, suddenly throw his lot in with the Lutheran and Reformed churches, since the only thing necessary is to “believe in the blood of Jesus”?

By now, many of the earlier Bohemian brothers had resigned from top leadership positions in the church, feeling incapable and unworthy. The movement had grown extremely fast in numbers, with people from all over the map—both physically and spiritually—arriving at Moravian settlements to join. Some accuse Zinzendorf of purposely manipulating the situation so that he himself would pretty much have all the controls in his own hands. Others see the situation as simply ripe for a man of his “let’s get something done around here” nature to naturally fall into the lead role. Regardless of what Ludwig’s secret desires were or were not, by the mid 1740s he ended

up pretty well deciding the course of the Moravian movement, without a lot of other men to balance him out. Officially, Jesus was the Head of the Moravian Church. In practicality, Ludwig himself directed it by default. The effects of this were soon felt.

Some people feel the defeat of his plans in America set Ludwig in a sort of reactionary mood. If people were not willing to unite around his idea that all Christendom should be united around “the one central truth” of reconciliation by the blood and wounds of the Lamb, he would certainly not let that destroy his rejoicing in that truth. And rejoice he did.

Wounds. The wounds of Christ. Oh, the precious wounds. The “blood and wounds theology,” as it became known. Ah, the wounds, where a sinful man could find refuge. Let me rest in the wounds, the precious wounds! As one hymn of the time ran:

Des Wundten Kreutz-Gotts Bundesblut
Die Wunden-wunden-wunden-fluth,
Ihr Wunden! Ja, ihr wunden!

(The Cross-God’s covenant blood of the wounds, the wounds-wounds-wounds-flow, its wounds! Yes its wounds!)

Euer Wunden-wunden-wunden-gut
Macht Wunden-wunden-wunden-muth
Und Wunden, Herzens-wunden.

(Your wounds-wounds-wounds possession, gives you wounds-wounds-wounds-courage, and wounds wounds-heart.)

Wunden! Wunden! Wunden! Wunden!
Wunden! Wunden! Wunden! Wunden!

(Wounds! Wounds! Wounds! Wounds! Wounds! Wounds!
Wounds! Wounds!)

You probably get the idea ...

Yes, as impossible as it can seem, they began to idolize the wounds and blood of Jesus. “In our congregation it becomes bloodier all the time,” Christian Renatus von Zinzendorf (Ludwig’s son) wrote. “To speak of the cross and the blood becomes continually more pleasant and goes deeper into the heart. Every hour of the day we taste nothing but wounds and wounds and wounds and wounds.”

The recovery

For several years things got worse until finally it seemed Ludwig himself awoke to what was happening. The worst deviation was happening in Herrnhaag, Germany, where his son Renatus was heavily

involved in the leadership. Instead of the frugal buildings of earlier Herrnhut and Bethlehem style, great and grand buildings were planned and built, some of them fancily ornamented. Instead of simple discipleship, great ceremonies took place, such as all the members marching through a specially built little room that was painted red to look like the side-wound of Jesus. One historian writes:

So the Brethren at Herrnhag became a group of enthusiastic fanatics on the subject of the atonement of Christ, to the exclusion of all else in their speech and practice. This emphasis on a single topic, though it created unity, also produced a new extravagance which in turn caused [their] ruin ...

And then they took too literally what Jesus said about “except ye become as little children.” It came to the point that some of the men quit working, and even started playing with toys. The Count even



The Sisters' House and the Chapel still stand at Herrnhag, Germany, where some of the Moravian Brethren went off on a theological rabbit trail. The blood atonement was preached, to the exclusion of almost any other aspect, creating havoc in the whole movement.

started a new order, “The Order of the Little Fools.” Embarrassing? For later generations of Moravians, it certainly was and is. How could such piety degenerate into such foolishness? That question has been speculated on, but no generally-accepted, single conclusion has been arrived at.

Awaking as if from a dream, Ludwig began to curtail the excesses of which he himself was responsible—at least in large part—in the beginning. And yes, he was the one who started down the road of “acting like a little child,” although he didn’t take it to the extreme that some did. And—bless his heart—he was humble enough to accept the blame; he wrote a letter to the whole brotherhood acknowledging that he was to blame. While the emotional excesses were soon calmed in a few years, the financial excesses just about caused the whole movement to go belly up. The big building schemes almost bankrupt the whole Renewed Moravian

Church. After a couple of decades of hard work, the debts were finally paid off.

Although some modern historians like to claim that the whole wounds theme was rife with immorality and sensuousness,⁴⁰ those insinuations have never been proven. While it could have easily fallen into one immoral, sensuous mess (because, as Ludwig had said, wherever emotional excesses exist in religion, immorality is not far away), it seems that people came to their senses before it went that far. Ludwig called his son Renatus to be with him in England, and the healing of the embarrassing rupture began.

A few years down the road, Moravian leaders began to purge their liturgy and hymnals of the most rank deviations. And even though by browsing a modern hymnal one would hardly suspect that the Moravians had at one time made an idol out of the blood and wounds of Jesus, there is still plenty of “blood and wounds” theology to be found.

And Anna Nitschmann? She wrote that even though she was among those—coming and going, not continuously—who were going to extremes with the wounds idolatry, she was not aware of what they were doing until afterwards. Anna’s own writings reflect some “blood and wounds” theology, but one does not get the sense that she went overboard. Perhaps the old Bohemian Brethren approach to Scripture—careful obedience to Jesus’ teachings—held her feet firm in a slippery place.

Years of ministry

After the Sifting Time, the details of Anna’s life grow sparse. Her autobiography—of which the main part had been written in her early 20s—only contains a sentence or two for each of the years af-

40 My opinion is that some of the claims of sensuousness arise as much from the modern sensuous mindset than from what the original authors intended when they wrote the hymns in the 1740s. That said, they did speak of the side-wound as a sort of matrix from which people were reborn spiritually, and they often spoke in the love terms used in The Song of Solomon. On the accusations of immorality, one modern writer claims that “Zinzendorf’s extra-marital affair with Anna Nitschmann was an open secret in the community.” The problem I have with that accusation is that the man who makes this claim seems to be the only person in the whole of history who is aware of this “open secret”! (And I have browsed through thousands of pages of Moravian history books ...) To me, such an unfounded accusation is more a revelation of the accuser’s heart than a revelation of Ludwig’s and Anna’s character. This particular author saw sexual themes all over early Moravianism. Whose eye was sensual, his or the early Moravians?



Moravian dress and covering
50 years after Anna's death.
Compare to the picture on the
opposite page.

terwards. She basically travelled from congregation to congregation, sometimes with the Count's group, sometimes without. She seems to have spent her time in counseling the sisters in spiritual matters. She travelled in basically all of German-speaking Europe, even into Russia where she spent a few days with the Count's group in jail. A few years' time was spent in England, where for a while the Count set up his Pilgrim Congregation base.

And marriage ...

On June 19, 1756, Erdmund Dorothea, Ludwig's faithful wife, passed away. She had borne him

12 children, but only four survived into adulthood. She was what the Count wasn't; a practical manager and calm, steadfast personality. Ludwig said of her, "I have learned through 25 years of experience that my assistant is the only one from the four corners of the earth that fit my calling."

At her passing, the Count entered a time of depression. He didn't get out much, and was not his usual self. When the customary year of mourning was over, some of the Brethren encouraged him to get back into ministering and to marry again.

But marry who?

Anna Nitschmann was his obvious choice. She had spent many years as personal friend of his and his family, helping to tutor the children and serving as maid to Dorothea. While many people seriously doubted the Count's theology, none doubted his dedication to Christ—110%. It was sort of natural that he needed a companion that was also 110% dedicated to Christ.

There are no records of Anna's feelings at the proposal. Did she still feel that "marriage was not for her"? Did she hesitate, try to "get out of it," like she had at least twice before? Or did she feel a clear call and rejoice at the prospect of marriage?

No one seems to know. All that is known is that she and Ludwig were married in a private ceremony on June 27, 1757. But it was kept a secret!⁴¹

The reason for the secrecy was that European aristocracy—he was a *reichsgraf*, a king's counselor—would be abhorred that a count would marry a peasant girl! Not only would Ludwig face opposition from upper society and his own mother, he even feared that some of the common people would object. It was not until over a year later that the news was made public. And even then, it was a morganatic marriage, meaning that the peasant Anna



This painting of Anna was done about the time of her marriage.

would not be allowed any inheritance of the aristocrat's property.

I doubt neither Anna nor Ludwig cared about earthly inheritance anyway!

Final years

The three years following her marriage to Ludwig were spent in the same way as those preceding: they travelled about Europe visiting the Moravian congregations, encouraging and counseling. Then they both took sick. On May 9, 1760, Ludwig breathed his last. Anna was on her own deathbed, and her response to the news of his passing was a comment that she faced the bright prospect of joining him shortly.

And she did, two weeks later, on May 21.

Her life was short compared to our average lifespan of over 70 years. Just 44 and half years were spent walking this planet. But how fruitful those years were! How many sisters, young and old, received heartfelt counsel and admonition from her. How many young girls were turned from vanity to service!

And how many more will still be, in days yet to come, by reading

41 Only a few of the top leaders of the Moravian Church were aware of the marriage. One interesting detail is that Leonard Dober (now a bishop), with whom she had refused marriage two decades earlier, performed her marriage ceremony.

of her life? We will never know.

From a simple little Moravian shepherdess, Anna Nitschmann was called to a leading position in a great missionary movement. Although she never preached to men⁴² from a pulpit, she clearly had a ministry that changed lives. Her story is not “perfect,” as we have seen her struggles in her teen years with spiritual pride and doubts. But her story reflects the faithfulness of God to use a simple, unlearned, Moravian girl for the betterment of humanity and the salvation of souls.

May God grant us more Annas!



As Chief Eldress, Anna participated in church synods where important decisions were being made. In this picture of a Moravian synod, she (marked with a white arrow) is sitting next to Ludwig and Dorothea Zinzendorf.

⁴² One incident is recorded that she spoke in a Quaker meeting while in Pennsylvania, but details are a bit vague. While the early Moravians were more open to having women in leadership positions, such as Eldresses (Counselors), they followed the Scriptural teaching of not having women teach men.

History lessons

What can we learn from Anna's life?

1. In spite of what men may call a "lowly birth," God can use anyone, anywhere, who will dedicate themselves fully to His purposes. Anna's childhood as a shepherdess, and her subsequent work at a spinning wheel, in no way hindered her from becoming the leading female figure in a great missionary enterprise. Her childhood education was probably sparse by today's standards, yet she wrote hymns that are still sung 250 years later.

2. In spite of what may seem as "spots" in her life story (spiritual pride and a year of lonely depression, among others), Anna went on to be a blessing to many girls and women in many countries. Too many times young people get discouraged when they fall into temptations, and Satan slams them with accusations of worthlessness ... "Look what you just did! You will never amount to anything! God could never use someone like you!" But God specializes in redeeming what men may think are unredeemable situations!

3. Great missionaries are ordinary people. Yes, they may have been given gifts that others may not have, but the bottom line is that we are all humans. And if we are humans, God can redeem us from our self-centeredness. Once redeemed from "self," we are in a position to be used for the furtherance of God's kingdom.

4. Great mission organizations sometimes make great mistakes. The "Sifting Time" was and is a giant blob on the record of Moravian missions. In spite of that embarrassing time, some of the Moravians picked up the pieces and moved on. Others never seemed to recover fully. It is up to us as individuals as to what we will do with ourselves when we find we have erred.

5. A person told me once that the 11th commandment should be "Be ye balanced." In respects to Zinzendorf's leadership and theology, that little saying fits well. God never intended that one man take too much leadership upon himself. God uses others to keep all of us "balanced." Would there have been a "Sifting Time" in the Moravian Church if Zinzendorf could have had some peers to balance out his theology? Could the Moravian revival have spread further if it had had better balanced theology?

We don't know the answers to these questions, but they are worth pondering as we read history. As has been said, "Those who refuse to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." ~

Appendix A—Zinzendorf Theology

Nicolas Ludwig von Zinzendorf was a gifted man. Not many people in this world can write thousands of hymns. Nor can very many of us compose a hymn at the end of a church service that sums up the message ... I mean, like sing it as it comes to us in such a way that most people never know we are composing it as we sing it. Ludwig could!

Ludwig was a “people person.” He would take time with every single person in each of the Moravian congregations he visited. He really cared about them, even though the time was short with them, he let every single one know that he cared.

The Count was a zealous man. Every ounce of his strength was dedicated to the cause of Christ. And his zeal was contagious! He could inspire people to love Christ like he himself loved Him.

But ...

Poor Ludwig was a flunky theologian. I don’t say that uniquely. Even the Moravian Church admits it. There are probably a few people in this world who admire him so much that they would be offended to hear someone say the Count was a theological flunky. But the opinions of Ludwig’s doctrinal writings are generally negative overall. After his death, the Moravian leaders had the worst of Zinzendorf’s theological oddities removed from his writings, in recognition that they were speculations that would be better if they were simply forgotten.

In general, Zinzendorf was a Lutheran. As long as someone agreed to a basic Lutheran view of salvation, the Count was happy. Yes, he really did like the Moravians’ practice of the Sermon on the Mount. But the bottom line is that he—especially in his later years—did not feel it a necessity.

In writing this story of Anna, my heart was saddened to such a point that I hardly had courage to continue. “I cant!” I told myself. I just felt I could not promote Zinzendorfan theology.

The original emigrants from Moravia and Bohemia were not theologically Lutheran. The old Bohemian Church was born a couple of generations before Luther nailed his “95 Theses” to the door of the chapel.⁴³ The foundation of the Bohemian Revival was built upon

43 If he did indeed nail them to the door. It seems that actual historical evidence is scanty, other than Philipp Melanchthon writing that “reportedly” Luther had done so. Other than that, there seems to be no evidence from Luther or anyone else that his theses were nailed to the door. And, his 95 Theses were written in Latin

discipleship: following Jesus in practical faith. When Luther and his friends came along, the conservative part of the Bohemian Brethren reproved Luther for the idea that a man could go to heaven “by faith alone, without good works.”

So when the exiles settled at Herrnhut, there was a clash of ideas. Zinzendorf wanted them to be Lutherans. He wanted them to drop their insistence on the old Bohemian Brethren way of life and teaching. The Bohemians persisted. “We will go somewhere else, if we have to,” they told him.

Finally, they decided to put the question to the lot. The lot said to stick to the old Bohemian Brethren teachings. Zinzendorf relinquished, for a while. Within the first decade or so of its existence, the question came up three times, with some strong opinions on either side: should they become Lutherans or stay with the old practices of the Bohemian Church. All three times the lot said stick with the Bohemian way.

Although Zinzendorf strongly wanted them to become full-fledged Lutherans, he did accept them sticking to the Bohemian practices (including practicing the Sermon on the Mount) *if* they would just acknowledge the Augsburg Confession as the doctrinal foundation for their church.

The Moravian and Bohemian exiles agreed to this. Their faith was not based upon theological intricacies, but simple following of Jesus. So to accept a theological statement probably seemed like a little thing. As long as they could still practice discipleship, what did it matter?

So they accepted the Augsburg Confession ... to their later hurt.

For the first few years, Zinzendorf accepted the Bohemian ideas with little to say against their unique applications. In fact, he was enthusiastic to see people who lived uprightly.

But in 1734, a little event happened that changed the whole focus of the Renewed Moravian Brethren Church. Ludwig was sitting by the fireplace when he noticed a slip of paper that had fallen out of the trash that had been thrown into the fire to be burned. Picking it up, he saw that it was the Watchword for the day, followed by two lines from a familiar German hymn: “*Lass uns in deiner Nägelmaal, erblicken unsre Gnadenwahl*” (Let us see in your nail wounds how you have chosen us through grace).

originally, hardly something to post on the “bulletin board” of a German church???

Ludwig was stunned in silence for a moment. He felt that was the voice of God speaking to him. That little piece of paper became his theological foundation for the rest of his life. He would say later that from that point on, the only thing that really mattered was the blood atonement of Jesus. From that little slip of paper came the whole “blood and wounds” theology.

From that little slip of paper, the old Bohemian insistence on practical discipleship received its death blow. Yes, it would be years before the Moravian Church would say that nonresistance was just an option, not a requirement. But on that day, the emphasis began to change. Never to return again ... to this very day.

The whole theological question gets down to this question: Did Jesus come to take away guilt, or cure the disease of sin. Lutheranism in its shallowest form only provides a relief from a guilty conscience, but it does not cure the disease. In contrast, the old, original Bohemian Brethren saw that discipleship was the cornerstone of Christianity, not a mere pardon of past offenses. One of the founding voices of the old Bohemian Brethren Church was Peter Chelcicky. His view is expressed in the following words of a historian:

To imitate the example of Christ—Chelcicky taught—is the most exalted rule of life ... to love God above all and one's neighbor as oneself, the supreme law. Such love implies hearty obedience to the divine commandments, willingness to suffer injustice, and an unwavering determination never to repay evil with evil. The show of virtue without the substance—hypocrisy and Phariseism, attaching importance to mere outward rites, ceremonies and usages of the Church—without fostering holiness of heart and seeking a reformation of life, he denounced in the strongest terms. Under all circumstances the divine law is sufficient; and Christianity constitutes the kingdom of liberty. In this kingdom the spiritual part of man lives and strives for that which is good, undisturbed by discord, violence, or war.

In short, Lutheranism [supposedly] took away the penalty of sin. The old Bohemian Brethren held the concept—like the later Anabaptist movement—of a changed life by the power of Christ within.

And so Zinzendorf killed the Moravian Church with his Lutheran doctrine. The first generation of exiles that came out of Moravia and Bohemia held on to obeying Jesus' teachings concerning war, wealth, and oaths. But by the time they died off, Lutheran theology prevailed and the Moravian Church today is but just another Protes-

tant denomination that has lost basically all non-conformity and the practicing of the teachings of Jesus on the Mount.

In comparison, the conservative Anabaptist churches, which predated the Moravian exile by two centuries, have maintained a much better theology and practice. Still today there are Anabaptist congregations that follow Christ's teachings (at least to a degree) given on the Mount.

The lesson for Anabaptists? Don't let Lutheran doctrine in the door!

On the other hand, how did the Moravian Church prosper so well in its glorious first couple of decades? The answer is a "sold-out" dedication to Christ. An example is given in the following incident:

"Are you ready," said Zinzendorf to John Soerensen, "to serve the Saviour in Greenland?"

"Here am I, send me," said Soerensen. He had never thought of such a thing before.

"But the matter is pressing; we want someone to go at once."

"Well!" replied Soerensen, "that's no difficulty. If you will only get me a new pair of boots I will set off this very day. My old ones are quite worn out, and I have not another pair to call my own."

And the next day the man was off, and served in Greenland forty-six years.

I have to question myself: What would have happened to the Moravian Church if Zinzendorf had not turned it into, basically, a Lutheran church? What would have happened if the original emphasis on discipleship had not been killed by the "blood and wounds" theology? Would there still be non-conformed, nonresistant, non-swearing, non-accumulating Moravian congregations today? Would the women still wear their simple clothes and have covered heads? Would the men still live holy, simple lives and volunteer to go to the worst places on earth to share Christ as soon as they could slip out of their worn-out boots into a new pair?

And what would happen to those of us who consider ourselves Anabaptists if we could tap into the 110% dedication of Zinzendorf, Anna Nitschmann, and the host of other Moravians and Bohemians that came out of the revival?

Wow! What would happen?!!

Appendix B—The Lot

While a few Christian groups make use of the lot on occasion, I suppose the Moravians made more use of this decision-making process than any other group in church history. Everything, and I mean that literally, seemed to have been decided by the lot. Not only did ordinations and marriages have to pass the approval of the lot, but every applicant for church membership had to be approved by the lot! And, such major decisions as to whether the Moravian exiles should join the Lutheran church was put to the lot, on three different occasions.

What to make of all that? Myself, I feel the use of the lot went way overboard. Nonetheless, it is historical fact. One historian says it like this:

The great fault in Zinzendorf's character was lack of ballast. For the last few years he had given way to the habit of despising his own common sense; and instead of using his own judgment he now used the lot. He had probably learned this habit from the Halle Pietists. He carried his lot apparatus in his pocket; he consulted it on all sorts of topics; he regarded it as the infallible voice of God. "To me," said he, in a letter to Spangenberg, "the lot and the will of God are simply one and the same thing. I am not wise enough to seek God's will by my own mental efforts. I would rather trust an innocent piece of paper than my own feelings."

Ludwig's "lot apparatus" consisted of three cards. Yes, No, and Wait. Was it the voice of God, or was it simply running life on the whim of chance?

The quote above says that Zinzendorf "probably learned it from the Halle Pietists." That may be so, but I do know that the Bohemian Brethren had a history of using the lot ever since their beginnings in the mid-1400s.

In spite of my own serious doubts about using the lot as readily as Zinzendorf did, I have to say that many good things came out of the Moravian revival. And I, for one, am extremely thankful that the lot forbade them on three occasions from just being Lutherans! I feel that would have been an early death for the revival! But did the good come from the lot, or in spite of it? I leave the reader to decide.

One amusing story of the lot (after it happened, of course, and looking from the outside) coming out of the Moravian history books happened during the slave revolt in South America. The two Moravian missionaries saw the smoke of the burning buildings drawing

closer and closer. Although they were friendly to the angry African revolters, they realized that their white skin made them easy suspects to the enraged, revenge-seeking slaves. The time came to make the decision ... they knew that any time now the angry men might burst into their house and mercilessly beat and kill them like they were doing to all the slave owners they could catch.

Should they run, or stay and take a chance at perhaps calming the wild emotions of the revolting Africans? After all, they were on friendly terms with them.

"It's time to leave, we need to go" said the one.

"Maybe we should use the lot and see if we should go," replied the other.

"In cases like this, we don't need to use the lot," was the reply.

So they left. And I smile at the reasoning of the one who suddenly felt no need to use the lot. I suppose I would have felt the same way.

But what is the positive side of the lot? It takes the matter completely out of men's hands. It creates a spirit of resignation. And we should all be resigned before the Lord. In that sense, I am of the persuasion that the lot could be beneficial sometimes. Too many times God gets blamed for things: "The Lord told me to do [such and such]."

The problem with the "Lord told me" is that it often contradicts plain Scripture. Perhaps someone gets remarried after a divorce, while the first spouse is still alive. Yet, since "the Lord told me to" the person feels justified in their second marriage. Obviously, someone was not listening very closely and their will was probably not totally resigned before God.

There is no need for the lot in a decision that the Bible already

"The lot said no ..."

(An example of the use of the lot, from a history book)

"At a Synod held a few years later (1764), the Brethren commissioned Spangenberg to write a "Life of Zinzendorf." As the Count, however, had been far from perfect, they had to face the serious question whether Spangenberg should be allowed to expose his faults to public gaze. They consulted the Lot: the Lot said "No"; and, therefore, they solemnly warned Spangenberg that, in order to avoid creating a false impression, he was "to leave out everything which would not edify the public." The loyal Spangenberg obeyed."

makes clear, like whether a divorced person should marry while the first true spouse is still alive. But if the decision is not obviously sin one way or another—like should we move, or stay where we currently live—the lot could be a way to make sure that our hearts are totally resigned to receiving an answer outside of ourselves.

I am not promoting the use of the lot. I have never used it to make a decision, other than perhaps in a game or other trivial decision. The Old Testament speaks favorably of its use, but that was before God gave men the Holy Ghost. I am only trying to show how that the use of the lot *could* be beneficial. Perhaps a good way to test our resignation is to ask ourselves the question, “Am I willing to use the lot to decide this question?” “If I believed that God spoke through the lot, would I gladly lay this before Him in that method?”

If we find our heart reluctant to just throw the thing gladly before the Lord and accept whatever the lot would say, we need to work on the resignation of our will!

Appendix C—Moravian Consecration

The following is a quote I ran across that gives us an idea of what the Moravians faced in their colonization/mission efforts:

In the eighteenth century the death rate among the Moravian missionaries was very high, and all honor should be given to the men who were so ready to fill the gaps. The most striking examples of this high death rate are:

- (1) St. Thomas, 160 deaths in 50 years (1732-82).
- (2) St. Croix, 22 deaths in 2 years (1733-5).
- (3) Surinam, 50 missionaries died within a year after arrival.
- (4) Tranquebar and Nicobar Islands, 46 deaths in 37 years.

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Through worldliness, spiritual pride, doubts, depression, and an extremely embarrassing failure of her church, God led a simple Moravian shepherdess into a leading position in one of the most ambitious, mission-minded movements of church history, The Renewed Moravian Brethren.

Anna Nitschmann's story is unique, yet so common. Follow her life, as she travels through a great revival, backslides, is restored, and passes through the trying times of spiritual adolescence and marriage proposals. Later in life, she travels to America and takes a trip into unexplored Indian territory.

This story is compiled from many sources, but some of it is taken from her autobiography, almost forgotten under the piles of history books.

Anna's Lamb conquered, and she followed!

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