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Moravian Spirituality and its Propagation in West Yorkshire during the Eighteenth-Century Evangelical Revival

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Moravian Spirituality

The Moravian Church, or Renewed Unity of the Brethren as it was more generally known in the eighteenth century, was originally a Bohemian separatist church claiming fifteenth-century origins. In Luther's time it accepted the Augsburg Confession as its own confession of faith, aligning itself wholly with Protestantism. It flourished for a time in its homeland, but, after the Thirty Years War (1618–48) when Roman Catholic hegemony was re-established in Bohemia, it was crushed as an institutional church, except for a tenuous remnant in Poland. During succeeding decades descendants of the original Unity found refuge in various parts of German-speaking Central Europe, including the province of Oberlausitz in Saxony. One such group came under the influence of Count Zinzendorf as an exponent of Pietism. In 1722 he allowed them to build a settlement named Herrnhut from which, under his leadership, a dynamic Renewed Unity evolved, sending evangelists to many parts of Protestant Europe, including Great Britain, and overseas principally to the West Indies, Pennsylvania and Greenland.

Renewed Unity activity began in Great Britain during the late 1730s and their evangelists quickly linked up with sympathetic native clergy such as the Anglican, Rev. Benjamin Ingham, who was similarly campaigning in West Yorkshire. In 1742 the Brethren took over Ingham's

local connexion of religious societies and later settled a number of permanent congregations, principally the Place Congregation, or exclusive religious settlement, at Fulneck near Leeds. They also established three subordinate non-residential Country Congregations at nearby Mirfield, Gomersal and Wyke.

At an early stage converts, styled Brothers or Sisters, were encouraged to live in community. Small-scale rented accommodation was provided for the young and single, the so-called economies. In Fulneck, much larger communal residences were provided—the Choir Houses—as well as cottage accommodation for married couples. All members were grouped in Choirs sharing similar personal circumstances; for example, there were separate choirs for the young, the single and the married. Choirs were also sub-divided into numerous Classes, meeting primarily for religious instruction, as well as much smaller, flexible Bands which met informally for general spiritual edification.

Well-informed and sympathetic contemporaries regarded Place Congregations as imaginative Zinzendorfian interpretations of the pietistic impulse to extricate local spiritual élites, a lay minority, from the masses. Such earnest groups, taking the commitment, devotion and zeal of the choicest souls in Christendom as the norm, could then be directed to influence the less earnest by *praxis pietatis.*

The initial impact of this alien religious organisation in West Yorkshire was locally dramatic. Its early successes were to some extent assured because it benefited from the general enthusiasm for revival, which was a feature of certain sections of the population during the 1740s and 1750s and chronicled in the congregational archive at Fulneck. Evidence from this source shows that the Brethren's spirituality was profoundly dependent upon Zinzendorf's spiritual and theological insights. His influence upon his people was of central importance,[1] exercising an enormously strong, diverse and vigorous hold over their imagination and loyalty. He was their presiding genius and spokesman during his lifetime. Consequently, the spirituality of the Brethren, though orthodox, evangelical and pietistic at root, had emphases derived from Zinzendorf who, although claiming to be an orthodox Lutheran, showed interest in types of spirituality previously confined to monasteries and medieval mystical sources. He proclaimed it in a European civilisation apparently labouring under a general confusion which: 'has also an Influence on religious matters. . . . The Divines are very often not acquainted with the true original Doctrine of their own Church. . . . it is the common Opinion that a Man

1 F. E. Stoeffler, *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, 1973), 140.

becomes holy or virtuous by proportion of his Speculation; but this is not the Doctrine of the Saviour'.[2]

The Count argued further that many in contemporary society counted it a shame and reproach to be overcome by the Saviour. On the contrary, it was reckoned as an honour to resist vigorously all the kind invitations, persuasions and truths of the Gospel. As a result, the minority of true believers could reasonably expect nothing but hatred, reproach and persecution from their nearest friends, relations and acquaintances; yet, in the face of such disapproval, those who felt drawn by the power of God were not to be dissuaded. Thus, in a context where orthodoxy was fighting a rearguard action against the 'cold sensibilities of the Enlightenment',[3] Zinzendorf returned to his interpretation[4] of orthodox evangelicalism, and in doing so set the Brethren resolutely against an easy accommodation with the world.

The Count's spirituality was Christocentric, with the Crucifixion at its heart, finding Christ's suffering not merely a theme for grateful and penitent reflection, but the ultimate manifestation of his human nature and therefore of his credentials as Saviour of mankind. Zinzendorf concentrated on the need for conscious conversion as a way to the Lamb of God within whatever denomination aspirants happened to worship.[5] Conversion was regarded as a process initiated by the Saviour to gain the redemptive power of his blood shed on the Cross, a power on which great emphasis was placed: 'Our Saviour must make a beginning of such a Salvation. He will do all by His Spirit; send a fire upon the Earth. Here, one must do nothing but quietly attend the Voice of the Lord when He comes and approaches the Heart with His Power.'[6]

The new, regenerated 'childlike' state was judged to be radically superior to the old, and was expected to act as a spur to subsequent righteousness based on the Pauline ethic. For Zinzendorf, the converted no longer had any right to live independently to pursue their

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2 Unity Archive, Herrnhut, Report of the Second London Synod, Nov. 10–16 1754, No. 95 in a recitative of 179 of Zinzendorf's Principles. MSS R13. B2. 2. Also a letter from J. Gambold to James Hutton in London 18 Dec. 1742, MS R.13. A5. 4. Writing of the state of the learning at Oxford, Gambold mentioned widespread reading of 'modern Essays upon the Foundations of Morality in Reason and Human Nature; also searched into is the Nature of God . . . Providence is not well received'.

3 J. Wallmann, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands: Von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt, 1973), 156.

4 P. Deghaye, *La Doctrine Esoterique de Zinzendorf* (Paris, 1969), 674.

5 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Discourses upon important Subjects in Religion preached in London during 1748*, Introduction, XXVIII.

6 Zinzendorf, *Sixteen Discourses on Jesus Christ our Lord, Being an Exposition of the Second Part of the Creed. Preached at Berlin in 1738 by the Rt. Rev. Lewis, Bishop of the ancient Brethren's Churches*, trans. from German (London, 1750), II, 20.

own interests; they were now the property of the Saviour who, through his Holy Spirit, directed their inner life of contemplation, prayer and worship, and its practical counterpart of engagement, action and work. 'A Religion established by Preachers enflamed with a celestial Fire and hazarding their lives out of a mere Impulse of Conscience, stands upon a Rock.'[7] This desired involvement included unmistakable and continued expressions of burning love for other Brethren, neighbours and outsiders, in the form of communication, communion and community spirit under the symbol of the Cross. This was the way to happiness. Only the happy could assist the Holy Spirit to renew others;[8] they, like the Apostles, 'never deviated from their general Plan viz. to beseech and invite all men to give themselves up to the Lord Jesus'.[9]

These 'new' religious experiences revolved round Zinzendorf's understanding of the word 'feeling', the locus of which was not the head, but the heart. Here was the designated essence of a person, his innermost personality, his affective nature. Conversion meant the acquisition of a 'new' heart. It could not think about the Saviour, but it could experience him,[10] and this 'new' capacity for continual affective, as opposed to intellectual, responsiveness to the promptings of his Holy Spirit, was the core of 'Herzensreligion', or the Religion of the Heart. Such a mystical union with the Saviour 'makes us look upon the whole World as a little Corner and Heap of Dust and all the Inhabitants thereof as Grasshoppers. It will make us think as if we and the Lord were alone in the World'.[11] It was an exclusive, personal, experiential oneness with the Saviour in a relationship of unreserved love, exemplifying a recurrent theme in western religious mysticism.

True Christians were those who felt the Saviour's directing presence in their hearts. For them, Jesus was the sole object and end of life, so that all thoughts, words and desires were full of him.[12] Even free-will had to be abandoned: the directing Holy Spirit felt in the Heart had to think for its 'host'[13] and make each one into a 'complete Christian'.[14] Great emphasis was placed on the need for fraternal unity: all must

7 Unity Archive, Herrnhut, Report of the Second London Synod of 1754. Recitative of Zinzendorf's Principles. No. 6. MSS R13. B2. 2.

8 Zinzendorf, *Sixteen Discourses*, V, 55. Zinzendorf argued that happiness came to those who gave themselves up to Jesus Christ and followed him.

9 Ibid., 57.

10 Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 144.

11 Zinzendorf, *Sixteen Discourses*, IV, 44.

12 Ibid., I, 13.

13 Zinzendorf, *Twenty-one Discourses on the Augsburg Confession preached at the Brethren's Seminary at Marienborn Dec. 1747-March 1748.* Trans. F. Okeley (London, 1753), 25–29.

14 Stoeffler, *Evangelical Pietism*, 16. Continental pietists made much of being 'ein ganzer Christ', a complete Christian.

have the same outlook and be of one mind in Christ; this was held to be another aspect of individual and congregational happiness.

Brethren in such mystical union with the Saviour were not expected to have to contrive and speculate on how to avoid sin and demonstrate morally blameless living. There was no call for them to reason about their faith. They simply had to be sensitive and responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, which made them all zealous of good works. In effect it made them holy, and the need for holiness, the sacred within the human community, was a recurrent and important theme in Zinzendorf's writings.[15] He saw it as evidence of a new nature created by the Saviour and not mere conformity with set regulations. Holiness developed in quality with constant practice, giving deeper insights into its mysteries; it was greatly enhanced by meditation and prayer, the latter being recommended as the fundamental religious activity.[16] Indeed, prayer was meant to continue without ceasing, thus sanctifying 'all States, Employments and Conditions'.[17] All was to be accomplished within an ascetic context, where honour, riches, pretensions and the pleasures of the world were abandoned. Little was to be made of ease, and minds were not to be set on earthly things. Devotion and loyalty were expected in everyday life on the assumption that the Saviour was perpetually present.

The Brethren's spirituality, as expressed in their Place Congregations, was church-orientated. It placed great emphasis on the values of theocratic communal life and regular worship, with the ideals of a 'living congregation of Christ' uppermost. Zinzendorf wanted all congregations to be communities of believers, where everybody thought, preached, prayed and sang together. 'When,' he asked, 'have the faithful their daily communal Joys? So long as they do things together.'[18] This communal dimension was most strongly expressed in the Eucharist. Those present were transported to Calvary itself and gathered, not only into the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, but into the full sweep of salvation history as a whole. They were also most closely bonded with the unseen fraternal community of the deceased Brethren already with the Saviour. The Community of the Brethren always bound together the living and the dead. The blissful dead were not believed to be inactive: they regularly interceded with the Saviour on behalf of their living Brethren and Sisters on earth who, it was implied, directly benefited from these activities.[19]

15 Zinzendorf, *Sixteen Discourses*, III, 31.
16 Ibid., 32.
17 Ibid., VI, 70.
18 O. Uttendorfer, *Zinzendorfs Gedanken über den Gottesdienst* (Herrnhut, 1931), cited in Nielson, UF.
19 Zinzendorf, *Twenty-one Discourses*, XIX, 243.

As already indicated, personal direction by the Holy Spirit was interpreted in the most ample manner as day-to-day leadership by the Saviour in person, as if he were literally present. The same principle applied at congregational level. The true beginning of a new congregation was accounted for as the Holy Spirit's gathering of awakened souls into a fraternal body, so that they could not live without communion.[20] Such groupings were regarded as a simple and excellent way of preserving souls. Since each community was believed to be under the immediate direction of the Saviour, he could disclose his plans for it, where necessary, by directing the outcome of a lottery. It was argued that he could indicate his will by guiding the hand of an ordained petitioner to select the 'correct' written answer from the various possible alternatives. Usually only matters of substance for individual congregations and the Unity in general were presented to the Saviour and decided in this way.

Very great emphasis was placed on this principle of divine guidance. In theory, everything done in the Brotherhood was done only because the Saviour ordered it. Zinzendorf persistently defended the decision-making role of the lot in these circumstances. 'For me', he said, 'the Lot and the Will of the Saviour will be one and the same, until I gain more Wisdom. I am not yet wise enough to find the Lord's Will in my own Ideas.'[21] He argued that the lot gave clear, as opposed to ambiguous, instructions from the Saviour. In his concluding address to the London Synod of January 1747, Bishop Johannes von Watteville said, 'We must not do what looks and seems pretty in our Eyes and Understanding, but what is His Will . . . .'[22] At the 1754 London Synod Zinzendorf argued that the Saviour was bodily present in the Brethren's Halls and Synods. He believed that, 'the Man Jesus of Nazareth is present in this our economy, [i.e. the organisation as a whole, or one particular part of it], not only as the omnipresent God, but that He frequently visits us, and is as a Man, so bodily among us, that He, at that Time cannot be said to be anywhere else.'[23]

Zinzendorf declared further that the Saviour had always had among men a secretary to whom he communicated his heart's thoughts, for

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20 UA. Herrnhut, Report of the Second Synod of 1754. Recitative of Zinzendorf's Principles, No. 20. MSS R13. B2.2.

21 E. Beyreuther, *Zinzendorf und die Christenheit* (Marburg, 1961), 74. F. W. Kantzenbach, *Orthodoxie und Pietismus* (Gutersloh, 1966), 202, cited in Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 155.

22 UA. Herrnhut, Reports of English Synods, 1742–52. MSS R13 B1. 6. In this connection it is worth noting that the lot had a decisive influence in determining the location of missions. See also L. K. Stampe, *The Moravian Missions at the time of Zinzendorf: Principles and Practice* (New York, 1947), 50.

23 UA. Herrnhut, Report of the Second London Synod of 1754. Recitative of Zinzendorf's Principles, No. 12. MSS R.

transmission to others. The Count on this occasion did not elaborate on whether he regarded himself as sole holder of this office among the Brethren, He had no need to: his oracular omniscience was taken for granted. It was, for example, official doctrine that the Saviour had revealed to Zinzendorf exclusively his divine plans for Place Congregations, and entrusted him with their execution. The congregation at Herrnhut was reminded of this by Bishop Johannes von Watteville on 17 May 1760, shortly after Zinzendorf's death on 9 May 1760. Speaking of Place Congregations, the Bishop said that, 'Our Saviour made use of this, His Disciple, [i.e. Zinzendorf] as the Founder of this new Phenomenon of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ . . . Our Saviour hath entrusted the Heart of the Disciple with the fundamental Principles of these Villages of Christ and the Rule after which they are to be carried on.'[24] His views were reiterated during the Marienborn General Synod of 1764, when it was maintained that Place Congregations were 'a Phenomenon of the Eighteenth Century the like of which there never was . . . on them rests a peculiar Grace . . . they are so calculated that the Holy Spirit can be at full liberty in its Work'.[25]

The close communal relationship between the Saviour, Zinzendorf and the Brotherhood was formalised to their satisfaction during the London Synod held from 11–23 September 1741. On 16 September Zinzendorf proposed that the Saviour in Person be invited to accept the post of General Elder of the Brethren, and take care of all their affairs.[26] The offer was put to the lot; the declared result was that he agreed. News of this decision was sent to all congregational leaders and publicly announced by them on 13 November 1741. For the faithful it had potent propaganda value by highlighting once again the illustrious status of their church over and above all other denominations. On 9 April 1755, Bishop Johannes von Watteville was in Fulneck. 'He kept the evening meeting, wherein was an extraordinary happy feeling: Text; "I am with you always; nobody does supply thy Place." He spoke of the Character of the Unity which is quite different from all other Denominations since they have not got our Lord and Lamb for their Elder as we have and daily experience in a blessed Manner to our Comfort.'[27]

Under Zinzendorf's leadership, and within the ethos of the Theology of the Heart, the Brethren were involved as either 'anchorites' or missionaries in the first phase of a trans-confessional and trans-

24 Fulneck Archive, Diarium des Jungerhauses, 17 May 1760, MSS 357.

25 FA., Compendium of Resolutions of the 1764 General Synod at Marienborn, MSS 315, 46.

26 F. Bovet, *The Banished Count or the Life of Count Zinzendorf*, trans. J. Gill, (London, 1865), 214.

27 FA. Cong. Diary, 9 April 1755.

continental missionary movement, and their Place Congregations were supportive citadels of evangelical orthodoxy. Zinzendorf argued that missionaries should never want to settle anywhere in the world, and could 'find themselves' by wandering as pilgrims among the nations. This opinion was due in part to the general flexibility of organisation observed throughout in the early institutions of the Brethren, with a view to their easy adaptations to changing external conditions and internal needs. Chiefly, however, it was due to Zinzendorf's restless spirit[28] and the way in which he viewed the overseas missionary calling.

On the other hand, the bulk of the members who were not missionaries were not to mix with the world.[29] Inward congregational matters, as Zinzendorf put it, were 'quite different from outward affairs . . . our church is not to be drawn into any Intricacy with the World'.[30] In addition, 'Choir Houses are holy Places where People become Anchorites and Strangers to the World,'[31] though this use of the term 'Anchorites' was not meant to be followed literally. The paradox was theoretically soluble: the settled anchorites in the Place Congregations could become elite missionaries, if they really abandoned all thoughts of self-determination in the light of their need for and acceptance of clear direction by the Holy Spirit. Such heroic abandonment was the basis of 'proper life' in the day-to-day world in Zinzendorf's as indeed in Luther's judgement. It liberated the faithful from brooding and persistent introspection about their role in the church and released them for action among the heathen. It is also noteworthy that Zinzendorf instructed his missionaries to read and preach from Luther's writings without mentioning him by name.[32]

Zinzendorf recognised that, in practice, not all members who had the attributes of anchorites would be called for mission duty by the Holy Spirit. Congregations inevitably needed these two largely separate groups of members. 'Some men,' he said, 'the Saviour uses in a common Way, whom He permits to busy themselves in Things necessary for civil Life. These however can do all for him and be truly faithful and graceful Christians.'[33] The other and, in the case of Fulneck, much smaller group, the Saviour 'drove along' to become missionaries. These were Disciples.[34] Both groups, Zinzendorf argued, 'must make

28 H. M. Meyer, *Child Nature and Nurture according to Zinzendorf* (New York, 1928), 166.

29 UA. Herrnhut, Report of the Second London Synod of 1754. Recitative of Zinzendorf's Principles, no. 113.

30 Ibid., no. 149.

31 Ibid., no. 161.

32 Oberman, *Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel*, 192. See also Havens, *Zinzendorf and Augsburg Confession*, 188.

33 Zinzendorf, *Sixteen Discourses*, XIII, 141.

34 Ibid., 141. At this time it was unprecedented that laymen were used as missionaries. Stampe, *Moravian Missions*, 42.

little of Honour, Riches, Ease and the Pleasures of Life'.[35] Nevertheless, in the outward demonstration of their inner spiritual life, both were to be different. A soldier of Christ, i.e. a Disciple or Warrior, 'must be ready at every Hour to quit his Right, his Conveniency and deny himself . . . whereas another may demand and possess his own in Peace'.[36]

The Count believed that the majority in both groups ought to be unlearned Brethren, because plain, simple people were always the Saviour's 'fittest instruments'.[37] Mystical union with him ennobled them, making them Kings, Priests and Prophets, with the honour to wear his oil, seal and name. The word of truth was put into their mouths by him; therefore, although there were ordained clergy within the Brotherhood, it was not Zinzendorf's opinion that a distinction should be made between them and the laity, as in other denominations. In the community of the Brethren all were messengers of grace and support to each other. Christians, not just the ordained clergy, were priests of God, walking daily in their 'holy apparel and lifting up holy Hands without Wrath and Doubting'.[38]

Zinzendorf accepted the God of Judaeo-Christian tradition as a living reality, on whose revelation in Jesus Christ humanity's religious welfare was wholly dependent. Nowhere, however, did he aspire to comprehend rationally the nature of God. Indeed, he repeated emphatically that this could not be done, for it was enveloped in inscrutable mystery.[39] Consequently, the bold vision of God's nature embodied in the doctrine of the Trinity, was for Zinzendorf merely a statement of faith supported by evidence from the New Testament. No amount of reasoning could take the human intellect to God. A religiously meaningful understanding of the deity depended entirely on what the Godhead imparted about itself: it revealed itself in Christ. Zinzendorf's whole doctrine was summed up in the person of Christ,[40] and the Count developed a Christocentric understanding of God which went far beyond traditional orthodoxy. His viewpoint was based on the idea of Christ as God's total revelation within the possible limits of human understanding.[41] Christ was God revealed in his offices, i.e. in his sacred duties and employment, through whom everything was made, by whom it was sustained and through whom it will be restored. It was thus Zinzendorf's conception that Christ was not merely the revelation of God; he was the known God in his totality.

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35 Zinzendorf, *Sixteen Discourses*, XII, 132.
36 Ibid., XIII, 143
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., III, 32
39 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Discourses*, II, 13.
40 Dehaye, *La Doctrine Esoterique*, 671.
41 Zinzendorf, *Sieben Letzte Reden* II, 11, cited in Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 146–47.

Because of the implications of this Christology on the classical doctrine of the Holy Trinity derived from Greek philosophy, Zinzendorf elected to conceptualise God's triunity in a familiar way. He used the symbolism of the human family—father, mother and son. By the Son he meant God's office in manifesting his love in both creation and redemption; the Son was God bearing a human image; the Son was God humbling himself in the incarnation, and suffering for humanity the agonies of the Cross. He was the divinely-provided point of redemptive contact between God and humanity, a true spiritual refuge and fellow man to everyone with faith.[42] Zinzendorf's expression of the fervent mutual love implicit in this salutary relationship was usually sentimental.

The Son was concerned with all those outside the Church. The Father was God's office as protector and ruler of his people; hence his 'employment' was with the temporal and spiritual welfare of those within the Church.[43] Thus, the Father was not the fountainhead of deity and directly the Father of all men. He became so in a secondary sense through the Son, who created, redeemed, and brought men into the church.

The Zinzendorfian symbol of the Mother was applied to the Holy Spirit. This was God's office as comforter, teacher and inspirer. Every Christian was, therefore, encouraged to remain continuously in the same relationship to the Divine as a child does to its human mother.[44]

The Count's understanding of the meaning of Christ's victory over sin and death recognised the objective power of evil. He stated, 'Satan does not approach a child of God: Evil is deterred,'[45] and emphasised the need for man's psychological identification with the suffering Saviour. The model was 'Jesus Christ as He hung on the Cross with all His Wounds . . . the slaughtered Jesus Christ looking at you'.[46] In essence, the presupposition was that, through willed empathy with his dying state, believers experienced his suffering and ecstasy vicariously. Then they were able to appropriate the divinely-intended benefits of such surrogate suffering, namely, a new state in Christ. Unfortunately, the poetic representation of this model, in which Zinzendorf excelled, was taken to excess by some of his sympathisers in the Brotherhood. It

42 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures*, V, 49.

43 Zinzendorf, *Sieben Letzte Reden*, II, 35 and 39, cited in Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 149.

44 Zinzendorf, 'Gemein Reden 1748/49, part II', in *Hauptschriften in Sechs Banden*, 249 f., cited in Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 149.

45 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures*, V, 55.

46 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures*, II, 28. The side wound of Christ had a particular fascination and devotional power, for it gave access to his heart and thereby became a symbol of refuge in his love. E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven and London, 1992), 244.

was on this basis alone that the generally offensive 'blood and wounds' theology originated. For a time, during the 1740s, it threatened to cut the Brethren off from other institutional Christian groups, because the authentic doctrine of justification found in Paul's writings came into temporary prominence in their hymns, litanies and prayers in a form which contemporaries found strange, abstruse and repulsive.[47] The Brethren referred obsessively to the blood and 'Sidewound' of the suffering Saviour as the sole source of renewal.

The joyful, emotional and fundamentally romantic attachment of individual Brethren to the Saviour was theoretically a profoundly satisfying reality at the centre of everyday life. Zinzendorf perceived an edifying analogy in a concept of eternal truth in 'marriage religion'.[48] This maintained that the loving relationship between the awakened Christian and the Saviour could be modelled on that of bride and groom. The Count therefore regarded sexuality in marriage as a sacrament. The sexual act was holy, and the pleasure associated with it hallowed by the fact that it pointed to the delight of a Christian's attachment to Christ. For Zinzendorf, Christian marriage was a symbol of the Christian life in general[49] and included the idea of the church as the bride of Christ. It went to excess in some German congregations during the 1740s, but was nevertheless a significant aspect of worship and practice in the Brotherhood, where true marriage was seen as a marriage of warriors.

The Propagation of Moravian Spirituality in West Yorkshire

The leaders of the Brethren distributed spiritual propaganda throughout the geographically-scattered congregations and mission stations of their church, to inform and influence. This propagandist material was contained in their own printed hymnody, litanies and text books, which illustrated their characteristic style. It was also present in the manuscript copies of large numbers of edifying sermons, mission reports and news items which were gathered in and then circulated from Herrnhut for reading and study. During his lifetime much of it originated from Zinzendorf, leading supporters such as Bishop Johannes

47 K. Barth, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*, trans. B. Cozens and J. Bowden (London, 1972), 132. Devotion to the Wounds of Jesus had a long and distinguished history, being one of the most popular cults of late medieval Europe.

48 This concept of 'marriage religion' derived from the mystical teachings of Jacob Boehme, Fenelon and Madame Guyon. L. Aalen, *Die Theologie des jungen Zinzendorf* (Berlin and Hamburg, 1966), 283, cited in Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 2.

49 Zinzendorf, 'Zeister Reden 1746/47' in *Hauptschriften in sechs Banden*, vol. III, 207–208, cited in Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 153.

von Watteville, and members of the élite pilgrim group which accompanied the Count on his travels. Some even came from remote mission stations such as those in Greenland, so that the principal developments there could become common knowledge in European congregations.

This was a well-organised spiritual propaganda exercise on a very large scale, based on principles known for centuries and formalised in 1622 when the term 'propaganda' was first used.[50] Its objectives included general spiritual edification in all congregations, adding to the mystique of Christ's leadership, encouraging missions and strengthening the sense of belonging together. At local congregational level, records of Christian virtue, as recorded in the spiritual autobiographies or memoirs of the terminally ill, were extensively used for similar purposes. Ultimately all these propagandist activities were undertaken with the hope of nurturing desired attitudes of mind, leading to action on approved lines.

The Fulneck archive contains hundreds of eighteenth-century sermons, mission reports and news items, received from the distribution centre in Herrnhut during the mid to late eighteenth century. Their propagandist significance is undeniably great. In this article, however, attention will be directed to the more manageable, yet equally rewarding, local collection of congregational memoirs, augmented by an examination of propagandist elements in the 1754 Hymn Book and Litany.

Memoirs as Spiritual Propaganda.

Importance was attached to proper preparation for death. Terminally ill members, therefore, either wrote their memoirs—spiritual autobiographies—or dictated them to the ordained ministers, usually referred to as Labourers. The latter often added comments of their own if some topic of general interest was raised which commended the Brethren. After decease, edited fair copies were read out publicly as examples of Christian virtue and pietistic spiritual insight, for the edification of the funeral congregation. Later, after the human remains had been interred in Fulneck burial ground, these memoirs were deposited in the Congregational Archives for possible further use.[51] They

50 T. H. Qualter, *Propaganda and Psychological Warfare* (New York, 1962), 2, 5 and 27. Its religious origins are of interest. On 22 June 1622, Pope Gregory XV established the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, for the peaceful propagation of the Catholic faith. The Sacred Congregation deliberately attempted to form, control or alter the attitudes of other groups by using instruments of communication.

51 The extent to which they were re-used is conjectural. Some certainly were, because MSS were subsequently amended or simplified; out-of-date terminology was replaced.

augmented the Congregational Diaries and Conference Minute Books as the continuously expanding spiritual autobiography of the Yorkshire Congregation as a whole, providing justification for its claim to be carrying out the work of the Saviour faithfully in the locality.

The memoirs of 271[52] members have survived in the three principal eighteenth-century collections. Although their length and propaganda content varies considerably, they have the typical format of an evangelical spiritual testimony. Some are too short and inarticulate to be spiritually significant. Others demonstrate a considerable degree of lay religious sophistication. They are lengthy, detailed and analytical, offering historians an unrivalled insight into the religious preoccupations of the people who wrote them. Approved attitudes and appropriate actions resulting from the teaching of the Brethren are described. As a result, memoirs are valuable interpretations of the Brethren's evangelical spirituality as reported by some of their otherwise little-known local converts.

These eighteenth-century writers outlined a stable social and conventional religious background, which tended to be more than usually devout. For a variety of reasons, particularly in the case of members converted during the evangelical revival of the 1730s and 40s, doubts about their salvation began to trouble them. They felt that good works were not enough in themselves, and they experienced a spiritual crisis. Conversion and renewal were seen as the only way to peace of mind. Their memoirs described how the Brethren showed them the way, and received them into the Yorkshire Congregation to their great joy. The rest was an intentionally detailed recital of the benefits of congregational membership, in order to edify and inspire others.

In more detail, the writers[53] claimed to be the offspring of practising Christian families associated with local Anglican or Dissenting congregations. They often referred to their parents as 'religious', or 'very religious'; a few emphasised that their parents had endeavoured to bring them up 'in the fear of the Lord', or 'for the Lord'. Many women and some men referred particularly to their mother's beneficent spiritual influence. William Ireland had 'a very pious Mother, and her Admonitions had a great Effect on his Mind; from a Child he was a Singer of Psalms in his Church'. Mary Calvert wrote that her parents were Presbyterians who brought her up very strictly in the same religion, 'to prevent her being drawn into the sinful Ways and Course of the

52 MSS 376 Members buried 1750–84 105 memoirs.
MSS 377 Members buried 1754–87 98 memoirs.
MSS 379 Members buried 1761–90 68 memoirs
Total 271.

53 Individual citations have not been provided for the MSS quoted in the following section. All come from FA MSS 376, 377 and 379.

World'. Mary Peel had parents who were religious, 'taking me constantly to the Dissenters' meetings'.

As adults, they were home-based artisans or tradesmen—or married to such people—able to work fairly successfully in the competitive industrialising society of West Yorkshire, with its unpredictable booms and slumps. As married people they maintained stable relationships and cared for their children. People of this sort prospered. At the very least there was a tendency for them to rise above the bare level of poverty in which others at the bottom of the social hierarchy found themselves through inability to manage their lives in a disciplined fashion. In general, they were possessed of the qualities of sobriety, diligence and responsibility within the compass of local criteria. David Emmot was brought up in a practising Anglican family and, as an apprentice, had the misfortune to serve three successively unsympathetic masters. 'Yet he served out his Time very faithfully with the last and learned to weave stuffs.' Later, in 1727, trade was very bad; so he went to London to find work. He was employed as a gardener by a gingerbread-maker and his wife. They were 'so taken with him that they would have adopted him as their Son; but he grew uneasy in his Mind and could not accept their Offer but set out on his return to Yorkshire . . . at last he reached Home and was received by his Parents with great Joy'. All turned out well. He succeeded in his trade and became a locally influential member of the Brethren. Sarah Sheard, also, had a religious background. In 1700, after a period of time in service, she married a clothier. They lived comfortably on a farm in Mirfield, near Fulneck, for several years. Then the family business was affected by a slump. 'Meeting with losses in his Trade they were reduced very low. While her husband was confined for Debt she found it very hard to provide for her small Family, which induced her to bake Oatcake for sale and being of a high spirit and unwilling to complain or seek relief she endeavoured to her utmost for their subsistence.' In 1714 her husband was released. 'They moved to a Cottage at the Nabb, in Mirfield, where after some Time they began to make Cloth again and having put their two eldest sons Apprentice they came into easier Circumstances.'

Before they had come under the influence of the Brethren, these people had been looking for satisfaction in a sense of immediate communion with a transcendent deity. During the locally-sensational Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s they had become newly and painfully aware of their own depravity. Previously, in a context of religious toleration,[54] they had aspired to morally blameless Christian

54 W. Monter, *Ritual, Myth and Magic in Early Modern Europe* (Brighton, 1983), 39. From the vantage point of the eighteenth century, Voltaire saw England as the happy home of religious toleration.

conduct, but had not found contemporary Anglicanism's concentration on outward forms and observances adequate to subdue their irrational, contradictory and disagreeable impulses. Recognition of this had already impelled some Anglicans, in a fruitless search among dissenting congregations, to find the peace and joy which eluded them. In this state of discontent with themselves and the established institutional denominations, they had been particularly susceptible to the urgent emotive pressures for conversion and renewal generated by the preaching and subsequent pastoral oversight of local, extra-parochial evangelists. Mary Whitaker had believed herself to be righteous, yet admitted that, 'though I have been preserved outwardly from wicked Things which others have come into, I feel no better, for I have a wicked Heart.' During the Great Awakening, Mary Scorfield was aware of 'the Power of Sin and Death which she felt working in her and which all her Efforts could not subdue'. Esther Preston admitted, 'I thought by reading, praying and doing nothing bad I should obtain the Favour and Love of God, yet this afforded me no real Satisfaction.' William Spicer, 'being in his youth distressed abut the Salvation of his Soul he sought for some People who could lead him on the right road to Happiness and thus ran form one Religion to another to no Purpose and found no Satisfaction for his Heart or Mind'.

At this critical stage in their spiritual development, being disillusioned with good works, and sensing that there were transcendent spiritual elements in religion from which they were excluded, they had finally come to hear the evangelistic preaching of the Brethren. Its combination of dogma, mysticism and emotion had clearly overwhelmed them. They recorded being overcome with gratitude by the Saviour's supernatural and mysterious love, and his offer of mystical union was accepted with enthusiasm. As a result, they underwent conversion experiences which were sometimes recorded in detail, providing potent propaganda value.

For Mary Scorfield, 'the feeling of her Misery was so great before she learn'd to know the slaughtered Lamb (that only matchless Heart) who had atoned for and redeemed her from the Power of Sin and Death . . . that it drove her almost to an Act of Desperation. When the Saviour appeared to her as her Reconciler and stept before her Heart in His suffering Beauties it attached her Heart to her crucified Lord and Lover in such a Manner that He ever after remained the beloved object to which she clung and from whence she derived Solace from all her Perplexity, Pain and Distress.'

Mary Peel wrote, 'He has often been so visibly near my Heart as if I had seen Him with my bodily Eyes; yea, I could converse with Him as with an intimate Friend about Everything.'

Ann Stead was for some time in great distress of soul and wrote, 'In

this Condition I once went in great Heaviness to a Meeting which Br. Parminter held, during which the Lord manifested Himself to my Heart in his bloody Form just as he expired on the Cross and He assured me that He had blotted out all my Sins and received me as His child.'

Conversion led to formal reception into the local society and subsequently into congregational membership, when the Saviour was deemed to have given his approval through the lot. Acceptance into what was thus represented to them as a spiritual élite was valued very highly: many wrote of their delight when chosen by the Saviour. Elizabeth Bullock, 'often put up a Sigh to her Wounded Friend[55] and with a sinnerlike Heart prayed to Him to give her admission among them and accordingly she was received into membership of the Society in July 1761, to her no small Joy.' Mary Wood was selected in 1750. 'On 13 June our Saviour granted my Request to be received, which unexpected Grace bowed me to the Dust at the Feet of my dearest Bridegroom.'

As a result of these experiences, religious practices were no longer merely outward forms and observances, but an affair of the happy, fervent heart. There was a consuming commitment to the maintenance of this exalted state, a state realised by the individual through 'an inward experience of peace and joy'.[56] All action became action in the service of God and not of self, for conversion implied a transformation of personality in this world and the acceptance of an entirely new role within it. However, like all separatist groups which had a shared preoccupation with the communal, the converted residents were, in practice, liable to fission over personalities, because they lived in such close proximity to each other. To prevent this, the leaders at Fulneck made great efforts to preserve communal social harmony. Members were repeatedly presented with the utopian personal ideal of openheartedness, or willing, open fellowship. This assumed an exalted state of mind, and responsiveness to the Saviour's guidance in everyday life. Openheartedness was theoretically linked with high ethical standards, including commitment to the spiritual and physical welfare of others in the community.

Its feared antithesis was reticence or reservedness. This implied broken fellowship with the Saviour, a breach in the mystical bond. Those who were honest enough to admit experiences of it were encouraged to comment on these lapses in some detail as a solemn warning to the

55 Typical phraseology for the crucified Saviour; others included, 'dearest Bridegroom'.

56 R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm. A Chapter in the History of Religion with Special Reference to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1950), 2.

others. James Oates was represented as an ideal Brother, because he lived 'in the same simple and open-hearted Course ardently desiring to become a Joy to that Heart which had broken in Death for him'. Samuel Lister, though a received member, had secret doubts about his suitability: 'But in the beginning of the year 1766, when Br. Steinhauer came to be our Labourer, he heartily desired us to speak out Minds freely; accordingly I resolved—though with Fear—to do this, for he comforted me greatly and I felt myself quite well and our Saviour very neat my Heart, so that I enjoyed a very happy Choir Festival, which made me resolve never to hide anything from my Labourer again, having found the Benefit of being openhearted.'

Grace Hanson and some more of her Band had been showing undisclosed signs of non-conformity with settlement and choir house norms. 'One Time she and some more of her Band were closely spoken to concerning the great importance of Openheartedness which caused them great Concern. They retired to a Place by themselves and sensible of the Loss they sustained by their Reservedness they prostrated and begged our Saviour with many Tears to take away from them what had given Him Pain and to cause the Spirit of Openheartedness to rest upon them. Rising up again, they gave each other the Kiss of Peace. this remained for ever memorable to her and her Companions.'

As already noted, because all members lived in close proximity to each other they were divided up into small compatible groups, or Bands, composed typically or three or four people. These encouraged close spiritual and social relationships to create unity and forestall disharmony, for it was a principle of the Brethren that members should never be expected to cope with spiritual or temporal problems alone. Bands were not intended to be exclusive or divisive; members could usually transfer from one to another at will. Banding's influence was so pervasive that any intimate, openhearted discussion, even private prayer, was often described as 'having a Band', 'keeping Bands', or 'having a Band-like Conversation'. Such deliberate cultivation of close fraternal bonds did not eradicate all spiritual and social problems, but for many members it provided a source of consolation, which their memoirs show was appreciated and highly recommended.

Abraham Stockwell, a master clothier, was in financial trouble at one stage in his life: 'His external and economical Affairs did not prosper so well as both he and others would have wished and on that Account he used sometimes to have some gloomy Moments for fear he should not be able to do Justice and pay Everybody their own. But as soon as he had spoken his Heart in an open band-like Way to his Labourer he was clear again and had Confidence in our heavenly Father that Everything of that Kind would go well.'

Mary Gauk, 'had a thorough heart's Band with her dear Labourer

concerning her past Time where many Tears of Love were shed on both Sides.'

Anna Maria Gussenbauer wrote, 'I kept many hearty Bands with our dear Saviour and the Holy Ghost showed me once more what a poor Child I was. I thought many Times, "Dearest Saviour do not forsake me; but let me feel Thee near me".'

Memoir-writers recorded edifying examples of spiritual and social benefit derived from living together in the Fulneck Choir Houses and their affiliated, smaller and more scattered economies. These institutions were managed collections of residential Bands; they were also the working places of the congregation, most of whom worked in cloth-making and associated trades.

Hannah Whiteley moved from her home to live in Gomersal economy at the age of twenty-three. 'On 18th August 1756 I, unworthy Child had the Favour to come to the economy at Gomersal where according to my Desire it was clear to me that I was in my right Place, where I belonged, which has been a Support and Comfort to me.'

Grace Thornton, at the age of fourteen, moved to Gomersal economy, 'at which Place I was soon at Home, much rejoiced in my happy Lot and felt cheerful and glad to live among the Sisters.... In May 1760 I had to leave to remove into the Choir House at Fulneck which rejoiced me very much, believing I was removed from all Danger and now had a lasting Home.'

John Plaisted, 'arrived at the dear Single Brethren's House [in Fulneck] where I was at home directly and found this to be the Place for me according to the Impression I had always had of it and from the Day of my Arrival to this Day have always thought that I shall never be transplanted any where else.'

Converts wrote very little about the regular acts of congregational worship. However, many referred euphorically to the Eucharist because they sensed enhanced mystical union with the Saviour. Often they could not find suitable words to describe their emotions: some claimed to have heard the Saviour's voice; all were grateful for participation through the ministrations of the Brethren. Rachel Brook felt to be 'embraced by her dear Lamb in the blessed participation of His Corpse and Blood of which she took in her Room with a hungry and thirsty Heart'.

Mary Calvert particularly remembered her first communion, and recalled that, 'What I enjoyed when I was admitted the first time to the Holy Communion with the Congregation was so great and had such an Effect on me that I am not able to express in Words the Blessing it was to me. During the Enjoyment of His Broken Body it was as if my dear Saviour was bodily present, entered into a new Covenant with me and

said distinctly to me, "Thou art mine and I am thine" and this He has kept clear to me to this day.'

Grace Brook's heart, 'longed and wished still more to be united with the Saviour and his People and with them to eat His Flesh and Blood, that heavenly Repast in the Holy Communion; which was granted to her 19 November 1752, after which she enjoyed a constant Peace and Rest in her Soul.'

The Brethren's perceptions of death were not associated with horror and fear. Instead, it was visualised as a point of entry into an infinitely richer new life with the Saviour and deceased members of the Brotherhood, and this perception was widely accepted.

In the final stages of her illness Elizabeth Bullock asked that the doctor should not be called again. ' "The Saviour is my Doctor, He knows what is best for me. He is daily healing my Soul and making it fit for His Kingdom."—When asked by her family if she desired to recover again, she said, "Oh no, I would not for all the World if I could have it. All in it would not keep me from my Saviour. He has called me and I will go." '

Sally Stocks recorded that she was quite assured that she would go to the Saviour who loved her with an everlasting love. 'Death is no Terror to me since I was bought so dearly by His Pain and bitter Suffering. Death is only a Joy and Pleasure to me when I think I shall soon go to Him who loves me so much.'

Thomas Drake, when near death, 'longed for the happy Moment when he would see his Saviour's Wounds and Kiss and inly greet the Prints in Hands and Feet'. At the point of death it was recorded that the soul of Alice Wickers, 'went into the arms of her eternal Husband'.

Hymnody as Spiritual Propaganda

The teachings of the Brethren were graphically represented in their hymnody, 'which was regarded as the chief theological expression of the Faith'.[57] Zinzendorf, who was a prolific composer from an early age, published his first hymnal, 'Sammlung geistlicher und lieblicher Lieder' (A collection of loving spiritual songs) in Leipzig in 1725. Subsequently, and particularly after 1727 when he assumed the leadership of the Brethren, he had a prominent role in the composition of new hymns specifically suited to their needs, and encouraged an appreciation of the enormous spiritual power of hymnody. Hymn-singing was therefore important in all acts of worship, but outstandingly so in the popular form of service known as the Singstunde, or Singing hour. In it the presiding Labourer selected, then sang, a sequence of discrete

57 H. Williams, 'The Development of the Moravian Hymnal' in *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society*, XVII-XVIII (Nazareth, Pennsylvania), 1961, 264

stanzas from numerous hymns, to develop some theological insight. As this progressed, the congregation, who usually knew by heart the hymns as a whole, would fall in with the Labourer before he reached the end of the first line of each stanza.

The first official brethren's hymnal was published in Germany in 1735, and during the next decade it was enlarged by the addition of numerous lengthy appendices. Some of these were coloured by the emotional extravagances associated with 'blood and wounds' theology, which led to their religious settlement in Herrnhaag, near Frankfurt, acquiring temporary notoriety in the 1740s. However, when the Brethren began their evangelistic work in Britain, this controversial development had hardly begun. The English convert, James Hutton, published a hymnology of translations from the German as a private undertaking in 1741. This, augmented by later appendices, along with a few other unofficial collections, remained in use until the early 1750s. In 1752 the British Provincial Synod expressed a desire for an official English Language Hymnal. The resolution was approved by the General Synod and in 1754 the new hymnal was published. It was entitled, *A Collection of Hymns of the Children of God in all Ages, from the Beginning till Now. In Two Parts, designed chiefly for the Use of the Congregations in Union with the Brethren's Church.* Volume I, which contained 695 hymns, was entitled, *Hymns of the Church of God in Preceding Times.* About half its contents were translations of German hymns composed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The other half included hymns of the Primitive Church, Bohemian Brethren, and old hymns of the English Church. Volume II contained 460 hymns and was entitled *Hymns of the Present Congregation of the Brethren.* It consisted almost entirely of translations of hymns composed by German Brethren after the renewal of 1727; many were composed by Count Zinzendorf. They represented contemporary German taste and practice, and some derived from the newly revised German Hymnal, which by then was beginning to return from the 'blood and wounds' era to a more orthodox style. Both volumes constituted the standard English hymnal for the next two decades, and were in regular use in Fulneck and the other British congregations.

The collection of hymns in Volume II dealt with the person and reconciliatory influence of Jesus Christ above all else. Many reiterated, in familiar forms drawn from the scriptures, the evangelical Christocentric themes of gratitude for undeserved salvation and the need for compliance with the Saviour's will thereafter. Within this framework they emphasised characteristic contemporary Pietistic priorities which the Brethren's leaders valued and wished to communicate to the members by every available means. Some of these priorities, illustrated by a few examples, were as follows:

1. There was divine guidance to the Mystical Presence, and a convert need never be afraid:

'Thy chosen path we tread,
Refresh'd and comforted;
Us in thy Hand up bear,
And daily forward lead
With thy most tender care
Yea, at every Step
Close to our Side keep.' 196, v. 7.

'Childlike beg of our dear Saviour
That he quite throughout the Day,
In all Parts of our Behaviour
As him pleases, lead us may.' 65, v. 6.

Pilgrims and messengers, whether in Europe or overseas, received constant supernatural support:

'Angels guarded them from danger,
Morning star, I follow thee,
Lead me here or lead me there;
Thou my Staff in trav'ling be,
I'll no other weapon bear;
Me may Angels guard from ill,
When I am to do thy Will.' 236, v. 1.

How Christ his souls doth bless,
No tongue can e'er express!
They the life of Men no more,
But a life mysterious live;
Vessels they of his great pow'r
Day by day new gifts receive.' 67, v. 1.

Protection from evil was freely available:

'When Satan espy'd
What Bliss I enjoyed
He fretted and roar'd;
I let him fret on and cleav'd close
to my Lord.' 84, v. 17.

There should be fearlessness in the face of natural disasters, particularly at sea:

'We in our Lamb our refuge find,
Fear neither storm nor angry wind;

In danger cheerful, void of care
No enemy can touch a hair.' 182, v. 6.

'Their masts may crack and split,
and dawn may break;
The Babes will smile, tho' others fear
and quake.' 247, v. 17.

We ask thee, Saviour, to preserve this ship
And Company, whom thou delight'st to keep;
Let thy tender Mercy, that's never failing,
Protect and bless those hearts who now are sailing
On the ocean wide.' 231, v. 1.

2. The inadequacy of human reason should be recognised.

'That our forever-blessed God
By his own Jesu's Death and Blood
Has shown his love to such degree
As ne'er in truth can fathomed be.' 247, v. 1.

How shall we praise, Father, thy loving mind?
Where to describe it, Strength, Expressions find?
Who the Son of thy Love for us transgressors,
Gav'st up to such great Troubles, Pain and Tortures
And Death itself.

No, no; Man's understanding tries in vain
Such high mysterious knowledge to attain;
Yet Souls who are simple, who feel this Fire,
Must melt in Thankfulness and Love's Desire
Towards their God.' 20, vv. 6 and 7.

The substitution of reliance on human reason in spiritual matters with divine guidance was not intended to encourage thoughtless passivity; the desired responses were wholly active. In response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the word 'yes' had to be in the forefront of consciousness:

'Thy ways we are going
Many years, O Lamb;
And in some measure
Understand thy aim;
Find it just and fitting,
Never to say "no";
O make us willing
To say "Amen" too.' 184, v. 2.

3. The privileges and responsibilities of membership had to be known and respected.

Members were loved by the Saviour:
'Thou'st lov'd us with an eternal love;
Thou'st woo'd us and allured,
Yea out of love even death endured
Who else can thus his Kindness prove?' 226, v. 14.

They were his chosen People, Disciples and witnesses:

We thy blest people are, thy chosen train,
Bought with the Price of thy so bitter Pain.' 216, v. 16.

O ground us deeper still in thee
And let us thy disciples be!
And when we witness here below,
Let thy pure joy our hearts o'erflow:
Thy spirit breathe and words of life inspire,
And dart them to each soul like burning fire. 195, v. 5.

They were comparable with Angels:

'Ye Angels, hear what I declare!
He, your so lovely God in Heaven,
He has my every sin forgiven:
I am as bright as you . . .' 24, v. 3.

They were not 'at home' in this world:

This transient world is not our home,
No soul finds here or Rest or Bliss . . .' 41, v. 1.

They were capable of becoming more holy:

'Holier and purer every Day
The soul within you doth grow;
A Glory this! but such as Christ
Is ready to bestow.' 239, v. 36.

They were members of a Brotherhood within which mutual love was very important:

Unite us Lord with Cords of Love;
Weighty let each the Blessing prove,
Of being in the Brotherhood
Whose standard is the Cross's Wood.' 216, v. 7.

The 1754 English Language Litany as Spiritual Propaganda

The spiritual ethos of the Brethren was exemplified in the Litany which was printed at the end of Volume II of the 1754 Hymnal. It appeared in two forms: there was the standard text for use on most Sundays, and an extended version for special occasions. Like the hymnal, the litany was translated from German sources and expressed contemporary pietistic taste, with Zinzendorfian emphases. The standard text had a formal traditional style and content for the most part, and humbly brought to the attention of the Saviour the heartfelt needs of his people. At the same time, it was a resume of the spiritual preoccupations of the Brotherhood for the edification of its members. These were elaborated in four principal groups located between pages 374 and 382 of the text.

The world was defined in orthodox terms as inherently wicked and influenced by an active Satanic force This persistently encouraged suspicion, scandal, schism and tumult, the very antithesis of the loving Unity which the Brethren hoped to maintain amongst themselves.

'From the Devil's Power and Craft,
From Tumult and Sedition'
From the Wicked World . . .
From Confusion . . .
Keep us, our dear Lord and God.

Hinder and destroy all Designs and Schemes of Satan
and the World:
Defend us against his Accusation;
Hinder all Schisms and Scandals;
Put far from thy People all Deceivers;
Hear us O dear Lord and God.'

There were detailed requests for assistance in conserving the characteristic style of the Brotherhood. The first was a general entreaty that all the converted, no matter in which denomination they worshipped, should enjoy mystical union with the Saviour and see themselves as part of a living, yet invisible church. Then followed a series of supplications for those in Place Congregations, stressing the need for holiness, discipline and unity. They included:

'Bless thy holy Catholick Church invisibly,
unite her visibly, and bring her together
from the Ends of the World;
Keep all her Labourers in the Apostolic
Mind and Simplicity . . .

Bless and Preserve all our Churches
Bring and keep all our choirs in true
Discipline and Holiness . . .
Grant Love and Unity in all our Congregations . . .
Keep the single Brethren and Sisters chaste,
both in Body and in Spirit . . .

Remain the Hope of our Widows . . .'

Recognising that, for holy living, the physical structures of the congregations had to be maintained and the basic needs of the inhabitants provided for, there were petitions such as the following:

'Take all the Needs of the Church upon thyself;
Bless our Table Service;
Grant our Providers a Conduct unexceptionable before
God and Men.'

There were supplications on behalf of the Brethren's missionaries, or messengers to the heathen: It was requested that all existing stations would survive and new ones become available.

'Keep they Eyes open on all thy Witnesses and Messengers
both by land and sea;
Let Spirit and Fire rest upon their Testimony;
Keep our Doors open among the Heathen and open
those that are still shut . . .'

The possible recipients of these ministrations were classified as Negroes, Savages and Slaves. The first and last groups were virtually synonymous; the second included categories as diverse as Greenland Eskimoes, American Indians and South African Hottentots. Some concern was also expressed for the Jews who, with the aid of the Saviour, needed to be delivered from their 'Blindness, Rage and Malice'.

Finally, the litany advocated continued awareness of the dependence of the Brotherhood on royal goodwill and support, both in Europe and elsewhere. This led to the inclusion of petitions for the well-being of royalty such as the princes of Brandenburg, Saxony and Denmark, the States General and the States of Utrecht, civil leaders in the Swiss cantons, and American governors and proprietors. Then followed specific references to King George II who, it was hoped, would be succeeded by heirs who, like him, would preserve true religion in all his dominions. Finally, in deference to local and regional secular authority, the Saviour was asked to guide all magistrates and to look compassionately on all in prison because of religious dissent.

Conclusion

All members of the Brotherhood claimed to have undergone the experience of conversion. Subsequently, they had been mystically united with the Saviour and their Christian practice had been influenced by work and worship in Place Congregations, Country Congregations, or the smaller, related economies. These were conceived as ideal Christian communities reminiscent of the early apostolic church. Within them great stress was placed on the need for mutual love and unity. This was not intended to flow from the local leadership's passion for ordering the minutiae of everyday life, but from the uninhibited and joyful expression of the religion of the heart, leading to an unselfish willingness to subordinate personal interests to those of the community as a whole.

Such 'openhearted' attitudes drew out many of the active, deeply devout young adults into forms of mission service which were sufficiently difficult to provide a severe challenge to their faith. One, which was a characteristic feature of the work in Europe, was among the Brethren's Diaspora. This involved joining groups of enthusiastic evangelists working in various parts of continental Europe, particularly in the Baltic States, setting up networks of religious societies for interested non-members. Their achievements and the effectiveness of their personal witness were referred to frequently in the congregational memoirs, and it can be assumed that the experiences of people in Yorkshire were similar to those recorded elsewhere.

Another objective, which provided limitless opportunities for evangelism, was in foreign missions to the heathen. Recommended sites for this were taken up all over the world, The majority were in colonies of Protestant European powers where, at the very least, a rudimentary pattern of settlement had been established and permanent relationships made with some of the indigenous inhabitants.

A highly disciplined approach was essential for the spiritual 'warriors' and 'messengers' whom the Brethren sent as missionaries, so that they could cope with the isolation and dangers which were inherent in such enterprises. When working far from home, among alien populations the pre-eminent virtue was fearlessness rooted in the conviction that the Saviour was mystically present, To reinforce their faith, there was frequent reiteration of the confident assertions of the hymnal and liturgy, and acceptance of the stream of edifying spiritual guidance from Herrnhut. This augmented and enriched their own shared devotional life and linked them in spirit to the 'sending congregations' and the Brotherhood as a whole. It was this relationship which summed up the essence of the spirituality of the Brethren: they aspired to enter the mind of Christ while engaged on a battlefield.

Fulneck was the physical expression of the Brethren's spiritual life in West Yorkshire. The imposing new congregation and choir houses, its centre-piece, were a conspicuous local landmark. They were comparable in size to the residences of many of the local gentry, and visible evidence of wealth, although subsequent events showed that this wealth was not soundly based. The settlement stood apart from the local townships, with the appearance of an aloof, privileged 'safe stronghold', in which the family of Brothers and Sisters who lived and worked together, could be undisturbed in responding to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Yet Fulneck, like the other settlements of the Brethren, was never surrounded by an enclosure wall. Its absence implied confidence in spiritual defences against contamination from the outside world, and a conviction that the whole complex was knit together by firm strands of control. Only from such a secure base could missions be launched.

Abstract

This article describes how evangelists of a little-known European Protestant Brotherhood made an incursion into West Yorkshire during the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. It shows how they introduced novel aspects of heart-religion associated with the spiritual ideas of Count Zinzendorf. These are examined in some detail. Although only a limited number of people felt able to respond, evidence is provided of the effectiveness of this ministry. The article adds to knowledge by detailing the allurement of a mystical evangelical style from an alien source among northern artisans.