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**“The Hallensians are Pietists;  
aren’t you a Hallensian?”**

**Mühlenberg’s Conflict with the  
Moravians in America**

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**ABSTRACT:** The rivalry between two centers of German Pietism, Halle and Herrnhut, shaped the development of both the Lutheran Church and the Moravian Church in America. The conflict began in Germany, but Pennsylvania became a major battleground in the 1740s. After years of sometimes violent controversy, the Moravians and Lutherans eventually developed as separate denominations. The most famous episode was the encounter on December 30, 1742, between Zinzendorf and Henry Melchior Mühlenberg, but that was just the first skirmish. Mühlenberg continued to oppose the Moravians after Zinzendorf’s departure for Europe. In Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Tulpehocken Mühlenberg fought publicly with the Moravians over who would supervise Lutheran ministry in America. Mühlenberg intervened in several Lutheran congregations that had pastors friendly to the Moravians and asserted his own authority over them. Both sides used law courts and the press to assert their claim to be considered true Lutherans and convince the public that the others were heterodox “Pietists.”

## INTRODUCTION

Half a year after his arrival in Pennsylvania Lutheran pastor Henry Melchior Mühlberg described the condition of the Germans in Pennsylvania in a letter to a friend. The young preacher from Halle painted a grim picture of social dissolution caused by immigration. "Our poor Lutheran people are in such a miserable condition and ruin that it cannot be sufficiently bewailed, even with tears of blood. The young people are growing up, but the parents are leaving some of their children to grow up without baptism, without instruction and knowledge, and to become heathen. Eating, drinking, whoring, coveting, boasting, impudence, wantonness and the like have almost taken over."<sup>1</sup> Approximately ninety thousand Germans immigrated to America from 1730 to 1754, almost all of them members of the Lutheran or Reformed state churches, but very few ordained German ministers dared the Atlantic crossing.<sup>2</sup> German-speaking Lutherans were slow to organize congregations without support of government authorities and patrons, and when the laity did gather for worship they often had to rely on poorly qualified pastors. The young Pietist preacher Mühlberg looked out on a field that was vast but the laborers were few, and naturally he looked to Halle for assistance.

There was one exception to the general picture of religious neglect among German-speaking Christians in the American colonies. Although they had been organized for less than twenty years the Moravians or

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** This article originated as a paper delivered for the conference, Pietists and Lutherans in the Prerevolutionary and Revolutionary Atlantic World: An International Symposium on the Occasion of Henry Melchior Mühlberg's 300th Birthday in 1711, held at the Franckesche Stiftungen at Halle, Germany, on August 24–27, 2011. It is published here with permission of Franckesche Stiftungen, and a different version of this article will be published in the Hallesche Forschungen series.

1. Mühlberg, Letter 23, Aug. 12, 1743, to Joachim Oporin in Göttingen, in John W. Kleiner and Helmut T. Lehmann, ed. and trans., *The Correspondence of Heinrich Melchior Mühlberg* (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1986), 1:116. Original: "Es ist ein solcher erbärmlicher Zustand und Verfall unter unser armen Lutherischen Leuten, daß es mit Blut thränen nicht genug kann beweinet werden; die Jugend

wächst heran, die Eltern lassen ihre Kinder zum Theil ohne Taufe, ohne Information und Erkänstis aufwachsen, und ins Heidenthum gehen. Fressen, sauffen, huren, geitzen, stolziren, Frechheit, Übermuth und dergleichen hat fast überhand genommen." Kurt Aland, ed., *Die Korrespondenz Heinrich Melchior Mühlbergs aus der Anfangszeit des deutschen Luthertums in Nordamerika*, vol. 1, 1740–1752 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 101.

2. Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus is Female: Moravians and Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 25. Germans composed about one-third of the population of the commonwealth by 1790 according to the first U.S. census. Sally Schwartz, "A Mixed Multitude": *The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 1.

Herrnhuters had an extensive international network with evangelists on four continents, including North America. About one hundred and fifty Moravian evangelists and teachers, including thirty-seven women, worked in more than one hundred and seventy German Lutheran and German Reformed communities from New York to Virginia.<sup>3</sup> When Mühlenberg arrived in Pennsylvania in late 1742 there were more than sixty pastors working in German Lutheran and Reformed congregations in America, two-thirds of whom were associated with the Moravian brotherhood. The Moravians also founded more than twenty schools for German boys and girls, often charging little or no tuition for the poor students.<sup>4</sup> Most of these Moravian evangelists, pastors, and teachers were transported from Europe through an effective organization that was unrivaled in transatlantic immigration in the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> About 20 percent of the Moravian immigrants in the colonial era were ordained, many of them with university educations, and several were aristocrats. In short, the Moravians provided the colonies with large numbers of highly qualified clergy, evangelists, and teachers, many of whom were bilingual.

Rather than viewing the Moravians as potential allies in the struggle to bring religion to the colonists, Mühlenberg treated them as rivals who threatened his work to build an orderly church structure in America. He complained to his superiors in Halle: "If I were at one with the Moravians, I would soon have laborers and assistants enough."<sup>6</sup> Although Mühlenberg has been called a "missionary of moderation,"<sup>7</sup> he was zealous in his opposition to Zinzendorfianism. In Philadelphia, Lancaster, Tulpehocken, and elsewhere Mühlenberg fought publicly with the Moravians over the question of who would oversee the Lutheran churches in America. Several Lutheran congregations in Pennsylvania were permanently divided as Mühlenberg successfully erected boundaries between his followers and

3. Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*, 113.

4. Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*, 113.

5. Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717–1775* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 136. Only one of the 830 Moravian immigrants died in transit to America, a mortality rate that was thirty-eight times lower than for all other German immigrants.

6. Report of Dec. 12, 1745, Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:109. The most extensive modern analysis of the confrontation

between Mühlenberg and Zinzendorf was written by Walter H. Wagner as part of the successful full-communion dialog between the Moravian Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Wagner, *The Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter: A Controversy in Search of Understanding* (Nazareth, Pa.: Moravian Historical Society, 2002).

7. Leonard R. Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation: Henry Melchior Muhlenberg and the Lutheran Church in English America* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980).

the “Zinzendorfers.” Repeatedly Mühlenberg intervened in Lutheran congregations that were polarized by pastors friendly to the Moravians. Rather than working to reconcile factions in these disputes, Mühlenberg encouraged his followers to separate from those who gravitated toward Herrnhut. He used the popular press, law courts, and the extensive Halle public relations network to assert his claim to be the true Lutheran in Pennsylvania and dismiss the Moravians as disruptive Pietists. The Moravians used similar methods to attack Mühlenberg and his colleagues in their effort to convince the public and colonial officials that it was the Hallensians who were heterodox Pietists rather than orthodox Lutherans. Mühlenberg complained to his superiors in Halle, “I have to suffer much in my ministry on account of the Moravians. They still intend to topple me and that because I am supposed to be a pietist.”<sup>8</sup>

Although Mühlenberg is often (and rightly) identified as the “patriarch of American Lutheranism,” there is surprisingly little scholarship on him and his successful effort to create an American Lutheran denomination.<sup>9</sup> There has been much more interest in his sons, Peter and Frederick, who had political and military careers in the United States. Much of what has been published about Henry Mühlenberg relies almost exclusively on Mühlenberg’s journals and reports to his superiors in Halle in which he reported on the numerous conflicts he was involved with in the colonies. Thus, much of the scholarship on Mühlenberg and his work reflects his perspective rather than that of his opponents.

In the 1990s the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Moravian Church in North America, Northern and Southern Provinces,

8. Mühlenberg, Letter 35, To Francke and Ziegenhagen, May 1744, *Correspondence* 1:160. Original: “Ich muß viel leiden in meinem Amte wegen der *Moravians*. Sie meinen noch immer mich zu stürzen und zwar deswegen weil ich ein Pietist wäre.” *Korrespondenz*, 1:137.

9. Leonard R. Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation: Henry Melchior Muhlenberg and the Lutheran Church in English America* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980); Karl-Otto Strohmidel, “Henry Melchior Mühlenberg’s European Heritage,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 6 (1992): 5–34; Paul A. W. Wallace, *The Muhlenbergs of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950); Theodore G. Tappert, “The Church’s Infancy 1650–1790,” *The Lutherans in North America*, ed. E. Clifford Nelson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,

1975), 3–77; Harvey LeRoy Nelson, “A Critical Study of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg’s Means of Maintaining His Lutheranism” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1990); Paul D. Kuenning, *The Rise and Fall of American Lutheran Pietism: The Rejection of an Activist Heritage* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988); L. DeAne Lagerquist, *The Lutherans* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1999); William K. Frick, *Henry Melchior Muhlenberg: Patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1902); Henry Melchior Mühlenberg, *The Journals of Henry Melchior Mühlenberg in Three Volumes*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: The Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States and the Mühlenberg Press, 1942).

agreed to full communion. As part of that process Walter Wagner, Samuel Zeller, and Otto Dreydoppel reviewed the early conflict between Lutherans and Moravians in an effort to move "beyond the Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg impasse."<sup>10</sup> The focus of these works is the famous encounter between Zinzendorf and Mühlenberg in 1742, but some of Mühlenberg's most intense battles with Moravians came later in the decade. These works also relied heavily on older scholarship rather than archival materials, but they do provide a more balanced treatment of the subject than previous works. One of the strengths of Wagner's detailed presentation of the conflict is that he interprets it as a conflict within the Lutheran community; however, he restricts his analysis to the situation in Philadelphia rather than examining the later conflicts in other Lutheran congregations.

The three-hundredth anniversary of Mühlenberg's birth provides an opportunity to reconsider his early career in America. By using records in the Moravian Archives in addition to Mühlenberg's correspondence and journals, we gain a more complicated picture of his long struggle with the Moravians. This was not merely a personal conflict between Zinzendorf and Mühlenberg; Pennsylvania was a battlefield in the ongoing rivalry between two centers of German evangelicalism: Herrnhut and Halle. There is little evidence to support Aaron Fogleman's claim that the Moravians' unorthodox attitude toward gender and sexuality was the catalyst for religious conflict in colonial Pennsylvania.<sup>11</sup> Fogleman provides a helpful analysis of several religious controversies involving the Moravians, but he does not give sufficient attention to the central role Mühlenberg played in each of those episodes. Fogleman recognizes that many Lutherans feared that Zinzendorf's ecumenism would undermine confessional boundaries, but he does not adequately place the Moravian controversy in the larger context of conflict within German Lutheranism over Pietism. The greater concern among German Lutherans was that Zinzendorffianism would dissolve

10. Samuel R. Zeiser, "Moravians and Lutherans: Getting Beyond the Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Impasse," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society*, no. 28 (1994): 15–29; Wagner, *The Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*; Otto Dreydoppel, "The Incident at Philadelphia: A Moravian Perspective on the Muhlenberg-Zinzendorf Encounter," *TMDK: Transatlantic Moravian Dialogue Correspondence* 6 (July 1995): 43–54. For a discussion of the full communion agreement, see Arthur Freeman, *Following Our Shepherd to Full*

*Communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (unpublished report, 1995, accessed on Jan. 15, 2012, at [www.moravianseminary.edu/Freeman/Ecumenics/FollowingourShepherdELCA.pdf](http://www.moravianseminary.edu/Freeman/Ecumenics/FollowingourShepherdELCA.pdf)).

11. He argues that the opponents of the Moravians feared "female power run amok, which could be seen in the radical gospel of femaleness in the Trinity, women preaching, strange marriage and sex practices that undermined the patriarchal family." Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*, 219.

Lutheran identity and church order. This was primarily a struggle over ecclesiastical boundaries, pastoral authority, and who could rightly claim the name of “Lutheran” in America.

On December 30, 1742, Mühlenberg had his only face-to-face meeting with Count Zinzendorf. He wrote in his journal: “This was the first time I ever saw the Count face to face and I expected to hear something great from the *Reformator Ecclesiae*.”<sup>12</sup> Zinzendorf dismissed Mühlenberg as a “country pastor,” but it would be Mühlenberg, not the count, who would shape American Lutheranism. Mühlenberg also had a profound impact on the Moravians in America. By successfully asserting the authority of Halle over German-speaking Lutherans in Pennsylvania, Mühlenberg forced the Moravians to identify themselves as a separate church with a distinctive polity. They gradually discarded Zinzendorf’s ecumenical dream of gathering Protestants into a spiritual fellowship transcending confessional boundaries. During the pivotal period of the First Great Awakening, Mühlenberg imported European confessionalism to colonial America and thus helped establish the denominational pattern of American Christianity.<sup>13</sup>

#### HALLE AND HERRNHUT

During their famous encounter, Zinzendorf exclaimed that Mühlenberg’s presence in Philadelphia was “another spiteful trick” by Gotthilf August Francke of Halle and Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen, the Lutheran chaplain of the Court of St. James.<sup>14</sup> When Mühlenberg confirmed that he had been educated at Halle and that his call to Philadelphia had been mediated by both Francke and Ziegenhagen, Zinzendorf insisted that the young preacher must be a Pietist rather than a genuine Lutheran since he was educated at Halle. “The Hallensians are Pietists; aren’t you a Hallensian?” the count asked. Mühlenberg replied simply that he was a Lutheran,

12. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:76. Interestingly, this line is omitted from the account of the meeting later published by Halle. According to Theodore Tappert, Mühlenberg’s reports from America “were rigorously edited in Halle” before publication. “Mühlenberg’s remarks that he and his colleagues were often called ‘Pietists’ and ‘secret Moravians’ were discreetly deleted. . . . Accordingly the Halle Reports

offer a very incomplete, and sometimes a distorted picture, which the manuscript journals help to complete and correct.” Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:xvi.

13. Frank Mead, Samuel Hill, and Craig Atwood, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 13th ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2010).

14. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:76.

a claim Zinzendorf disputed.<sup>15</sup> It may appear odd that Zinzendorf and his followers would use the term "Pietist" reproachfully since modern historians generally identify Zinzendorf as a Pietist, even a Radical Pietist, but in the 1700s the word Pietist implied heterodoxy and fanaticism.<sup>16</sup> Modern historians use the term more neutrally to describe a type of religious reform movement in Germany associated with Jacob Philipp Spener and his protégé August Hermann Francke. Zinzendorf's family were supporters of Spener's program of religious revival and the count was educated at Francke's school in Halle.

Zinzendorf considered his teacher August Hermann Francke one of his mentors, but he gradually distanced himself from Halle after a group of Protestant refugees from Moravia established a village called Herrnhut on his estate in Saxony in 1722. Zinzendorf and the Moravians created a new type of Christian community based on Zinzendorf's idea of the *Brüdergemeine*, or community of brothers. This was an attempt to rejuvenate all churches by reclaiming the spirit of the apostolic church. Members called one another brother and sister, and they adopted offices and rituals used in early Christianity. The count was particularly impressed by the historical writings of Gottfried Arnold, and the residents of Herrnhut instituted several practices of the early church that Arnold had praised but were viewed with suspicion in the established churches. Among these were the Kiss of Peace, the Agape meal, footwashing, and calling fellow believers "brother" and "sister."<sup>17</sup> They appointed both men and women to serve as elders, deacons, and evangelists, but they did not write a new confession of faith. Instead they adopted the Augsburg Confession, the defining document of Lutheranism, as their standard for doctrine.<sup>18</sup>

Although he affirmed the Augsburg Confession and had great respect for the established church, Zinzendorf agreed with Radical Pietists, like Arnold, that faith is an inward disposition toward Christ, not an outward subscription to a confessional statement. As such, he could recognize people in many different churches as believers and potential brothers and sisters in the fellowship of the Lamb of God. Historians have highlighted the

15. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:79.

16. Hans Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, trans. Gerald MacDonald (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 2007).

17. Paul Peucker, "The Ideal of Primitive Christianity as a Source of Moravian Liturgical

Practice," *Journal of Moravian History*, no. 6 (2009): 7–29.

18. N. L. von Zinzendorf, *Ein und zwanzig Discourse über die Augspurgische Confession . . .* (n.p., [1749]), 203.



role that the Philadelphian movement of Jane Leade played in Zinzendorf's conception of the church.<sup>19</sup> Shortly before leaving for America he exclaimed: "we are able to accept people from all kinds of denominations and sects into our *Gemeine* [community] without requiring them to change their denominational form."<sup>20</sup> Hans Schneider has summarized the many points of conflict between Halle and Herrnhut prior to Zinzendorf's mission to North America.<sup>21</sup> Although there were disagreements over theology and piety, it appears that Halle was primarily upset that Zinzendorf was competing with them directly on many fronts, and his movement was growing rapidly.

Mühlenberg and his superiors in Halle identified the Moravian brotherhood as a threat to the Lutheran Church and the social order primarily because of Zinzendorf's radical ecumenism. For more than one hundred years, the social order of Germany was defined along the confessional lines that Zinzendorf was cavalierly crossing. Mühlenberg wrote: "Count von Zinzendorf . . . wanted to reform everything and bring the Lutherans, Reformed and all the rest into his Moravian polity. Among Lutherans he pretended he was an authentic Lutheran pastor, among the Reformed he said he was an authentic Reformed [pastor], and so on. As a result of his activities and crude proceedings, such confusion and chaos were created that one can see neither beginning nor end. Things are quite confused here now. They are scolding, blaming, slandering and fighting among and against one another so much that it is pitiful. That is how I found it when I came to Philadelphia."<sup>22</sup> Several prominent theologians in the

19. Peter Vogt, "Zinzendorf's 'Philadelphian' Ecumenism in Pennsylvania, 1742: An Example of Cross-Cultural Dynamics in Eighteenth Century Pietism," *The Covenant Quarterly* 62 (2004): 13–27; Hans Schneider, "'Philadelphische Brüder mit einem lutherischen Maul und mährischen Rock': Zu Zinzendorfs Kirchenverständnis," in Martin Brecht and Paul Peucker, eds., *Neue Aspekte der Zinzendorf-Forschung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 11–36.

20. Zinzendorf, Sermon Given in Heerendyk on August 16, 1741, *A Collection of Sermons from Zinzendorf's Pennsylvania Journey*, trans. Julie Tomberlin Weber, ed. Craig Atwood, (n.p., n.d.), 7.

21. Hans Schneider, "Die 'zürnenden Mutterkinder.' Der Konflikt zwischen Halle und Herrnhut," *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 29 (2009): 43–53, 64–66.

22. Mühlenberg, Letter 23, *Correspondence*, 1:116. Original: "Der Graf v. Zinzendorf war schon ein Jahr in diesem Land mit seinen Leuten gewesen als ich herein kam. Er hat wollen alles reformiren und Lutheraner, Reformirte und alles übrige in seine Mährische Verfassung bringen. Bey den Lutheranern hat er vorgegeben, er wäre ein ächter lutherischer Prediger, bey den reformirten hat er gesagt, er wäre ein ächter Reformirter und so weiter. Es is aber durch sein treiben und unreifes Verfahren eine solche Confusion und Mischmasch worden, daß man fast weder Anfang noch Ende siehet. Es gehet nun ziemlich durch einander. Sie schimpfen, schelten, lästern und fechten unter und gegen einander, daß es zu erbarmen ist. So habe es gefunden, als in Philadelphia kam." *Korrespondenz*, 1:101.

1730s and 1740s published harsh critiques of the count's theology and accused him of everything from antinomianism to spiritual tyranny, but their basic concern was that Zinzendorf relativized denominational difference.<sup>23</sup>

Zinzendorf's support for the Moravian refugees on his estate aroused great opposition from church authorities in Germany. In August 1731 the Holy Roman Emperor lodged a formal complaint against Count Zinzendorf for encouraging his subjects to leave Czech crown lands. Even members of Zinzendorf's "own family thought he had demeaned himself by his dealings with his refugees."<sup>24</sup> Among those who considered it unseemly for an imperial count to participate in footwashings with peasants was Zinzendorf's aunt Henrietta Sophia von Gersdorf, who had close ties to Halle. Before he received the call to America, Mühlenberg served as a chaplain and teacher at Gersdorf's estate, Grosshennersdorf. Mühlenberg admitted to the count that his opinion was informed by Gersdorf: "you are just what your aunt told me you were."<sup>25</sup> Opposition to Zinzendorf in Saxony increased after the consecration of the first Moravian bishop in 1735, and the count was finally exiled from the kingdom in 1736.<sup>26</sup> Rather than curtail his activities in the face of opposition and official reprimands, Zinzendorf extended his work by sending Moravians as missionaries to the slaves on St. Thomas under the auspices of the Danish crown.<sup>27</sup> Eventually he extended the mission to the North American mainland. As early as February 1736 Francke and Ziegenhagen expressed concern that the count might settle permanently in the New World.<sup>28</sup>

Zinzendorf upset Halle further by bringing several people with separatist tendencies into his ecumenical brotherhood, most notably August Gottlieb Spangenberg, who played a key role in the Moravian mission

23. Some of the polemics against Zinzendorf were republished under the title *Antizinzendorfiana*, ed. Erich Beyreuther, in the series *Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, Materialien und Dokumente. Reihe 2*, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1976), vol. 14–16. For a complete overview of Moravian and anti-Moravian writings during Zinzendorf's lifetime: Dietrich Meyer, ed., *Bibliographisches Handbuch zur Zinzendorf-Forschung* (Düsseldorf: privately printed, 1987).

24. Ward, *Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 129.

25. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:79.

26. J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum 1722–1957* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education of the Moravian Church in America, 1967), 64–65.

27. Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

28. Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 68–69.

to North America.<sup>29</sup> Although they did not know each other personally, Spangenberg and Mühlenberg were connected through an extensive Pietist network, and both became leaders of their respective religious communities in Pennsylvania. Both were of the middle class, who benefited from the patronage of nobles.<sup>30</sup> But their differences are as illuminating as their similarities. As a young man, Spangenberg tended toward moralism and legalism, whereas Mühlenberg describes his own adolescence as rowdy and rebellious. Mühlenberg came under the influence of Pietists while he was a student at the University of Göttingen in 1735, was befriended by some of the pious nobles associated with Halle, and was eventually ordained.<sup>31</sup>

For his part, Spangenberg took a degree in Lutheran theology and was involved with Pietists in Jena, but he was deeply influenced by the mysticism of Johann Gichtel.<sup>32</sup> Zinzendorf helped get Spangenberg appointed to a position in Halle; however, Spangenberg's enthusiasm for mysticism and his reluctance to take communion with the "unconverted" caused problems. After Spangenberg was dismissed from his post in 1733 he was welcomed in Herrnhut, which widened the breach between Halle and Zinzendorf. Ziegenhagen in London was drawn into the affair when Spangenberg came to England to arrange for the Moravians to do mission work in Georgia. The opposition of Halle to Spangenberg and Zinzendorf had contributed to the failure of the Moravian mission to Georgia in the 1730s.<sup>33</sup> Mühlenberg was no doubt aware of the Spangenberg affair since he was associated with Count Christian Ernst von Stolberg-Wernigerode, a strident opponent of Zinzendorf and Spangenberg. This certainly contributed to Mühlenberg's

29. Ward, *Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 139; Craig D. Atwood, "Spangenberg: A Radical Pietist in Colonial America," *Journal of Moravian History*, no. 4 (2008): 7–27; Atwood, "Apolo-gizing for the Moravians: Spangenberg's *Idea Fidei Fratrum*," *Journal of Moravian History*, no. 8 (2010): 53–88. Gerhard Reichel's *August Gottlieb Spangenberg* (Tübingen, 1906) remains the only modern biography of Spangenberg. Edwin Albert Sawyer, *The Religious Experience of the Colonial American Moravians*, published in *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 18:1–227 gives a brief biography of Spangenberg on pages 45–68. A short, but influential account of his life by an anonymous author is found in the preface to August Gottlieb Spangenberg, *An Exposition of Christian Doctrine, as Taught in*

*the Protestant Church of the United Brethren, or, Unitas Fratrum*, tr. and ed. by Benjamin LaTrobe, 3rd English edition (Winston-Salem, N.C.: Moravian Church Board of Christian Education, 1959).

30. One of Mühlenberg's early patrons was Henry XI Count Reuss von Ober Greiz, a relative of Zinzendorf's first wife, Erdmuth Dorothea. Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 22.

31. Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 20–21.

32. Atwood, "Spangenberg: A Radical Pietist in Colonial America," 12–13.

33. Aaron S. Fogleman, "Shadow Boxing in Georgia: The Beginnings of the Moravian-Lutheran Conflict in British North America," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 83 (1999): 629–59.

opposition to the Moravians in the 1740s when Spangenberg served as the Chief Elder of the Moravians in America.

#### LUTHERANS IN PENNSYLVANIA

It is not surprising that Pennsylvania became one of the most important settings for intra-Pietist rivalry. William Penn enticed thousands of Germans, especially from the Rhineland, to immigrate with the promise of religious toleration and freedom from a state church.<sup>34</sup> Halle had expressed interest in Pennsylvania as early as 1699. A. H. Francke posed several questions about life under the "holy experiment" to Daniel Falckner, a land agent in Pennsylvania. He asked how a new immigrant could "seek out persons imbued with a true Philadelphian spirit from among the Swedes, English, Germans, and religious persuasions who are there." Falckner answered in a tract called *Curieuse Nachricht von Pennsylvania* in which he encouraged readers to show love toward neighbors until "all sects and parties . . . abjure their birth marks and enter with one accord into a resolution of resigned brotherly love."<sup>35</sup> We can only speculate as to whether Zinzendorf knew of his mentor's interest in establishing a Philadelphian church in Penn's colony or Falckner's suggestion for pursuing piety in a strange land. What is certain is that it was forty years before Halle sent a pastor for the Germans in Pennsylvania. It was not until Halle received word that the Herrnhuters were making plans for a mission to North America that they decided to send a pastor. Clearly, it was the perceived threat from Herrnhut that motivated Francke to send a Pietist pastor to America.

It is easy to understand why it took several decades for Halle to address the need for Lutheran pastors in America. First of all, Pennsylvania was a British colony, and it was not clear if church officials in Germany should (or could) play a role in American congregational affairs. Second, the government of Pennsylvania was in the hands of the Quakers, whom most Lutheran theologians dismissed as enthusiasts because they believed in the direct inspiration of God and did not observe the sacraments. The fact that most Quakers refused to swear oaths or take up arms meant that they had more in common with Mennonites and Moravians than with members of

34. Schwartz, *A Mixed Multitude*, 12–35.

35. Schwartz, *A Mixed Multitude*, 65.

a state church. Third, it was difficult for Lutheran pastors and laypersons to adjust to a situation in which there was no governmental oversight of religion. Every religious organization in Pennsylvania, even the Anglican Church, was a voluntary society responsible for its own welfare and discipline. Legally, there was no difference between churches and sects, to use Max Weber's famous types. This was a hard concept for members of established churches, whereas dissenters, like the Presbyterians, had a history of forming congregations independent of the established church. Thus Scots-Irish Presbyterians quickly established churches and presbyteries in America, but Lutherans had no model for self-government. Ecclesiastical authority was at the heart of every battle Mühlberg had with the Moravians. Could any European authority legitimately provide oversight over Lutherans in Pennsylvania or should Lutherans simply govern themselves as a new church in America?

One might expect that German Lutherans in the British Empire enjoyed some privileges since King George was a Lutheran, but they were not officially recognized as a legal church alongside the Anglican Church. Mühlberg pressed the claim that Ziegenhagen, the Lutheran chaplain to the Court of St. James, was the recognized authority over Lutherans in the British Empire; however, that was simply not true. No European official or consistory had legal authority over any German religious body in America, particularly not in Pennsylvania where religious toleration was the law of the land. Congregations were free, of course, to voluntarily submit to any governing structure they chose to align themselves with, and Mühlberg tried to persuade the German Lutherans to subordinate themselves to Halle and his Philadelphia ministerium. Swedish Lutherans could appeal to the archbishop of Uppsala as the final authority. Eventually most of the Swedish Lutheran congregations in colonial America decided that episcopacy and royal legitimacy were more important to them than confessional identity and they united with the Church of England. Unlike the Lutherans, the Moravian Church was granted full legal status in England in 1749 when Parliament recognized the *Unitas Fratrum* as "an antient and episcopal church."<sup>36</sup> This gave Moravians legal status within the British Empire, but it undermined Zinzendorf's assertion that the Moravians were somehow "Lutheran."

36. Hamilton and Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 123–25; Colin Podmore,

*The Moravians in England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

## MÜHLENBERG'S CALL TO PHILADELPHIA

Halle's involvement with America began when three small congregations (New Hanover, Providence, and Philadelphia) jointly issued a call for a pastor in 1733. The "United Congregations" sent their initial request for a pastor to Ziegenhagen since he was the chaplain of the king and would have the necessary contacts for securing a pastor, but Ziegenhagen asked G. H. Francke to find a pastor through the Halle network. Francke informed the United Congregations that they would have to meet some difficult standards before a call could be issued. He insisted that the American congregations guarantee a cash salary for the pastor, provide for his return to Europe if things did not work out, and accept without reservation whomever Francke sent.<sup>37</sup> The Americans were offended by these demands and accused Halle of being more concerned about a pastor's material comfort than with his commitment to serve Christ. Twice more the United Congregations sent letters requesting a pastor without result. In 1739 the Americans informed Francke that they would turn to the consistory in Darmstadt for assistance since Halle had not done anything.<sup>38</sup> That appeared to be the end of Francke's and Ziegenhagen's involvement with the Lutherans in Pennsylvania; however, Darmstadt never responded to the call from Pennsylvania.

Francke and Ziegenhagen changed their minds when they heard that Zinzendorf was planning a journey to America to strengthen the Herrnhuters' fledgling mission to the Indians and their evangelistic work among European settlers. Particularly troubling was the report that Zinzendorf was hoping to unite German-speaking Protestants, including sectarians, into an ecumenical fellowship. Zinzendorf's "American plan" goaded Francke into finally acting on the United Congregation's request for a pastor. He knew that Mühlberg was available because he was about to lose his position at the orphanage that Baroness von Gersdorf operated at Grosshennersdorf. Financial difficulties were forcing her to close the orphanage in 1741. Mühlberg traveled to Halle to confer with Francke about his future, and Francke extended "a call to the Lutheran people in the province of Pennsylvania" on September 6, 1741. Mühlberg accepted on a three-year trial basis.<sup>39</sup> In a reversal of policy, Halle did not demand

37. Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 66.

38. Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 91.

39. Mühlberg, *Journals*, 1:6–7.

that the Americans pay for Mühlenberg's transportation nor for the cost of a return trip if things did not work out. Ziegenhagen agreed to pay for transportation out of a special fund, and he also hosted Mühlenberg in London for several weeks so he could learn English. Ziegenhagen formally extended the call in London, and Mühlenberg accepted it even though there was not a guarantee of a salary.

According to Riforgiato, "When it became evident that Zinzendorf was making deep inroads into Pennsylvania Lutheranism, Francke promptly resurrected the call entrusted to him by the United Congregations seven years previously."<sup>40</sup> The difficulty with this reconstruction is that Mühlenberg's call was issued three months *before* Zinzendorf arrived in America. The count was actually in London when Francke first issued the call. Ziegenhagen could have easily sent word to Zinzendorf about the decision to provide a Halle-trained pastor for Pennsylvania, but he did not. Ziegenhagen and Francke knew that Spangenberg had been active in Germantown preparing for Moravians to settle in Pennsylvania and that Zinzendorf was preparing to visit the New World. Mühlenberg was sent to Pennsylvania not because Zinzendorf was creating problems for the Lutherans, but because Halle feared that Zinzendorf would make inroads in the Quaker colony before Halle could establish a presence. Surprisingly, neither Francke nor Ziegenhagen informed the Lutheran congregations in America that a pastor had been selected even though more than a year passed between Mühlenberg's acceptance of the call and his arrival in Philadelphia. It is unlikely that was a mere oversight. It is more likely the Halle network did not want Zinzendorf to have time to prepare for the appearance of a rival.

Not every scholar agrees that Francke's sudden reversal of policy toward Pennsylvania was in direct response to Zinzendorf's plans. Karl-Otto Strohmidel suggested that Francke's decision was primarily motivated by the news that Mühlenberg had lost his position at Grosshennersdorf.<sup>41</sup> However, Strohmidel's account of Mühlenberg's early career gives no indication of why Francke would have been concerned about the young man's employment. Moreover, Francke was aware that a position had been provided for him in Grosshennersdorf by Carl Gottlob von Burgsdorf. Both Francke and Ziegenhagen encouraged the young pastor to accept the call to America even though they expressed doubts to each other about Mühlenberg's ability. Strohmidel argues that Mühlenberg could not have

40. Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 91.

41. Strohmidel, "European Heritage," 7–10.

been sent specifically to challenge Zinzendorf because his superiors knew he was at best "an average talent."<sup>42</sup> However, the mere fact that Mühlenberg may not have been the best candidate to challenge the Moravians is hardly a compelling argument. It is probable that Mühlenberg was the most qualified candidate willing to risk his life crossing the Atlantic.<sup>43</sup>

Mühlenberg spent several weeks in London preparing for his assignment, but Ziegenhagen was not impressed by Mühlenberg as a preacher or pastor. "He is not only weak but also totally incapable of conveying a clear idea of a matter to somebody. Therefore I am deeply concerned that all our hope and expenses will be to no avail, because circumstances in Pennsylvania will be much too hard for him."<sup>44</sup> Ziegenhagen does not specify what his hopes were, but it seems likely that thwarting Zinzendorf was one of them. More important, neither Ziegenhagen nor Francke expressed any reservations about Mühlenberg to his American congregations. As it turned out, Mühlenberg proved to be an excellent choice because he was tenacious and had a strong sense of loyalty to Halle. He did not attempt to overcome Zinzendorf with eloquence or theological brilliance; he simply asserted the authority of Halle over and over in congregations where pastors or members were found to be sympathetic to Zinzendorffianism.

Mühlenberg did not journey directly to Philadelphia. He went first to Georgia to confer with John Martin Boltzius, a pro-Halle pastor serving the Salzburgers in the Ebenezer congregation. The Moravians had abandoned their mission in Georgia just the year before, which demonstrated their vulnerability, but the Georgia failure had not halted the Moravian mission. While in Georgia Mühlenberg learned that Zinzendorf had held several ecumenical synods in Pennsylvania in an attempt to unite German churches and sects into Christian fellowship.<sup>45</sup> The synods failed, in part, because many of the participants feared that Zinzendorf was merely trying to take over their own communities of faith and make them all Moravians.<sup>46</sup>

42. Strohmidel, "European Heritage," 11. "The rather home-spun Hallensian candidate was not especially selected to counteract the brilliant Zinzendorf and pursue ambitious Hallensian plans." Strohmidel, "European Heritage," 28.

43. Before his departure from Europe Mühlenberg was informed about Count Zinzendorf's plans and was warned that this "would be a tough test" for him. Wagner, *Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*, 86.

44. Quoted by Strohmidel, "European Heritage," 13.

45. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:63.

46. Peter Vogt, *An Authentic Relation of the Occasion, Continuance, and Conclusion of the First Assembly of Some Labourers out of Most of the Christian Religions and Other Private Religious People in Pensilvania Kept in German Town 1st and 2nd January 1741/2*, in *Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, Materialien und Dokumente, Reihe 2* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1976), 30.



Fogleman summarized the opposition generated by Zinzendorf's ecumenism thus: "Count Zinzendorf was directly challenging their confessional ideal by saying essentially that the clergy and laity could be members of the state churches and simultaneously participate in the Moravian heresy. The count was in the field, claiming that he was a Lutheran bishop and ordaining Moravians into the Lutheran priesthood, and his Moravian preachers in North America were actually working in Lutheran and Reformed communities, administering the sacraments and claiming to their congregants that they were upstanding, properly ordained members of those churches."<sup>47</sup> Fogleman is in error on at least one point. Zinzendorf never claimed to be a *Lutheran* bishop. In America he did not even publicize his status as a *Moravian* bishop.

While in Georgia Mühlenberg "received a document concerning a tumult which had taken place in an old house on July 18 [1742] in Philadelphia between the Reformed, the Moravian Brethren, and the Lutherans. The weak and immature actions which Mr. Zinzendorf exhibited in the conference and the tumult of July 18 grieved me very much."<sup>48</sup> The Lutheran congregation in Philadelphia to which Mühlenberg was called shared a building with the Reformed congregation, but the Reformed, probably on the orders of pastor Johann Philipp Boehme, put a lock on the door one Sunday without providing a key for the Lutherans.<sup>49</sup> Pastor Boehme objected to the fact that the Lutheran preacher at the time, Christopher Pyrlaeus, was associated with the Moravians. Pyrlaeus broke the lock so the congregation could assemble for worship. Some of the Reformed must have expected this to happen because they quickly stormed the church. When Pyrlaeus stood his ground he was assaulted and forcibly ejected from the pulpit. He later reported that the Lutherans and "other devout people" tried to shield him from harm. He gathered the flock in his lodgings where he delivered the sermon.<sup>50</sup> Multiple versions of the sequence of events were published in the Pennsylvania press as each side tried to gain public support, and both sides filed lawsuits. Even though Pyrlaeus was eventually vindicated by the courts the Lutheran congregation remained permanently divided between those who supported him and those who sided with the Reformed preacher. No one in Philadelphia knew at the time of the riot that

47. Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*, 112.

48. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:63.

49. There are several good accounts of the incident on Arch Street. Wagner's is detailed

and balanced. Wagner, *Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*, 98–102.

50. Wagner, *Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*, 100.

Mühlenberg had already been dispatched by Ziegenhagen to be the pastor of the Lutheran congregation.

The roots of the problem in Philadelphia went back to 1739 when Ziegenhagen informed Zinzendorf that there was a pressing need for a pastor in Philadelphia because Francke had chosen not to send anyone. It is not clear what Ziegenhagen intended for Zinzendorf to do with this information, but when Zinzendorf arrived in Philadelphia in December 1741 he consulted with the lay leaders of the Lutheran congregations to determine whether he could assist them. It appears that the New Hanover and Providence congregations were not interested in his services, but several members of the Philadelphia congregation heard him preach in his rented rooms. According to Spangenberg, they were so impressed with his explication of Luther's Small Catechism that they invited him to preach in their church.<sup>51</sup> Out of courtesy, Zinzendorf contacted the Reformed pastor, Boehme, to see if he had objections to him preaching in the building that the Lutherans and Reformed shared. Boehme's reply made it clear that he had reservations about the count personally, but he felt he had could not interfere with the Lutherans' invitation.<sup>52</sup> According to the Moravian version of events, the congregation agreed that Zinzendorf presented the gospel in good Lutheran fashion, and so they invited him to serve Holy Communion. He did so on Easter Monday using the Lutheran liturgy. According to Spangenberg, when Zinzendorf preached on the meaning of communion and the need for genuine repentance, both the preacher and congregation were moved to tears.<sup>53</sup>

There is no doubt that the elders of the Lutheran congregation then called Zinzendorf to be their pastor. Zinzendorf's call is preserved in the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem and was published in the *Büdingische Sammlung*.<sup>54</sup> There is little in the call itself that a Lutheran could object to.

51. A. G. Spangenberg, *Leben des Herrn Nicolaus Ludwig Grafen und Herrn von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf* (Barby, [1772]–1775), 1390.

52. Boehme's reply was republished in *Büdingische Sammlung einiger in die Kirchen-Historie einschlagender Sonderlich neuerer Schrifften* (Büdingen, 1742), 3:62–64.

53. *Büdingische Sammlung* 3:580–81. Spangenberg described the scene thus: "dass die Predigt musste geendiget werden weil niemand vor Thränen mehr reden noch hören konte; worauf der darüber innigst gebeugte

und zärtlichst gerührte Prediger ihnen auf den Ostermontag das heilige Abendmahl versprach, wenn er finden würde, dass die Fassung kein Uebergang sey." *Leben Zinzendorfs*, 1392.

54. "Rites of the Lutheran Church," constitution of the Lutheran Church in Philadelphia with a call for Zinzendorf as minister of that church, 1742. Zinzendorf Papers (hereafter cited as PP Zdf), no. 53, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pa. (hereafter cited as MAB); *Büdingische Sammlung*, 2:828–30.

It begins with a lengthy quotation from Luther's introduction to the German mass. Preaching was to be according to the unaltered Augsburg Confession of 1535; discipline was to be carried out with the consent of the elders; private sins should be confessed privately; and baptisms should be in the presence of the mother and include instructions on the duties of Christian parents. Christopher Pyrlaeus, who studied theology at Leipzig, was included in the call as Zinzendorf's adjunct. The call also identified Zinzendorf as the inspector for the Lutherans in the region. But there were no signatures on the call itself, an oversight that Mühlenberg exploited to his advantage when he arrived in Philadelphia.<sup>55</sup>

Pastor Boehme grew increasingly hostile to Zinzendorf and Pyrlaeus after receiving a copy of the *Pastoral Letter*, a letter sent by the Amsterdam Classis in 1738 to all Reformed churches accusing the Moravians of heresy.<sup>56</sup> He started attacking their theology and piety from the pulpit and in the press. The opposition to Zinzendorf increased when a large group of Moravians arrived in Philadelphia in May on their way to the new Moravian settlement of Bethlehem. This was the so-called first sea congregation that provided much of the leadership for the Moravian mission in America. It appears that some of the Lutherans feared that Zinzendorf was trying to absorb them into the Moravian Church. The attack on Pyrlaeus took place soon after this while Zinzendorf was away. The Moravians took legal action in response to being locked out of the church and to the assault on Pyrlaeus. Although they won in court, the Zinzendorf party did not try to take possession of the disputed building. Instead the count arranged for the construction of a new church on Race Street, which he provocatively named the *Evangelische-Brüder Kirche* [Evangelical Brethren's Church]. The new church building was consecrated on November 14, 1742, with Pyrlaeus preaching, but some of the Lutherans continued to worship at the shared building. Valentine Kraft held services for them.

Mühlenberg arrived in Philadelphia just two weeks after the dedication of the Race Street building. It is clear is that when Mühlenberg arrived in Philadelphia he was prepared to challenge Zinzendorf and the Moravians on behalf of Halle. No evidence survives to indicate whether Mühlenberg had discussed what strategy he should employ, but the division in the Philadelphia church provided an opportunity to portray Zinzendorf as an

55. Wagner, *Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*, 95.

56. Hamilton and Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 70.

impostor, an exile from Saxony who came to America to foment confusion. In his letters Francke repeatedly pressed Mühlenberg for information on the Moravians that could be used against Zinzendorf in Germany. "The vainglory of the Moravians, based on what the Count has accomplished in America, is great. We would like to have some reliable information to the effect that he also has met opposition. For this reason a trustworthy brief report from Your Reverence would be very welcome to me."<sup>57</sup> Eventually one of the Halle scholars, Fresenius, filled eight hundred pages with Zinzendorf's supposed misdeeds in America, thanks in part to Mühlenberg.

As soon as he arrived in Philadelphia in late November, Mühlenberg made contact with an elder of the New Hanover congregation who apprised him on the state of affairs in the three congregations. Mühlenberg wisely chose to go first to New Hanover where he expected the least opposition to his call. Only a few Lutherans there were friendly to the Moravians, and there was much dissatisfaction with Johann Georg Schmidt, a barber who was acting as pastor.<sup>58</sup> Schmidt was not ordained, and he had a reputation for drinking and other behaviors unbecoming in a pastor. According to Mühlenberg, these were churches that "the Count could not capture because they were too smart for him and knew his weakness. . . . The Count did try it in both congregations and won over a few, but the people felt that he acted like a fox which is as skillful in luring the hens as a cock, and when they are near enough to him, he gobbles them up. What good is it to be able to speak ever so sweetly of the Savior and the Lamb when along with it thine eye be evil? So since the Count could get nowhere with these two country congregations, he granted them to me without any contradiction."<sup>59</sup> Nowhere else does Mühlenberg indicate that he and Zinzendorf even discussed these two congregations, but it is clear that Zinzendorf did not dispute Mühlenberg's right to be called as their pastor.

Mühlenberg quickly gained the support of the officers of the New Hanover and Providence congregations with his credentials from Halle, his academic training, and his demeanor. Most important, the elders accepted as valid his call from Ziegenhagen even though they had

57. Mühlenberg, Letter 20, from Francke to Mühlenberg, June 7, 1743, *Correspondence*, 1:104–5. Original: "Der eitle Ruhm der Herrnhuther, was der Graf in America ausgerichtet habe, ist gros: man will aber sichere Nachricht haben, daß er gleichwol auch seinen

Widerspruch gefunden habe. Daher mir eine zuverlässige kurtze Nachricht von Ew. W. sehr angenehm seyn wird." *Korrespondenz*, 1:92.

58. Wagner, *Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*, 108–9.

59. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:80.

informed Francke in 1739 that they were no longer looking for a pastor from Halle and had appealed instead to the Darmstadt Consistory.<sup>60</sup> Mühlenberg returned a month later with a letter of call that he wrote himself, which the officers signed. It is a curious form of call letter, which refers to “last Days and perilous Times” and warns against false preachers and those who come “to steal, to kill, and to destroy the sheep.”<sup>61</sup> Presumably Mühlenberg had Zinzendorf in mind when he wrote that. Apparently he interpreted the rivalry between Halle and Herrnhut in the apocalyptic terms of the children of light standing against the forces of the antichrist.

Mühlenberg returned to Philadelphia on November 30 and two days later was entertained in the home of Peter Koch, a wealthy merchant who was an officer in the Wicaco Swedish Lutheran church. Koch was anti-Pietist, but he became a close ally of Mühlenberg despite the fact that the latter was a product of Halle.<sup>62</sup> Koch was much more concerned about Moravian influence on Swedish Lutherans than he was about Halle Pietism, and he involved himself in several notable controversies involving Swedish pastors who were friendly to the Moravians. There is some justification in Zinzendorf’s claim that it was mainly Koch who had prevented him from preaching in the Swedish church in 1742.<sup>63</sup> Zinzendorf had many supporters in the Wicaco church, most notably Olaf Malander, an assistant of the rector Peter Tranberg. Malander eventually became a Moravian brother after the Swedish church hierarchy turned against Zinzendorf.<sup>64</sup>

Having gained the support of one of the wealthiest and most respected Lutherans in Philadelphia and armed with a signed call from two of the three German Lutheran congregations, Mühlenberg finally asserted his authority over the congregation in Philadelphia that had previously called Zinzendorf as pastor. The congregation had been divided since the riot of the previous summer, and many, including some elders, worshiped in the church built by Zinzendorf on Race Street.<sup>65</sup> Mühlenberg preached at the Wicaco Swedish church on December 27, 1742, and presented his credentials, including his signed call from Providence and New Hanover, to the

60. Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 91.

61. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:73–74.

62. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:69.

63. Wagner, *Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*, 97; Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:79.

64. Wagner, *Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*, 28.

65. Wagner, *Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*, 100–101.

rector and Koch. They acknowledged him as properly ordained and called to be a pastor. Mühlenberg noted that a "spy" of Zinzendorf's was present for this affair.<sup>66</sup> The next day Mühlenberg presented his credentials to the governor of the colony and other officials, who welcomed him warmly, especially since he had no qualms about taking the oath of allegiance to the British king. He then made a formal visit to the rector of the Anglican Church, who received him cordially.<sup>67</sup>

Two things are especially worthy of note here. First, Mühlenberg made no attempt to contact Zinzendorf or even inform him of his arrival even though he had recognized one of Zinzendorf's associates at some of his meetings with local leaders. This does not appear to have been an oversight on Mühlenberg's part since he was so diligent in presenting himself to other officials. When the count asked, "Is it not contrary to all fairness and courtesy that after I have been so long in this country you should not have come to visit me?" Mühlenberg replied, "Even if I had desired to call on you as a stranger, you would not have been there in any event, for it was said that you were among the Indians."<sup>68</sup> Mühlenberg had known for several days that Zinzendorf was in the city and even recognized his "spy" earlier in the week. By overtly ignoring the count, he hoped to diminish his standing among the elites, especially the local clergy. He then dismissed Zinzendorf and his supporters as sectarians who had no right to claim to be Lutheran. "There are all kinds of sects here, and how is it possible for me to run around to all of them? I have enough to do with the Lutherans who have been assigned to me."<sup>69</sup>

The second point to note is that Zinzendorf had already offended some of the prominent people Mühlenberg met with. Although Pennsylvania was a Quaker colony, the Moravian reluctance to take an oath of allegiance to the king did not sit well with everyone. Zinzendorf had also once refused an invitation to dine with one of the most important proprietors of the colony, James Logan. Logan had been impressed by Spangenberg when he met him, but he found the count difficult to understand.<sup>70</sup> When Zinzendorf solemnly laid down his aristocratic status in 1742 and resolved to go by the name *Herr von Thürnstein*, Logan dismissed the count's speech and actions as nonsensical. Some of the colonial officials had anti-Moravian polemics translated into English so they could confirm their suspicion that the count

66. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:74; Wagner, *Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*, 112–13.

67. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:75.

68. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:78.

69. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:78.

70. Schwartz, *A Mixed Multitude*, 114.

was a dangerous fanatic.<sup>71</sup> Herr von Thürnstein had been attacked in the press for traveling under a pseudonym, and even Mühlenberg implied that he did not realize that Thürnstein was actually the count.<sup>72</sup> It appears that the governor and his circle were happy to see the colorful count leave the colony and welcome a pastor who had the backing of the court chaplain in London, the head of the Halle institutes, and Peter Koch. Zinzendorf's "religion of the heart" offered the potential of radical religious and social change while Mühlenberg represented stability.

#### CONFRONTING ZINZENDORF

By the time Mühlenberg presented the call that he had written for the officials of the Arch Street Lutheran Church to sign on December 27, he had already outmaneuvered the Moravians in Philadelphia. It was only after he had firmly established his position as pastor of the Arch Street church that Mühlenberg arranged a direct confrontation with Zinzendorf on December 30. There was a dispute between the Race Street and Arch Street congregations over who had a legal right to the property of the Lutheran church building. After the riot in the summer, individual deacons retained certain items: "Whatever each could snatch on the run he took with him. One had taken the church record book, another the alms bag, a third the alms chest, a fourth the chalice, a fifth the key, and so on."<sup>73</sup> A brewer named Werner, who remained loyal to Zinzendorf, had kept a copper communion cup and a church record book. The items themselves were of little financial value, but they were important symbolically since they represented both sacramental authority and theological orthodoxy. As Roeber puts it, "Zinzendorf had made good his claim to be a Lutheran pastor by taking possession of the chalice used in the Lord's Supper. He maintained that both Frederick Michael Ziegenhagen, Halle's representative in London, and Mühlenberg were not true Lutherans, but 'arch-pietists,' guilty of a theology of works. The Count swore to inform the Anglican archbishop upon his return to Britain that the key Protestant teaching on justification had been destroyed by Halle's heterodox teaching. Zinzendorf appealed to episcopal oversight of church and sacraments where holiness, of the most 'forensic'

71. Schwartz, *A Mixed Multitude*, 133.

72. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:76.

73. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:75.

kind, was to be found."<sup>74</sup> In other words, this was more than a dispute over a cup and a book.

The only published accounts of the confrontation between Zinzendorf and Mühlenberg come from Mühlenberg himself, and historians should recognize that they were intended for propaganda (as were the Moravian publications) Zinzendorf and the Moravians had little to say about Mühlenberg or his encounter with the count. As Walter Wagner pointed out, Zinzendorf was occupied with many important things his last week in Philadelphia, and the Mühlenberg affair was at most a distraction.<sup>75</sup> The Moravian Archives does contain a copy of a letter that Zinzendorf sent to the Swedish pastor in Philadelphia complaining about Mühlenberg's insubordination and offensiveness.<sup>76</sup> Zinzendorf challenged the credentials of the Halle pastor and accused him of insinuating himself illegitimately into the Lutheran congregation. Zinzendorf insisted that the pastor and elders of the Swedish Church had to decide whether they would side with him or with the Pietists in Halle. However, when asked about the affair nearly a decade later, Zinzendorf claimed that he had made himself inspector out of "pure necessity" since there was no one else to assume that role. But "when Herr Mühlberg came, then I left."<sup>77</sup> The count complained that a decade after the confrontation Halle was still misrepresenting what happened in Philadelphia just to malign him.

In contrast to the paucity of Moravian accounts of the argument, Mühlenberg's journal is remarkably detailed and reads like a transcription of the conversation. Nevertheless, it is a re-creation of the event by a participant who was eager to claim victory. Within a few days Mühlenberg sent a copy of his account to his congregants, and at the first opportunity he sent a copy to Halle, where it was published. Mühlenberg was undoubtedly aware that his account would be included in polemics against Zinzendorf. The Halle version judiciously omits statements that appear

74. A. G. Roeber, "The Waters of Rebirth: The Eighteenth Century and Transoceanic Protestant Christianity," *Church History* 79 (2010): 40–76 (quote on 59).

75. Wagner, *Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter*, 102.

76. Letter by the Lutheran parochus Ludwig von Zinzendorf in Philadelphia to the Swedish pastor of the Wicaco church regarding

Mühlenberg. December 1742 (contemporary copy), Zinzendorf Papers, no. 14, MAB. See the transcription and translation by Gerald MacDonald at the end of this article.

77. A. G. Spangenberg, *Apologetische Schluß-Schrift, Worinn über tausend Beschuldigungen gegen die Brüder-Gemeinen und Ihren zeitherigen Ordinarium nach der Wahrheit beantwortet werden*, question 1026 (Leipzig, 1752), 404.



in the first version that might reflect badly on Mühlenberg. For instance, Mühlenberg originally noted that among those who were with the count that night were “several others who had left the Lutheran organization.”<sup>78</sup> Zinzendorf identified them as the deacons of the Lutheran church in order to counter Mühlenberg’s claim to have been properly called by the deacons. By omitting this reference to Lutherans who supported Zinzendorf, the Halle account separates Zinzendorf’s followers from the Lutherans. Zinzendorf’s dismissal of the remnant congregation at Arch Street as “rebels, agitators” was left that in the Halle account to demonstrate Zinzendorf’s apparent contempt for “true Lutherans” and to make him appear unbalanced.<sup>79</sup>

Naturally Halle did not publish Mühlenberg’s own expressions of contempt for his Lutheran flock found in one of his early reports from America: “Here there is no governing authority: elders and deacons are of no account. People do not listen to them but everybody is free and does as he pleases. Here in Philadelphia the Lutherans for the most part are united with Zinzendorf. The remaining ones are thoroughly disorderly. Some want to accuse me of Pietism because the dearest Dr. Francke is referred to in the letter and because I do not want to engage in tomfoolery with them as they are accustomed to do with old preacher Krafft.”<sup>80</sup> According to Mühlenberg, the conflict with Zinzendorf centered on the issue of who were true Lutherans and who were Pietists. Zinzendorf was convinced that the Lutherans in Halle, including Francke, were Pietists who had departed from the core Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith through grace alone.<sup>81</sup> He felt that Francke had fallen to the temptation of Pelagianism because his approach to conversion and ethics was legalistic

78. Mühlenberg, Letter 15, to the Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in Providence and New Hanover Philadelphia. January 1743, *Correspondence*, 1:54–61 (quote on 55). Original: “Der Bier Brauer namens Werner und einige andere von denen die von der Lutherischen Oeconomie abgetreten.” *Korrespondenz*, 1:49–54.

79. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:76.

80. Mühlenberg, Letter 14, Dec. 3, 1742, to Francke and Ziegenhagen, *Correspondence*, 1:49. Original: “Hier ist keine Obrigkeit, die Ältesten und Vorsteher gelten nicht. Die Leute folgen ihnen nicht sondern ein jeder ist frei und thut was er beliebt. Die Lutheraner hier

in Philadelphia sind meistens mit Zinzendorf vereinigt. Die übrigen sind von Herten unordentlich. Einige wollen mich des Pietismi beschuldigen, weil der liebste Herr Doctor Francke mit im Briefe benennt ist, und ich mich auch nicht mit ihnen Poßen machen will, wie sie mit den alten Prediger Krafft zu thun pflegen.” *Korrespondenz*, 1:41.

81. Erich Beyreuther, *Der junge Zinzendorf* (Marburg: Francke-Buchhandlung, 1957), 130–35; Bernhard Becker, *Zinzendorf und sein Christentum im Verhältnis zum kirchlichen und religiösen Leben seiner Zeit*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: F. Jansa, 1900), 218.

rather than evangelical.<sup>82</sup> In his conflict with Mühlenberg, Zinzendorf equated the terms "Pietist" and "Pelagian," which is why he could assert that Ziegenhagen and Francke were not truly Lutheran. Mühlenberg rejected the label of Pietist and asserted that his teachers in Halle were true Lutherans, not Pietists. It was the followers of Zinzendorf who were Pietists who had departed from orthodox Lutheran teaching.<sup>83</sup>

Some of the Lutherans in Pennsylvania, both German and Swedish, sided with Zinzendorf and regarded the Hallensians as Pietists. Mühlenberg complained for years that the Moravians portrayed him as a Pietist in order to undermine his respect among orthodox Lutherans. "Because he could not think of any other nasty trick he could inflict on me he left word with his followers that they should decry me in the city and in the country as a Pietist, so that the Swedes might chase me out of their church as a questionable person along with my Lutheran crowd."<sup>84</sup> This was a particularly sensitive issue with the Swedish Lutheran community since the Swedish government had issued laws restricting Pietist activity in that country.

Both men knew that the fact that an officer of the congregation had presented Zinzendorf with the communion chalice and the official register of the congregation was evidence that he had indeed been recognized as the pastor. Mühlenberg claims that he skillfully avoided acknowledging this, and the conversation grew heated. Mühlenberg described the event as if he were on trial, with Zinzendorf's entourage serving as a biased jury rather than seven church deacons helping to resolve a dispute. He claimed that Zinzendorf acknowledged his credentials by saying, "It cannot be denied that you were a Lutheran student in good standing, that you had a pastor charge, as was reported to me nine months ago from Herrnhut." This directly contradicts the evidence in Zinzendorf's letter to the Swedish pastor that he did not recognize the legitimacy of Mühlenberg's credentials.

82. For more on Zinzendorf's Christocentric approach to ethics, see Helmut Bintz, "Die Begründung der christliche Ethik in der Inkarnationslehre bei Zinzendorf," in *Pietismus-Herrnhutertum-Erweckungsbewegung: Festschrift für Erich Beyreuther*, ed. Dietrich Meyer (Köln: Rheinland-Verlag, 1982), 177–302; Peter Zimmerling, *Gott in Gemeinschaft: Zinzendorfs Trinitätslehre* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1991), 202–36; and Zimmerling, *Nachfolge zu lernen: Zinzendorf und das Leben der Brüdergemeine* (Moers: Brendow-Verlag, 1990).

83. Modern historians use the term Pietists for the Hallensians and Moravians.

84. Mühlenberg, Letter 23, Aug. 12, 1743, to Joachim Oporin in Göttingen, *Correspondence* 1:117. Original: "Weil er nun mir keinen andern Tort zu thun wuste, so hinterließ er den seiingen, daß sie mich in der Stadt und im Lande vor einen Pietisten ausschreyen und es dahin bringen solten, daß mich die Schweden als einen verdächtigten Menschen mit meinem Lutherischen Haufen aus ihrer Kirche jagen mögten." *Korrespondenz*, 1:102.

The veracity of Mühlenberg's account is clearly suspect and biased in his favor. What the two men did agree on was that Zinzendorf asked for an apology from the younger man for his rudeness.<sup>85</sup>

Having failed to recover the disputed items that night, Mühlenberg continued in his efforts in order to draw public attention to his contention that Zinzendorf was a usurper, liar, and thief. Mühlenberg summarized the situation in a letter to Europe: "Count Zinzendorf had purloined something from us, namely, a church record book and a copper chalice. On Thursday I got into a debate with the Count. He sought my downfall but he gained nothing. On Friday, 31 December, I brought charges with the major of the city against the Count on account of our church record book. The Count wriggled out of it with a coarse lie."<sup>86</sup> His journal and letters recount in great detail the steps Mühlenberg took to try to gain possession of the items, even involving the mayor of Philadelphia in the affair. Mühlenberg sent to Francke a copy of the letter from the magistrate, William Till, who had diplomatically suggested to Zinzendorf that he might have overlooked this matter in the midst of his preparations for departure.<sup>87</sup> We do not know what the Philadelphia authorities thought of this dispute among the Germans, but Mühlenberg effectively involved them in the transatlantic conflict between Halle and Herrnhut. Even though the proprietors had no legal authority over Pennsylvania churches, Mühlenberg found ways to use them to help determine the issue of who were the "real Lutherans" in Philadelphia.

Throughout their argument Zinzendorf tried and failed to get Mühlenberg to recognize him as the legitimate inspector for the Lutheran churches in the colony. Mühlenberg specifically rejected Zinzendorf's status as a Lutheran minister since he had been consecrated a Moravian bishop by Jablonski. "Can a Reformed preacher give such authority to you?" he asked. "How is it that sometimes you can be a Moravian bishop and sometimes an inspector and a Lutheran pastor?"<sup>88</sup> According to his version, Mühlenberg skillfully turned the conversation away from the question of who granted him authority to serve a congregation in a British colony to the question of where Zinzendorf had received his own authority. In fact, the

85. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:78–79.

86. Mühlenberg, Letter 16, March 12, 1743, to Francke and Ziegenhagen, *Correspondence*, 1:64. Original: "Der Graf Zinzendorf hatte was von uns weg practisiret nemlich ein Kirchen Buch und einen kupfern Kelch. Donnerstags kam mit den Grafen in disputant. Er suchte mich zu fallen, aber er gewann nichts. Freytags

den 31sten December verklagte ich den Grafen bey dem Stadt Mayor wegen unsers Kirchen Buches. Der Graf wickelte sich mit einer groben Lüge heraus." *Korrespondenz*, 1:57.

87. Mühlenberg, Letter 17, March 17, 1743, to Francke and Ziegenhagen, *Correspondence* 1:69–76; cf. *Korrespondenz*, 1:61–68.

88. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:77–78.

only thing that truly mattered in America was whose authority the Lutheran congregations *themselves* acknowledged and submitted to.

Mühlenberg was willing to acknowledge the count's authority over the Moravian church but not the Lutheran church. Within a few years Mühlenberg had established himself as the inspector of Lutheran congregations in Pennsylvania by persuading congregations and pastors to acknowledge him as such. The dispute over ecclesiastical authority ran deeper than just a question over whether Zinzendorf's call letter had been properly signed. Prior to leaving for America, Zinzendorf told his followers that he was a prophet whose authority came from God. "A true prophet," he said, "goes into the world with the testimony the Savior has given him and gives such an account of it that it touches human hearts. In this way he is distinguished from those salaried pastors and teachers who ensure that their office, their position, their livelihood are not taken away. A prophet has his pastorate in the whole world, and his word cannot remain without fruit."<sup>89</sup> The count apparently dismissed Mühlenberg and other Lutheran clergy as a "hireling" unwilling to take genuine risks for the sake of Jesus.

If Mühlenberg's goal in confronting Zinzendorf was merely to retrieve the chalice and church register, then he failed. However, if Mühlenberg's real purpose was to damage Zinzendorf's reputation on both sides of the Atlantic and distinguish between "true Lutherans" and Herrnhuters, he succeeded admirably. He created the impression that the count fled from the law in Philadelphia and was forced to leave America. Halle published accounts of the confrontation to demonstrate that their young pastor was fearless in the face of adversity. The published versions also supported Halle's claim that it was Zinzendorf who was the Pietist causing confusion in the Lutheran Church. Francke encouraged Mühlenberg to continue to send publishable material related to the confrontation in America: "and whatever else you can find out and retrieve as evidence, how the Count tried to cast suspicion on you and prevent your entry, how he put himself forward as a Lutheran pastor and overseer in Pennsylvania without a call, and all the other things that are referred to in this report, as well as about other disorders he created in Pennsylvania, I request from you as well."<sup>90</sup>

89. Zinzendorf, Sermon Given in Heerendijk on August 16, 1741, *Collection of Pennsylvania Sermons*, 2.

90. Mühlenberg, Letter 41, June 16, 1745, Francke to Mühlenberg, *Correspondence*, 1:198–99. Original: "daß der H. Gr. Sie habe suchen verdächtig zu machen und Ihren Eingang

zu verhindern, it. Daß der sich ohne Beruf zum lutherischen Prediger und Inspector in Pensylv. aufgeworfen und was sonst noch in der diesseitigen Nachricht angeführet ist, wie auch von andern Unordnungen die er in Pensylvanien angefangen, finden und aufbringen können, bitte mir gleichfalls aus." *Korrespondenz*, 1:167.

## CONTINUING CONFLICT WITH MORAVIANS

Zinzendorf's departure from America early in 1743 did not end the conflict among the Lutherans in Pennsylvania over the Herrnhuters. The next outbreak of violence against the Moravians occurred in 1744 after a Swedish Moravian evangelist named Paul Daniel Bryzelius began preaching at several locations in the Delaware Valley. In November 1743 Peter Böhler sent a report to Zinzendorf on Bryzelius's extensive preaching, which indicates that the conflict between Mühlenberg and the Moravians had expanded beyond the limits of Mühlenberg's own parish. According to Böhler, Bryzelius "preached in Manhatawn. One of the church elders there came upon Mühlenberg shortly before this and got into discourse with him about Bryzelius. Mühlenberg warned this man about Bryzelius. With this sermon, however, the man became so satisfied with Bryzelius that he had nothing good to say about Mühlenberg."<sup>91</sup> Tranberg, the Swedish pastor in Philadelphia, tried to convince the Swedish congregations to deny their pulpits to Bryzelius even though his own wife was awakened by Bryzelius's preaching. According to Böhler, Tranberg admitted that "he had nothing against Bryzelius's teaching, but he feared that Bryzelius would lead the Swedes away from their Swedish bishops and over to the Moravian bishops." Eventually Tranberg relented and allowed Bryzelius to preach wherever he was invited. His preaching was particularly popular in Racoon, New Jersey, but some of the trustees were offended that Bryzelius used vocabulary associated with the Moravians.

Rev. Gabriel Naesman, who had recently been sent from Sweden to minister in the Philadelphia area, was invited by the trustees to preach instead of Bryzelius, an act that split the congregation. On December 9 Naesman took the pulpit and prevented Bryzelius from preaching as he had been invited to do.<sup>92</sup> Peter Koch, a merchant in Philadelphia, encouraged the anti-Moravian side to oppose Bryzelius, and for weeks worship services were disrupted by angry shouting. Finally, in January 1744 the anti-Moravian faction carried clubs to church in order to intimidate Bryzelius and keep him from preaching. Although it appears that the majority of the congregation preferred Bryzelius to Naesman, the anti-Moravian trustees gained control of the church council. A few weeks later when Bryzelius returned to Racoon as part of his itinerant preaching schedule

91. From Peter Böhler to Zinzendorf, November 1, 1743, Library of Congress. I am grateful to Scott Gordon for this reference.

92. Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*, 199–204.

he was arrested for breaking the peace, but the trial did not go the way his opponents expected. Bryzelius was acquitted, while some of the men who had assaulted him earlier were fined. In fact, Bryzelius's behavior at the trial gained him sympathy with the court, and for a brief time public opinion in southern New Jersey swayed toward the Moravians. Even Naesman's attitude softened toward his fellow Swede for a while, but he soon grew so paranoid about the pacifist Moravians that he kept a loaded weapon at home for fear they would attack him at night.<sup>93</sup>

In 1760 Bryzelius left the Moravians and settled down as a Lutheran pastor in Germantown. Mühlenberg was delighted that he had won over one of the most effective Moravian itinerant preachers, and he wrote the letter of recommendation for Bryzelius to be ordained.<sup>94</sup> In it he acknowledged that Bryzelius had been one of his adversaries when he began his ministry in Philadelphia, but he claimed that Bryzelius had never known the truth about the Moravians. "Although he had now worked for about twenty years as a loyal slave under evil-eyed taskmasters and had served their interests well, he was never permitted to look into the inner secrets; he was kept on the periphery and had a rather hard time earning his living."<sup>95</sup> It is possible that Bryzelius claimed ignorance of some Moravian practices in order to please Mühlenberg; however, that claim is hardly credible. Bryzelius had a history of radical Pietism in Sweden before he was associated with the Moravians. He separated himself from the state church after he became involved with radical Pietist literature.<sup>96</sup> His religious attitudes came to the attention of the authorities, and so he decided to leave for Germany. He was introduced to the Moravians in Wetteravia, and in 1741 he joined the Herrnhag community near Frankfurt. He was so well respected by the Brethren that he was selected to be part of the first large group of Moravian pioneers to be sent to Pennsylvania in 1742, the so-called first sea congregation.<sup>97</sup>

93. Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*, 204.

94. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:452.

95. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1: 443–44.

96. *Memorandum Regarding Paul Daniel Bryzelius of Sweden*, undated, Minutes of the Elders Conference in Bethlehem for 1760, BethCong 254, MAB.

97. There is a letter from Bryzelius to Spangenberg preserved in the Moravian Archives. Though the author's English was very poor, it gives evidence of how deeply immersed he was in Moravian piety. "My Dear Brother I never felt such sweetness as now here at is soom tims with me as with the little Children

when ther Mothers Breast quite full is, it flus so fast that it rouns over and over, I can do nothing but lay in the Dust, now is my Heart quite in the matter which our Saviour has comand unto me, I'm very ingnorant and wek but I hop it well do. I have itten and thrank flesch and Blood of my Lamb, and now I'm cheerful, and humbled over my plan, as long Brother Loudrig was among the Heidan." Letter from Bryzelius to Spangenberg, n.d., BethCong 267, MAB. The letter appears to have been sent while Spangenberg was in Europe and Bryzelius was in Bethlehem, which would have been 1743/44.

After serving as an itinerant evangelist among Swedish people in the Delaware Valley Bryzelius was sent by the Moravians to Ireland. This may have been a way to remove him from the controversy in the Delaware Valley. Mühlenberg makes the claim, perhaps reported by Bryzelius, that he founded fifteen churches in Ireland alone.<sup>98</sup> It is not clear from the records why Bryzelius left the Moravian brotherhood; according to a confidential Moravian record, Bryzelius had fallen in with an “evil crowd” in Philadelphia and had to be “rescued” by the elders. After this he had a long conversation with Peter Böhler about his sinfulness.<sup>99</sup> The nature of his “sin” was not recorded, but it appears to be rebellion against the leadership in Bethlehem. The main cause of Bryzelius’s discontent appears to be that he wanted to give up itinerancy and settle down with his family in a salaried position. Mühlenberg noted in his journal that Bryzelius decided for himself “how best he might best be employed to advance the glory of God, the salvation of his fellow men, and the bodily and spiritual welfare of his family.”<sup>100</sup> Mühlenberg failed to mention to Halle that Bryzelius left his son in the Moravian school and one of his daughters remained as a Single Sister in Bethlehem. Clearly the rupture with the Moravians was not complete, and Bryzelius was willing to let “evil-eyed taskmasters” educate his children.

#### CONFLICT IN THE SWEDISH LUTHERAN CHURCH IN LANCASTER

Mühlenberg had a conflict with another Swedish Lutheran pastor that played an important role in the development of the Lutheran Church in America. Lars Nyberg, another graduate of the University of Uppsala, was ordained by Archbishop Eric Benzelius in Sweden in 1743 and commissioned to serve as pastor of the Lancaster congregation in Pennsylvania.<sup>101</sup> At that time the Swedish hierarchy looked more favorably on Herrnhut

98. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:443. It is possible that he had fifteen regular preaching places in the island, but the Moravians never had that many churches, and Bryzelius is hardly remembered in Moravian history. Hamilton and Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 127–28.

99. *Memorandum Regarding Paul Daniel Bryzelius*. Minutes of the Elders

Conference in Bethlehem 1760, BethCong 254, MAB.

100. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:443.

101. Richard Träger and Charlotte Träger-Große, eds., “Nyberg, Lars,” in “Dienerblätter: Biographische Übersichten von Personen, die im Dienst der Brüdergemeine standen” (unpublished manuscript, Herrnhut, Germany: Unitätsarchiv, n.d.), copy in MAB.

than Halle even though the archbishop had studied with A. H. Francke in Halle. Like Zinzendorf, Benzelius was concerned about possible Pelagian tendencies at Halle, and he once warned the Swedish crown that "that Halle was the source of Lutheran heterodoxy" in the Swedish church.<sup>102</sup> In the 1720s Sweden had passed laws intending to eradicate Pietism, and the works of Spener and Francke were banned in the realm. But the Swedish hierarchy began to look favorably on the Moravians after Daniel Ernst Jablonsky consecrated David Nitschmann as bishop of the *Unitas Fratrum* supposedly in apostolic succession in 1735.<sup>103</sup> Earlier in his career Jablonsky had tried to unite Protestants in Sweden, Germany, and England under a common episcopal church order. The idea met with more enthusiasm in Sweden and England than in Prussia, where the proposal was attacked by Pietist and orthodox theologians. In 1741 Zinzendorf sent an emissary, Arvid Gradin, to meet with the archbishop of Uppsala, Johannes Steuchius, and two future archbishops, Eric Benzelius and his brother Jacob. Gradin presented the archbishop with a history of the *Unitas Fratrum* and persuaded him that the modern Herrnhuters were a continuation of that Czech church. Gradin also convinced the archbishop that Moravian preachers proclaimed the doctrine of justification by faith through grace, unlike the Pietists. Though Gradin was granted permission to preach in Swedish churches, the Moravian liturgy was not approved for use in the country.<sup>104</sup>

The Lutherans in Pennsylvania were unaware of this turn of events in Europe. Since the Lancaster congregation had experienced repeated difficulties with unqualified or immoral pastors, they decided to ask the archbishop of Sweden to send someone qualified directly from Europe. Ironically, it was Peter Koch of Philadelphia who made the suggestion of writing to the archbishop. He wanted to guarantee that the Lancaster congregation remained solidly orthodox Lutheran; however, Koch did not know that the Church of Sweden had temporarily changed its opinion of the Moravians and would send a Swedish pastor who was attracted to the theology and piety of Zinzendorf. Unlike Bryzelius, who was at one time a Separatist, Nyberg was an orthodox Lutheran who decided that Zinzendorf offered a better interpretation of Luther's theology, particularly the necessity

102. Roeber, "Waters of Rebirth," 65–66.

103. Hamilton and Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 62–67. Alexander Schunka, "A Missing Link: Daniel Ernst Jablonski as the Connection Between

Comenius and Zinzendorf," in *Self, Community, World: Moravian Education in a Transatlantic World*, ed. Heikki Lempa and Paul Peucker (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2010).

104. Roeber, "Waters of Rebirth," 45–50.



of grace, than did the Halle Pietists. He was not a Moravian brother when he came to Lancaster, but he was what the Moravians called a “friend of the Brethren” (*Brüder Freund*). Soon after assuming the pulpit of the Lutheran church in Lancaster, Nyberg contacted the Moravians in Bethlehem, and early in 1745 he invited a Moravian evangelist to preach both in German and English in his church. A few months later he attended a Moravian synod, and in May of that year he married a Moravian sister.<sup>105</sup>

Naturally people suspected that Nyberg was a Moravian in Lutheran clothes. Mühlenberg was convinced that this was part of a greater Moravian strategy to take over Lutheran congregations.<sup>106</sup> This was the perspective of Halle, but the historical situation was more complicated. There is no doubt that Nyberg was a Lutheran pastor who was properly called to the congregation in Lancaster. Since he was appointed by the primate of the Church of Sweden his credentials were actually superior to those of Mühlenberg himself. There is no indication that the Moravians played any role in his call to Lancaster, but Mühlenberg was suspicious of Nyberg’s hostility toward Halle. Though Mühlenberg was simply a pastor in Philadelphia, he saw Nyberg as a threat the Halle network in America that had to be eliminated. Soon after Nyberg arrived, Mühlenberg “began to comment on Nyberg’s Moravian leanings.”<sup>107</sup>

Mühlenberg, Nyberg, and Bryzelius all attended a meeting of German and Swedish Lutheran ministers at the Wicaco church in Philadelphia 1745 to consider a possible union of the churches under a common polity. Nyberg opposed the plan because he did not want to be under the authority of the Halle pastors. He publicly stated that Zinzendorf’s sermons agreed better with the Augsburg Confession than the “suspect” doctrines and moralism of Halle. Nyberg reported that the Swedish archbishop had warned him about the Hallensians in America because of their suspect form of Lutheranism. Mühlenberg and Koch grew very angry and blamed Nyberg for the failure of the union. Both men became implacable opponents of Nyberg.<sup>108</sup>

105. Mark Häberlein, *The Practice of Pluralism: Congregational Life and Religious Diversity in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730–1820*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 62.

106. Some modern historians have accepted this as fact. For instance Riforgiato states: “Everywhere Moravian incursions assumed the same form. They would send a minister posing as a Lutheran pastor to a congregation which was either pastorless, or served by an untrained,

itinerant preacher, or a specially hired schoolmaster. . . . Ultimately their peculiar doctrines aroused suspicion, and the more orthodox members of the congregation would demand that they depart. Backed by their followers, the Moravians then denounced the orthodox as schismatics and attempted to seize the school and church buildings.” Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 95.

107. Häberlein, *Practice of Pluralism*, 62.

108. Häberlein, *Practice of Pluralism*, 62.

As Roeber has pointed out, this tempest in America was a manifestation of the international conflict over Pietism within the Lutheran churches. "In the Delaware River Valley of North America, the reverberations from the Moravian success in Sweden provoked a violent counter-reaction by 1745."<sup>109</sup> Nyberg even tried to convince the governor of the colony "that the German ministers were his enemies, and besides they were Hallensians or Pietists," a charge Mühlenberg vehemently denied.<sup>110</sup>

Since Mühlenberg could not attack Nyberg on the grounds that his ordination or call were invalid, he accused Nyberg of hypocrisy for claiming he was a Lutheran when he was really a Moravian. "When he arrived in Pennsylvania and was asked by me and other witnesses whether he knew of Count Zinzendorf and his teaching and plans, he flatly denied everything. . . . But since he was so unscrupulous and had already entered into the plans of the Zinzendorfers, his preaching, his catechization, and his relations with the members of the congregation were nothing but a continuous tearing down of the Evangelical Lutheran religion and a building up of his adopted Zinzendorfian plans."<sup>111</sup> Mühlenberg believed Nyberg was part of a conspiracy to bring Lutherans into the "Zinzendorfian net." He claimed that Nyberg was publicly portraying Mühlenberg and his "superiors, as extremely dangerous people and false teachers" in order to discredit them among the laity and the magistrates. He was particularly concerned that Nyberg was successfully labeling him and his colleagues as Pietists "against whom many royal mandates have been promulgated."<sup>112</sup> In response, Mühlenberg hoped to build a wall to separate the "Lutherans" from the "Moravians."

The controversy came to a head in November 1745 when Nyberg assisted the Moravians in holding a synod in Lancaster. Not only did he arrange housing for people from Bethlehem, he "attended the conference; took along with him the members of the congregation whom he had won over; and ridiculed the rest of the deacons who warned him and begged him not to go to the conference."<sup>113</sup> The next Sunday some seventy members of the congregation tried to deny Nyberg the pulpit. Nyberg, like Pyrlaeus and Byzelius, insisted on preaching despite violent opposition from the anti-Zinzendorf faction. It is significant that Mühlenberg supported the

109. Roeber, "Waters of Rebirth," 69.

110. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:112.

Mühlenberg refers to his adversary in Lancaster as Nyperg. Mühlenberg's attempt to unite the Swedish and German Lutheran churches ulti-

mately failed, and the Swedish congregations united with the Anglican Church instead.

111. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:164.

112. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:109.

113. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:109.

rebellious lay leaders in this conflict rather than their properly ordained and legitimately called pastor. The frequent claim that Mühlenberg's main concerns were order and the authority of pastors needs to be nuanced. Mühlenberg was diligent in promoting his authority and his control over the Lutheran congregations in Pennsylvania, but he opposed pastors who rejected the teachings of Halle.

The Lancaster affair, like the previous skirmish in Philadelphia, was fought in the courts and the press. Nyberg sued nine people for starting the riot, but he failed to prove his case in court. Nyberg's supporters and opponents published pieces in the newspapers accusing the Hallensians of fomenting violence and discord. Mühlenberg's party attacked the Moravians in the press by claiming that the tumult in Lancaster was merely the beginning of worse things to come. They even raised the specter of economic and sexual radicalism, warning people that Zinzendorf was intent on gaining possession of the "souls, bodies, and goods of the Pennsylvania Germans."<sup>114</sup> The Hallensians tried to associate the communalism of the Moravians in Bethlehem with the forced sharing of possessions and spouses during John of Leyden's famous reign of terror in Muenster in the sixteenth century. Nyberg's opponents falsely claimed the Moravians required all of their followers around the world to sell their possessions and live communally like the residents of Bethlehem did.

Gradually, Mühlenberg and his allies gained the upper hand and convinced the public that a pastor could not be a Lutheran and pro-Zinzendorf. The Moravians were successfully labeled as religious radicals who threatened the social order, while Mühlenberg's Lutherans were portrayed as the defenders of social stability. The colonial government insisted that the Lutherans had to settle the issue of whether Nyberg could continue as pastor themselves, but the governor suggested that Mühlenberg's Philadelphia ministerium would be the most appropriate body to decide the affair even though it represented only a handful of the German Lutheran congregations. Moreover, Lancaster was a Swedish Lutheran congregation. Nyberg understandably objected and denied that Mühlenberg's group had authority over him or his congregation. He appealed instead to the primate of the Church of Sweden, but unfortunately for him, the man who had ordained him was dead and the new archbishop, Jacob Benzelius, had never trusted the Moravians. Nyberg and his interpretation of the Augsburg Confession were no

114. Häberlein, *Practice of Pluralism*, 65.

longer acceptable in Sweden. Roeber summed up the situation nicely: "The bewildering rapidity with which Sweden adopted a rigorous episcopal-sacramental profile, only to assume a guise that welcomed the Moravians before turning on them with bared teeth challenges our comprehension."<sup>115</sup> It certainly added to the confusion in Pennsylvania when Nyberg found that his appeal was rejected.

More important for our examination of Mühlenberg, though, is the fact that the self-appointed inspector of the Lutheran churches escalated the conflict in Lancaster rather than seeking to reconcile the Lutheran factions. It was Mühlenberg who proposed that each side worship in the church building on alternating Sundays, thus dividing the congregation until a new pastor could be called. Rather than seeking reconciliation, Mühlenberg encouraged division in the congregation. Pastor Nyberg naturally rejected the compromise as undermining his pastoral authority, but the opposition to him from the anti-Zinzendorf faction grew more intense and violent with each passing week. Finally his supporters raised funds to build a new building, which they called St. Andrews Lutheran Church. It was founded as a Moravian-friendly (*brüderfreundliche*) church, but it never became a Moravian congregation.

In 1749 Nyberg resigned as pastor and relocated to Bethlehem with his family and finally became a Moravian brother. In 1751 he went back to Europe and in 1754 he was consecrated as a presbyter in the Moravian Church.<sup>116</sup> Interestingly, Nyberg eventually ran into conflict with the governing board of the Moravian Church and in the 1770s he returned to Sweden, where he served out the rest of his days as a Lutheran pastor in the state church.

After Nyberg built his own church building Mühlenberg encouraged the original Lutheran congregation to elect a new council, which included several of the most vocal opponents of Nyberg. When Mühlenberg suggested that they call his Halle-trained colleague Johann Friedrich Handschuh as their pastor, several members of the council objected. They preferred to have the pastor in neighboring Tulpehocken come every other Sunday to lead worship. Mühlenberg "resorted to outright threats," and told the council that his newly empowered ministerium would leave the Lancaster pulpit vacant if the council did not accept Handschuh.<sup>117</sup> This was a great victory for Mühlenberg, who had vanquished the Moravians and installed a strict Hallensian in one of the most important cities in Pennsylvania, but Handschuh proved to be too rigorous and judgmental

115. Roeber, "Waters of Rebirth," 64.

116. Träger and Träger-Große, "Nyberg, Lars."

117. Häberlein, *Practice of Pluralism*, 73–74.

(in other words, too Pietistic) for the Lutherans in Lancaster. He alienated much of the congregation by his preaching and strict discipline, but it was his marriage to a servant girl in 1750 that made him such an object of public derision that he was forced to leave the church.<sup>118</sup> It was several years before Mühlenberg was able to reassert authority over the Lancaster church.

#### CONRAD WEISER AND THE TULPEHOCKEN CHURCH

Despite his evident inadequacies as a pastor, Handschuh was loyal to Mühlenberg and played a role in one of Mühlenberg's more important achievements—the conversion of Conrad Weiser to the Lutheran Church. Weiser was one of the most important people in what was then the western frontier of Pennsylvania, and he was intimately connected to both Mühlenberg and the Moravians. Weiser came to North America from Germany with his family early in the 1700s, and when the financial situation of the family made it hard to feed the children, Weiser's father sent him to live with a local native tribe.<sup>119</sup> Having learned the language and culture of the natives, Weiser became a trusted interpreter and guide for Germans in the region. He also became a landowner and justice of the peace for the colonial government. Weiser's intense interest in religion and theology led him to join Conrad Beisel's Ephrata commune for a time. It was the Moravian Spangenberg who convinced Weiser to leave the radical Pietist monastery and rely on God's grace alone rather than mysticism and asceticism.

Despite his close friendship to Spangenberg, Weiser never became a Moravian brother. He did respect the way the Moravian missionaries tried to live with the natives and learn their ways instead of treating them as ignorant savages, and he willingly taught native languages to Moravian missionaries and introduced them to important tribal leaders. In 1742 he served as Zinzendorf's guide in the wilderness and tried unsuccessfully to explain the count's strange aristocratic ways to the Indians. It seemed like Weiser would become a Moravian, but in 1743 his daughter married Pastor Mühlenberg. Weiser knew that this would offend the Moravians, and he felt the need to write to Zinzendorf in Europe to inform him that he was now the father-in-law of his one-time foe Mühlenberg.<sup>120</sup> Weiser was now

118. Häberlein, *Practice of Pluralism*, 75–76.

119. Paul A. W. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser: Friend of Colonist and Mohawk*

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945).

120. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser*, 123.

caught up in the conflict between Halle and Herrnhut, and professors at Halle pressed Weiser for information they could use against Zinzendorf. In 1747 he provided Mühlenberg with his assessment of the count, knowing that it would be sent to Halle. He began by saying: "I hope his enemies, who *bombard* him without cause, or out of sectarian jealousy, may not read these words."<sup>121</sup> That was a vain hope since he was writing to some of Zinzendorf's greatest enemies. Even so, Weiser's balanced assessment of the count's gifts and flaws was not very damaging.

Over time, though, Weiser adopted Mühlenberg's negative opinion of the Moravians and joined the campaign to separate the Lutherans from the Herrnhuters. Near Weiser's farm in Tulpehocken there was a Lutheran congregation. Like many congregations in Pennsylvania in the colonial period, they had had a lot of trouble finding a suitable pastor. In 1742 Weiser asked Zinzendorf if he would arrange for a pastor to be sent from Halle, but instead the count installed one of his men, Gottlieb Büttner. When the new pastor failed to unite the congregation, the count personally ordained a man named John Phillip Meurer and appointed him pastor of the church. "Through these actions, the count was actually claiming the superintendency of the Lutheran church in Pennsylvania, a claim to which Weiser gave some semblance of legitimacy by his acquiescence."<sup>122</sup> Unfortunately, the two Lutheran factions in Tulpehocken continued to fight, and in 1743 Mühlenberg involved himself in the affair. Acting on his own authority, Mühlenberg appointed Tobias Wagner as the pastor, which only added to the confusion since now the Lutherans were divided into three parties (orthodox, Hallensian Pietist, Moravian). Claiming authority he did not have since no one had assigned him the post of inspector, Mühlenberg offered to remove Wagner and appoint a new pastor. Instead Wagner quit in protest over the Philadelphia minister's interference. Mühlenberg appointed a layperson as pastor rather than rely on the Moravian minister provided by Bethlehem.<sup>123</sup>

Eventually the Moravians in Bethlehem paid to build a stone church for the Lutherans on land supplied by a miller named Leonard Rieth. The pro-Zinzendorf Lutherans worshipped there with a pastor appointed by Spangenberg, but the conflict continued to rage in Tulpehocken.

121. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser*, 242. Mühlenberg told Halle about Zinzendorf's rumored affair with Anna Nitschmann, claiming that the Indians had told Weiser that Zinzendorf's

relationship with her was more intimate than it should have been. *Journals*, 1:167.

122. Rigorato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 91.

123. Rigorato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 97–98.

The miller Rieth died shortly after the church was erected, and for obscure reasons the Moravian pastor in Tulpehocken refused to do the funeral.<sup>124</sup> Rieth had to be buried in a graveside service by the Lutheran pastor, which offended Weiser and many others in the region. Spangenberg, the Moravian chief elder in Bethlehem, recalled the pastor of the congregation, but the damage was done. Since the Rieth family had given the land for the building of a *Lutheran* church, they claimed the *Moravian* congregation had no right to the building. As justice of the peace, Weiser was asked to settle the dispute, but by this time he had grown close to Mühlenberg and shared his view that Moravians were not really Lutherans. He accused Spangenberg of “church robbery” and deviousness.<sup>125</sup> He ruled against the Moravians, and they lost possession of the church they had built.

Somehow a rumor started that the Moravians in Bethlehem were praying for the death of Weiser. Weiser became seriously ill in 1748 when a comet appeared in the sky, which his family took as an ill omen that his death was imminent. Mühlenberg, Handschuh, and a couple of other Halle pastors visited with him in April 1748 and convinced him to receive communion as a Lutheran. Mühlenberg reported to Halle: “Mr. Weiser narrated to us the whole course of events between him and the Count and Mr. Spangenberg and Bishop Kammerhof. He showed us all the correspondence and told us where we would be able to find and use it after his death.”<sup>126</sup> Cammerhof was Spangenberg’s assistant in Bethlehem at the time. Feeling betrayed by Weiser, the Moravians abandoned their work in Tulpehocken, but the conflict between Halle and Herrnhut spread beyond Pennsylvania to other colonies.

Mühlenberg traveled to Maryland in the summer of 1747 to meet with Lutherans in the Monocacy area even though he had no authority in that colony. The Lutheran pastor Carl Rudolph had been proved guilty of immorality, and so the Moravians had been invited to send a teacher and preacher. His name was George Ninke, but not everyone in the congregation accepted him since his preaching reflected the sentiments of the Moravians, especially their “blood and wounds theology.” Mühlenberg found a divided congregation when he visited. As he reported, one “party had had the godless Carl Rudolph as their preacher, whom, however, they

124. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:170–72.

125. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser*, 245.

126. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:189.

had driven out after they became aware of his wickedness. The latter party had experienced the same fate with Mr. Nyberg as the people in Yorktown and Canawaque and had finally locked him out of the church when he tried to palm off upon them a Brother as a Lutheran preacher."<sup>127</sup> For Mühlenberg, this was further proof that the Moravians were conspiring to take over Lutheran congregations throughout America.

The Halle-trained pastor was forced to acknowledge, much to his displeasure, the legitimacy of a comment he heard from one of the English settlers, who claimed about the Moravians: "In my whole life I have never found any people who have been so like the Saviour in love, humility, gentleness, friendliness, and ardent zeal to win souls. In the English Church at home the preachers and listeners are dead. Our former English preacher here was a drunkard; the present township preacher is no better. That Carl Rudolph, whom the Germans had here, was a fornicator, a striker, and a drunkard."<sup>128</sup> It must have been uncomfortable for a pastor from Halle to argue that one should not judge the church by the behavior of its immoral pastors. Mühlenberg was so incensed by the morality and spirituality of the Moravian pastors that he felt the need to describe the Moravians as ambassadors of Satan, who can disguise himself as "an angel of light."<sup>129</sup> No matter how moral the Moravians were nor how many people experienced new birth through their preaching, they should never be trusted. Stymied by the opposition they faced in Penn's Woods, the Moravians began a more ambitious settlement in North Carolina, which they named Wachovia.

## RECONCILIATION?

Mühlenberg's personal journal and his reports to Halle demonstrate that he viewed the Moravians as a serious threat to the Lutheran Church in America, and he was diligent for several years in opposing Zinzendorffianism. But it appears that Mühlenberg may have eventually made peace with his enemies. He noted in 1748 the "Zinzendorfers" had been more "quiet and peaceful" than usual, but he evidently did not know that this was because of a conscious change in Moravian policy. The intense opposition the Moravians encountered from the Lutheran, Reformed, and

127. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:156.

128. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:159.

129. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:159.



German sects destroyed their original ecumenical plans and threatened their worldwide mission to non-Christian peoples. The number of polemics against them was increasing in the late 1740s, and the Moravians were shocked to see their most sacred beliefs, such as their devotion to the wounded Savior, being ridiculed in the press. In Europe they were forced to abandon their most magnificent community, Herrnhag, in 1750, and many of the residents relocated to Bethlehem in America. Zinzendorf and his lieutenants decided to withdraw from conflicted situations in America in the late 1740s and focus their dwindling resources on the Indian mission and strengthening the central community of Bethlehem.<sup>130</sup>

It is somewhat surprising that Mühlenberg, who had at one time volunteered to be a missionary to the East Indies, was not more interested in the Moravian mission to the native peoples in America.<sup>131</sup> There are two reasonable explanations for this. One, Mühlenberg's call was to serve the Lutherans in Pennsylvania, and he confined himself to his charge. Two, the Moravians were very successful in their mission to the natives, and Mühlenberg could hardly report to Halle on Moravian success. It is possible that Mühlenberg, like his son-in-law Weiser, admired the Moravians' work with natives even while deploring their influence among Germans. Mühlenberg's hostility toward the Moravians softened a bit during the French and Indian War when they sheltered a large number of refugees, many of whom were Germans, in Bethlehem.

When a party of Indians attacked the Moravian mission settlement of Gnadenhütten in 1755 and murdered all of the inhabitants, it affected Mühlenberg deeply. "What, after all, might be the reasons that the defenseless and innocent sheep in Gnaden-Hütten fell into the hands of the cruel murderers? . . . The world has thereby been clearly instructed and convinced that the United Brotherhood sided neither with the Frenchmen, nor with their hostile Indians, because they themselves bore the reproach of the Indians' cruel deeds of murder."<sup>132</sup> Rather than passing on negative rumors about the Moravians, Mühlenberg objected to the false charge that the Moravians and their Indian converts were secretly in league with the French. He was outraged that his old

130. Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), discusses in detail the change in the Moravians' mission in Pennsylvania after 1749.

131. He recorded some of Weiser's views on converting Indians but emphasized that

they would have to be taught "our revealed historical and dogmatic truths." And he was critical of Zinzendorf's attempt to convert Indians. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:168.

132. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, March 31, 1756, 1:387.

adversary Spangenberg had almost been killed by a man in New York who mistakenly thought the Moravians were allied with the French.<sup>133</sup> The massacre convinced Mühlenberg for the first time that Moravian missionaries were "sincere children of God" rather than ambassadors of Satan.

Thirty years later Mühlenberg was given word that the Moravian missionary Frederick Post desired to speak with him before he died. Mühlenberg received the news too late to visit Post, so he never learned why the Moravian wanted to meet with him. Yet Mühlenberg wrote of him in his journal: "After your many labors and trials, good friend, rest well in the arms of your God!"<sup>134</sup> There is only one other brief mention of Post in Mühlenberg's journals, but clearly Mühlenberg and the Moravian missionary must have had a positive relationship that was never reported to Halle.

One of the worst crises in colonial Pennsylvania was the uprising of the Paxton Boys in 1763. European settlers were steadily encroaching on treaty lands, and at times the Indians responded violently. A mob of whites, mostly Scots-Irish immigrants, decided to get revenge by attacking a peaceful settlement of Christian Indians near Lancaster. The murder of the unarmed natives shocked many people in the colony, especially the Quakers.<sup>135</sup> Fearing that the Moravian Indians would not be safe even in Bethlehem, the colonial government insisted that the Indians be brought to Philadelphia for safety. There they were confined in miserable conditions for several weeks as the Paxton Boys marched on the city with the intention of massacring them. According to Mühlenberg many of the Germans agreed with the Paxton Boys that "Indians who lived among the so-called Moravian Brethren had secretly killed several settlers," and that it was wrong for the Quaker government to protect Indians.<sup>136</sup> Mühlenberg did not say whether he agreed with that opinion, but he certainly did not oppose it. He tried to keep the German Lutherans from joining the rebellion, but not because he was sympathetic to the natives or the Moravians.

133. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 1:387. Mühlenberg agreed with Spangenberg's assertion that "since such false and deeply imbedded rumors and imputations could not have been removed from the minds of the loose mob either by oral or written apologies, or by explanations, and since the organization could not have been rescued from danger in any other way, the Saviour destined the innocent sheep in Gnaden-Hütten (of whom one could truly say that they were sincere children of God) to be

sacrificed, and by their amputation, or sacrifice, He saved the others."

134. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 3:670.

135. Krista Carmenzind, "Violence, Race, and the Paxton Boys," in *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania*, ed. William Pencak and Daniel K. Richter (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 201–20.

136. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 2:18.

Mühlenberg and the other Lutheran pastors agreed that Christians should not rebel against legal authorities. The affair grew more complicated when the Quaker government called for a militia to resist the rebels. According to Mühlenberg, many of the Germans “would unhesitatingly and gladly pour out their possessions and their blood for our most gracious king and officers, but they would not wage war against their own suffering fellow citizens for the sake of the Quakers and Herrnhuters, and their creatures or instruments, the double-dealing Indians.”<sup>137</sup>

Mühlenberg and the other Lutheran pastors in the area conferred and agreed that the Bible instructs Christians to support the government at all times. They instructed their parishioners “not to join the approaching rebels, but rather to stand on the side of the government.”<sup>138</sup> Mühlenberg ridiculed the Quakers and Moravians (“those pious sheep”) for compromising their pacifist principles in order to defend Indians. “It seemed strange that such preparations should be made against one’s own fellow citizens and Christians, whereas no one ever took so much trouble to protect from the Indians His Majesty’s subjects and citizens on the frontier.”<sup>139</sup> Mühlenberg expressed no sympathy for Christians who had been brutally murdered by the Rangers or for those Christians being held in a type of concentration camp in Philadelphia.<sup>140</sup> His concern was for public order and the welfare of the German Lutherans. It appears that Mühlenberg shared the racial attitudes of most Europeans at the time. Indigenous people might convert to Christianity, but they were not equal to white Christians.

The uprising was settled peacefully a few days later when the rebels presented their grievances to the colonial leaders, but the affair hastened the end of the Moravian mission to the native peoples in Pennsylvania. The rebellion also divided the German-speaking population of the colony. Mühlenberg reported that in the elections in the fall of 1764 a Lutheran trustee was elected to the assembly, “which greatly pleased the friends of the Proprietors, but greatly exasperated the Quakers and German Moravians.”<sup>141</sup> The vote was divided along ecclesiastical lines rather than ethnic or linguistic lines. It was between those who had been part of the state church in their homeland and those who adopted a radical New Testament ethic. “The English and German

137. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 2:18.

138. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 2:20.

139. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 2:19.

140. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 2:23.

Interestingly, the ex-Moravian Bryzelius

was briefly captured by the rebels, and he warned them that the Quaker government had raised a militia against them.

141. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 2:123.

Quakers, the Herrnhuters, Mennonites, and Schwenckfelders formed one party, and the English of the High Church and the Presbyterian Church, the German Lutherans, and German Reformed joined the other party and gained the upper hand—a thing heretofore unheard of."<sup>142</sup>

After the crisis of 1764 the Moravians retreated further from involvement with outsiders, and Mühlenberg seems to have continued to mellow toward them since they were no longer perceived as a threat to his church order. In 1769 he finally visited Bethlehem and was impressed by the town. That year he also stayed at an inn in the Moravian town of Lititz, near Lancaster, "which the so-called Moravian Brethren founded several years ago and are still developing gradually. . . . The innkeeper, an old Brother, was able to name and refresh my memory of several famous leaders and laborers whom I had learned to know personally in 1741 when I passed through Herrnhut."<sup>143</sup> It is a little surprising to hear the aging Mühlenberg reminiscing with an elderly Moravian about Herrnhut. When he returned three years later, the innkeeper introduced him to Bishop Matthew Hehl, whom Mühlenberg remembered as a young man in Saxony thirty years earlier and "was sincerely overjoyed to see him again."<sup>144</sup> While he was in Lititz, Mühlenberg bought a copy of David Cranz's history of the Moravian Church, which he read with some appreciation. The last mention of the Moravians in Mühlenberg's journal is the brief notation in 1787 that one of his sons "in response to a special invitation" attended the dedication of the church in Lititz.<sup>145</sup> Clearly the Moravians were no longer a threat to the Lutheran Church Mühlenberg had created in America. Mühlenberg's campaign against the Moravians was successful. He had avoided the label "Pietist" and was the recognized head of a Lutheran Church that did not include Zinzendorfians.

## CONCLUSION

The rivalry between Herrnhut and Halle helped shape Mühlenberg's work in America. Rather than working with Moravian evangelists and teachers, Mühlenberg drew boundaries between Moravians and Lutherans. Although he was clearly a representative of Halle Pietism, Mühlenberg successfully avoided the charge of Pietism by presenting Moravians as a threat to

142. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 2:123.

143. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 2:392.

144. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 2:517.

145. Mühlenberg, *Journals*, 3:750.

ecclesiastical and social order. Though he often complained about the lack of government authority over religion in Pennsylvania, he quickly recognized that this gave him freedom to organize his Lutheran congregations as he saw fit. Mühlberg quickly adjusted to a situation where “in religious affairs one has not the slightest support from the secular authorities, rather each one has the greatest freedom in this respect.”<sup>146</sup> Mühlberg and his Halle superiors often complained that Zinzendorf had taken on himself the functions of an inspector in Pennsylvania without warrant, but by 1745 Mühlberg was doing the same thing. He “took upon himself the right of ordination and the erection of an American ministerium. Thus Mühlberg met the Moravian threat through pragmatic improvisation and the extension of his own authority beyond the limits of his original call.”<sup>147</sup> Despite his insistence on proper Lutheran polity, Mühlberg accepted calls to be pastor of multiple congregations that he then appointed adjuncts to serve, just as Zinzendorf had done. He and his supporters repeatedly used the law courts and the press to oppose the Moravians and promote his own authority over the Lutherans. Having vanquished the Moravians, Mühlberg was free to organize the Lutherans as a distinct American denomination. In contrast, Zinzendorf’s dream of a broad Christian fellowship that included Lutherans, Reformed, Mennonites, Germans, English, Swedes, and Indians failed in part because of Mühlberg’s persistent public opposition. In the 1760s the Moravians in America were becoming another denomination alongside the Lutherans.

**APPENDIX: LETTER BY ZINZENDORF TO THE SWEDISH PASTOR  
AT THE WICACO CHURCH REGARDING MÜHLENBERG**

The letter, of which a contemporary copy is held at the Moravian Archives at Bethlehem (Zinzendorf Papers, no. 14), is reproduced here in a transcription and translation by Gerald T. MacDonald.

Schreiben des Lutherischen Parochi<sup>1</sup> Ludwig v. Z. in Philadelphia an den Schwedischen Pfarrer an der Wicaco<sup>2</sup> Kirche in causa Mühlbergens. Copia d[e] d[ato] Dez. 1742. Religions Sachen<sup>3</sup>

146. Mühlberg, Letter 17, March 17, 1743, to Francke and Ziegenhagen, *Correspondence* 1:76. Original: “Von der Obrigkeit hat man nicht den geringsten Beystand in Religions Sachen,

sondern ein jeder hat darin die gröste Freyheit.” *Korrespondenz*, 1:68.

147. Rigorato, *Missionary of Moderation*, 97.

Weil ich im geringsten nicht schertze in der Lutherischen Sache, und ich jetzo vernehme, daß der hallische Waysenhauß præceptor von Großhennersdorf, nahmens Mühlberg, der sich vor einen Lutherischen Pfarrer anno 35 berufen<sup>4</sup> zwar ausgiebet, von denen Lutherischen Vorstehern hieselbst aber vor nichts als einen tumultuarischen Eindringenen Miethling in eine fremde Heerde erkannt wird,<sup>5</sup> sich öffentlich in der Kirche hat sollen vernehmen lassen, daß er niemand als sich und den hiesigen Schwedischen Pfarrer vor Lutherische Lehrer erkenne, und aber ich hierüber ihn selbst schon gehöriges Ortes will zu finden wissen, zumahlen er in Gegenwart 7 autorisirter Zeugen [gesagt hat], so wohl, daß er einige Inspection in causa religionis nicht obhaben, als daß ihn diese illegale und unvernünftige Vorbeigehung des ordentlichen Parochii [sic] Lutherani von Philadelphia in Europa von niemand geheißten worden, weshalber ich bisher seine gebührende Submission und Erkenntniß seines groben Fehlers erwartet hatte. Er aber sich darauf öffentl. berufen, daß der Schwedische Pfarrer sich zu dieser Unordnung mit ihm vereini-get habe.

Als wird der Schwedische H. Pfarrer, [\_\_\_\_],<sup>6</sup> von welchen [sic] ich dergl. Absurdität keinesweges vermuthete, hiemit befraget: Ob er mich vor einen Herumläufer, und unordentlich vocirten Pfarrer halte. Woferne er, wie H. Mühlberg bereits gegen mich eingestanden, hierinnen unschuldig ist; so soll dieser Brief als nicht geschrieben angesehen werden. Im fall aber Er seinen Sinn mit dem intruso Mühlbergen vereinigt, so beliebe er mir solches in solchen Terminis die ich den geistl. Collegiis in Schweden zum Deciso schicken kan, noch heute zu melden.

Z.

A[nno]. 1742.

Letter by the Lutheran parochus<sup>1</sup> Ludwig von Zinzendorf in Philadelphia to the Swedish pastor of the Wicaco<sup>2</sup> church regarding Mühlenberg. Copy from December 1742. Religious Issues<sup>3</sup>

1. Pastor.

2. The church is now called Old Swedes or Gloria Dei Church. It is now Episcopalian.

3. This is an indication written by an eighteenth-century archivist, where to file this letter.

Because I do not in the least jest in Lutheran matters, and I now hear that the preceptor of the orphanage in Halle at Grossshennersdorf, named Mühlberg [*sic*] is indeed passing himself off as a Lutheran minister, called<sup>4</sup> in the year (17)35, but is recognized by the Lutheran church leaders here as nothing but a tumultuous hireling, intruding on a flock that is not his own.<sup>5</sup> He is reputed to have publicly made it known in the church that he recognizes no one but himself and the Swedish pastor there as Lutheran teachers. And yet I have found out about him—especially since he has said so in the presence of seven authorized witnesses—that he not only has no authority in religious matters, but that this illegal and nonsensical bypassing of the orderly Lutheran parish of Philadelphia was not called for by anyone in Europe. That is why I have been awaiting until now for his due submission and recognition of his grave error. He has, however, publically claimed that the Swedish pastor has joined with him in this irregularity.

Thus the Swedish pastor [\_\_\_\_]<sup>6</sup> is hereby questioned—and I suspect no such absurdity from him—as to whether he considers me to be a vagabond and not a properly called pastor. If he is innocent, as Mr. Mühlberg has already admitted to me, this letter shall be regarded as having never been written. However, in the case that he is of the same opinion as the intruder Mühlberg, may he already notify me today in such wording that I can send to the clerical college in Sweden for a decision.

4. Ordained, compare Augsburg Confession XIV: "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call."

5. John 10:12.

6. The rector of the Wicaco Church at the time was Peter Tranberg. His assistant, Olaf Malander, later joined the Moravians. It is possible that Zinzendorf was not sure to whom to address the letter and thus left it blank.