

STUDY ON THE MORAVIANS

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

I. IMPORTANT HISTORY TO STUDY & LEARN FROM

- A.** Count Nicolas Van Zinzendorf moved to an estate in 1722 in Berthelsdorf, Germany. This estate became a refuge for persecuted United Brethren from Bohemia. Under the leadership of Christian David, a Brethren village was established called Herrnhut (The Lord's Watch) in 1724.
- B.** John A. Roth (Lutheran Pastor) and Zinzendorf drew up laws to govern their religious and civic duties on May 12, 1727. They were injunctions and prohibitions, which he gleaned from Comenius from 100 years prior to date. Twelve elders were elected, and Zinzendorf organized the people into "Bands" of seven or eight each. This marked the legal organization of the Moravians. Their spiritual birth occurred in a Communion Service on August 13, 1727. The presence of the Holy Spirit was felt in a marked way. This is considered the Herrnhut Pentecost.
- C.** They divided the community in a 3 member, same sex group, known as "Bands". These bands met regularly, often daily for prayer, encouragement, fellowship, accountability and confession. No one was exempt, including Zinzendorf.

An excerpt from Zinzendorf's diary in 1729: "July 12, David Nitschmann and Christian David were at my table. We took stock of ourselves and told each other what yet remained to mar the image of Christ. I let them tell me first what I lacked and then I told them what they lacked."

- E.** This community also had larger groups known as classes of about a dozen people. Zinzendorf was tireless in each group. He would speak, worship or pray with people of all ages and situations, though he had a special heart for working with children.
- F.** All day prayer began August 12, 1729, with twenty-four men and twenty-four women praying each hour of the day. This prayer ministry, coupled with Zinzendorf's zeal to spread the gospel, led to missionary work in which the Moravians are credited with one missionary for every sixty members. This prayer meeting grew to about 300 people praying around the clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week for over 100 years.
- G.** The elders reserved and exercised control over external influences that came into the community. They placed restrictions on anything from traveling entertainers and peddlers to repeating of superstitions and old wives tales.
- H.** On the property of Herrnhut, trades and industries were actively encouraged with the objective of providing for the community and generating profits to support missions and outreach. Many crafts and businesses proved to be successful and one of them Durninger and Company eventually grew to become an international concern. No one could set up a business without the approval of the elders: ventures that wasted effort by competing with what was already plentiful or that could not be shown to be a practical or spiritual benefit would not be allowed. Individuals owned their property and profit from their own trade. However the universal excepted rule would be that everyone keep to the same simple

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standard of living and that any surplus produced would be given to the needs of the community and its wider missions and projects. The means of enforcement were pastoral rather than legal. There was no system of taxes or financial allocation, but simplicity of lifestyle and generosity of wealth were regarded as a basic requirement of spiritual health in an individual.

- I. Similarities of the Acts 2 model are remarkable. Everything flowed from a shared expression of deep individual devotion to Christ. And as a result, Herrnhut did not have the dehumanizing qualities of a system driven by a social ideology. Resources were shared efficiently and that a simple but adequate standard of living was enjoyed by all. Herrnhut simply did not suffer from blighting poverty or excesses of wealth that were common in their day.