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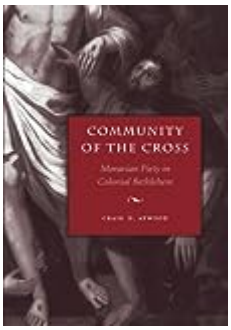
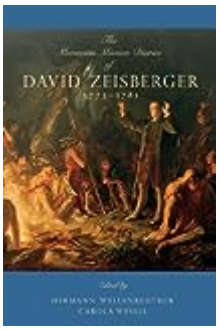


Craig D. Atwood. *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem.* University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. xi + 240 pp. $40.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-271-02367-0.



Hermann Wellenreuther, Carola Wessel, eds. *The Moravian Mission Diaries of David Zeisberger, 1772-1781.* Translated by Julie Tomberlin Weber. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005. x + 666 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-271-02522-3.

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Published on H-German (February, 2007)

Moravians and Moravian Missions in Early Modern North America

David Zeisberger is a popular figure, not only among specialists in North American mission history. Until now, Earl P. Olmstead's *David Zeisberger: A Life among the Indians* (1997) and his *Blackcoats among the Delaware: David Zeisberger on the Ohio Frontier* (1991) as well seem to have reached a non-academic audience interested in the history of the Moravian Church in the thirteen colonies, with Zeisberger as one of its most prominent missionaries. The two publications under review here provide a more academic perspective on these matters.

Born in Moravia in 1721, David Zeisberger spent his youth in the Netherlands and London, where he met James Oglethorpe. Oglethorpe enabled Zeisberger to join a Moravian colony in Georgia in 1739. From there Zeisberger moved on to Pennsylvania where, with his parents, he helped to build the settlement of Bethlehem, the future centre of Moravian missions in North America. In the 1760s Zeisberger served as missionary among the Delaware, whom he led to the Ohio valley when population growth in the colonies pushed them westward. There, in 1772, he established the mission village

of SchÃ¶nbrunn, near modern-day New Philadelphia. In the same year GnadenhÃ¼tten, a mission only a few miles away, was founded. Moravians were viewed suspiciously during the American Revolution, because they did not support either the British or the American side, and in 1781, the British arrested Zeisberger and his assistant, Johann Heckewelder. SchÃ¶nbrunn had already been abandoned by its Native American settlers in 1776. Gnadenbrunn, another mission town, was destroyed in 1782. Following the extinction of these missions, Zeisberger moved on to northern Ohio and Michigan, where he continued his missionary efforts until his death in 1808.

While Zeisberger's *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the Christian Indians* (1803) and his *English Spelling Book* (1776) were published during his lifetime, his diaries and his *History of the Northern American Indians* (1910) were not printed until the late nineteenth century. Mission diaries were by no means a private entertainment. Circulated among the Moravian missionaries, they served Moravian communities in their efforts to Christianize the "heathens" and were designed to inform the Unity's Elders' Conference in Europe about missionary progress overseas. In this function, they can be seen as the equivalent to the Jesuit *Relations*, which served similar purposes for the Jesuit missions. In 1885, Eugene F. Bliss edited an English translation of Zeisberger's mission diary, originally written in German, covering the years 1781 to 1798.[1] Over a century later, Hermann Wellenreuther and Carola Wessel have edited the diaries of an earlier period, covering the years 1772 to 1781.

These diaries are very important documents, useful in the fields of North American ethnohistory, church and mission history and the history of the American Revolution; an English translation is definitely a welcome contribution to current scholarship. Wessel and Wellenreuther's English edition includes a revised version of the German edition's introduction, Julie Tomberlin Weber's translation of "Brother David's" diaries, a register of persons belonging to the mission congregation, a register of geographical places, a large bibliography, a set of maps of the Ohio region and a comprehensive index of place names, persons and technical terms.

The introduction provides its reader with a general view of the historical background of Zeisberger's mission diaries and includes a geographical sketch, a description of the Native American tribes, an introduction to Pietist, especially Moravian, rituals and theology and concludes with a description of the original diaries themselves. Experts of the history of early modern American history or the Moravian missions in North America might feel inclined to skip these sections. They would, however, miss out on a well-written and concise history of the Moravian missions in North America and a level of detail often overlooked, even by some experts.

Zeisberger, as Wellenreuther puts it, "had a unique opportunity to familiarize himself with the whole spectrum of Native American life and customs, power relationships between tribes, languages and rituals, and religious beliefs" (p. 73). Zeisberger's abilities to learn Amerindian languages–he was fluent in Mohawk and Delaware and understood Onondaga and Shawnee–helped him in his missionary efforts. His diary therefore provides intriguing insight into Native Americans' lives in the Ohio Valley toward the end of the eighteenth century. His remarks also touch on the political struggle between converted and non-converted Amerindians, the conflict between the British and the Americans in the early years of the War of American Independence and the Moravian missions' role in these relationships.

Wellenreuther's and Wessel's edition of this "monument" of North American and Moravian history of the end of the eighteenth century has set standards high. Carefully annotated, taking into consideration the various copies of Zeisberger's diaries, it furthermore demonstrates a rather rare awareness of the problems inherent in the translation of an eighteenth-century Moravian text. This awareness, along with the editors' judicious employment of the vast additional archival sources, will make it difficult for future editors to surpass the standard set here.

While Wellenreuther's and Wessel's edition unites two German historians' expertise in North American history with an equally profound knowledge of the Pietist movement and the Moravian Church in Europe, Craig D. Atwood's *Community of the Cross* offers a North American Moravian theologian's perspective on Bethlehem and the theology of this Pietist church.

Atwood presents an intriguing portrayal of Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf's heart theology and its implementation in the Moravian Church in Bethlehem. In doing so, Atwood abandons the more traditional view, that the Moravian communities in North America distanced themselves from Zinzendorf, particularly from his so-called "eruption period." Older Moravian historiography asserts that during the "Sifting Time" Zinzendorf developed radical views, so-called aberrations that were not to be accepted into the Moravian communities in North

America. The rather erotic adoration of the wounds of Christ, as, for example, expressed in the *Litany of the Wounds of the Husband* (1757), disturbed not only non-Moravians but many Moravians themselves. Atwood, however, provides evidence that Zinzendorf's heart theology was essential for Bethlehem's Moravian community. He demonstrates impressively how, in Bethlehem, the "social body and the individual body [were] intricately connected' and how the community's 'statements about Christ's body [were] also statements about the community and the individuals in it. The body of Christ that the Moravians worshipped, the body of Christ that they understood themselves to be as a community, and their individual bodies, in which Christ dwelled, were distinguishable, yet inseparable" (p. IX) as were also the secular and the sacred (p. 63). Rituals, in particular music, the singing of litanies and hymns, love feasts and a variety of symbolic actions, served the community to remind its members daily of its ubiquitous connection with its "Savior." Its unique social structure, the "choir system," created a community that was supposed to value "each individual's development while forming a cohesive society" (p. 173), a community that accompanied its members from the womb to the grave.

Zinzendorf's challenging heart theology was not the only matter that enraged contemporary observers. Equally disturbing were elements of communal living, attitudes towards sexuality, marriage rituals and gender equity as practiced in Moravian communities. Even more disconcerting was the Moravians' impressive missionary success among the Native Americans. According to Atwood, "it was this non-rational approach to Christianity, its 'privilege of simplicity,' that made Moravians such effective missionaries" (p. 56).

Primary sources that reflect on the community's everyday life, conflicts within the community and with the "outside world," which are housed in the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, invite today's scholars to further research on a fascinating religious community and its role within early modern North America. Both Wellenreuther's and Wessel's edition of Zeisberger's diaries and Atwood's study of the Moravian community at Bethlehem will lay the groundwork for further studies in this area.

Note

[1]. *Diary of David Zeisberger a Moravian Missionary among the Indians of Ohio*, tr. and ed. Eugene F. Bliss (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke and Co., 1885).

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Citation: Susanne Lachenicht. Review of Atwood, Craig D., *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* and Wellenreuther, Hermann; Wessel, Carola, eds., *The Moravian Mission Diaries of David Zeisberger, 1772-1781.* H-German, H-Net Reviews. February, 2007.

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