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The New Jerusalem in the 18th Century Among the Moravian Church and the Radical Pietists¹

Introduction

The eighteenth century in Germany was the century of millennial movements. At the beginning of the century August Hermann Francke established his compound in Halle (Duchy of Magdeburg, a province of Hohenzollern Brandenburg-Prussia) in which fervent Pietists were educated for missionary work to be extended to the entire known world. The goal was to convert the world and prepare it for the End of Time. Utopian thinking within a millennial context once again appeared in various pietistic groups, and central to such a utopia was the concept of a Heavenly Jerusalem on earth. In Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism notions of a Heavenly Jerusalem usually remained in the background, but not so for smaller religious communities who tended to expect a heaven on earth. They sought an inner path and a retreat into select meetings and worship circles, into hermitages and settlements away from the everyday world. Longing for this holy city actually led to several utopian settlements in 18th century Germany.

The Zionites at Ronsdorf and the Moravian Church at Herrnhag are excellent examples of how the notion of a Heavenly Jerusalem was turned into a moving force. In the smallest details, such as the geometric layout of a city or positioning the settlement on a hill, we can note the Biblical images which shaped an architecture intentionally modeled on residents' image of a Heavenly Jerusalem and a daily life strongly influenced by their understanding of the apocalypse. Other ideas which influenced these settlements have been researched to one extent or another, including comparisons with ideal cities, with residential cities of the Baroque, and even with the architecture of the American Shakers.² How-

¹ First published in the American church history magazine *The Covenant Quarterly*, 63, 4, 2005, 3-19.

² A bibliography of Moravian Church architecture was compiled by Peter Vogt, published in volume 51/52 of *UF (Unitas Fratrum)*, 2003, 111-114. Important studies include: *H. Beck*, *Die Herrnhuter. Baukultur im pietistischen Zeitalter des 18. Jahrhunderts*; in: *Kunst und Kirche*, L, 1987, 186-189; *Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe* (Ed.): *Planstädte der Neuzeit vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*. Karlsruhe 1990, 348; *P. Vogt*, *The Shakers and the Moravians*; in:

ever, examination of the influence of the Heavenly Jerusalem on theology, arts, and spirituality among the Zionites' community and the Moravian Church remains a desiderata.

Ronsdorf

Ronsdorf was the most radical undertaking in bringing the Heavenly Jerusalem to life.³ Around the beginning of the 1720's a woman by the name of Anna vom Büchel (1698-1743) from the little town of Elberfeld began to preach about her revelations and visions.⁴ Rather quickly she was able to gather a firm following of both sexes, who in turn founded a Philadelphia Society according to the model of the English prophetess, Jane Leade. Among her followers was one Elias Eller (1690-1750), who was to win Büchel's heart. Eller became not only her closest follower but in a few years her husband. Even prior to their deciding to found a settlement, the central religious message of this pair lay in three ideas:

First, Anna vom Büchel was the medium through which the voice of God was transmitted. During worship-like sessions and love feasts Büchel ecstatically received messages which Eller promptly recorded and interpreted. No one but Elias Eller was allowed an interpretation. All her messages of prophesy were then published in the booklet, the Shepherd's

The Shaker Quarterly, XXI, 1993, 79-97; W. Murtagh, *Moravian Architecture and Town Planning*. Chapel Hill 1998; Landkreis Neuwied (Ed.), *Herrnhuter Architektur am Rhein und an der Wolga*, Koblenz 2000; L. Harasimowicz, *Architektur und Kunst*, in: *Glaubenswelt und Lebenswelten (Geschichte des Pietismus, IV)*, Göttingen 2004, 456-485. For Ronsdorf see: Ronsdorf. No. VI, 33 of the *Rheinischer Städteatlas*, Bonn 1980; and Claus Bernet, *Der lange Weg aus der Konfession in den radikalen Pietismus. Von Babel in das Himmlische Jerusalem – am Beispiel von Leonhard C. Sturm, Elias Eller und 'Chimonius'*, in: F. v. Lieburg (Ed.), *Confessionalism and Pietism. Religious Reform in Early Modern Europe and North America*, (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte, Beiheft LXVII) Mainz 2006.

³ The literature on Ronsdorf centers on two collections of older articles, both reprinted from Klaus Goebel (Ed.), *Von Eller bis Dürselen. Neue Beiträge zur Kirchen- und Stadtgeschichte von Wuppertal-Ronsdorf*, Bonn 1981, and: *In allem Betracht ein angenehmer Aufenthalt*, Köln 1994. Also from Goebel is a series of maps and drawings of Ronsdorf, including an excellent analysis of the founding process of Ronsdorf, published under the title "Ronsdorf" as no. VI, 33 of the *Rheinischer Städteatlas*, Bonn 1980. The rich source material I consulted in the Nordrhein-Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (NWH) and in the Archiv der Evangelischen Kirche im Rheinland (AEKR), both in Düsseldorf, has not yet been used for a historical dissertation on this radical pietist group.

⁴ For biography and bibliography about this prophetess see Claus Bernet, *Catharina vom Büchel*, in: *Biographisch-bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, XXII, 2003, 156-160. Still important is M. Goebel, *Die niederrheinische Reformierte Kirche und der Separatismus in Wittgenstein und am Niederrhein im 18. Jahrhundert*, Coblenz 1860 (Reprinted Basle 1992) and T. Wotschke, *Vom Tode der Zionsmutter Anna Eller 1743 in Ronsdorf*, in: *Monatshefte für rheinische Kirchengeschichte*, XXVII, 1933, 28-31.

Bag (from the story of David and Goliath in I Samuel 17). Fragments of the Shepherd's Bag can be found today in archives of the Protestant Church in Düsseldorf.⁵ Along with several Zionite and Antizionite tracts, these fragments have served as a main source of material for my research on Ronsdorf.⁶ Second, Anna vom Büchel and Elias Eller were considered the literal descendants of both Moses and Jesus Christ, and both felt called to initiate the End of Time.⁷ The couple perceived in themselves a special holiness. Although neither had a theological education, they organized biblical lectures, wrote religious tracts and discussed theological questions. Third, According to Eller and Büchel, by 1730 the apocalypse was in sight. When the world came to an end, only the pure would survive. The greater the piety, the greater the chance of survival.⁸

In this same year, however, there was no sign of the End. In Ireland a dreadful famine raged, Cherokee Indians in America formed a delegation to England, which was received by King George II, and yet nothing happened in Germany. Elberfeld remained quiet. The Philadelphia Society met weekly and held out to the end of the year. In vain they awaited an encounter with the New Jerusalem, some physical transformations, or at least a sign from God. One might expect that the millennial notion of a Heavenly Jerusalem was at its end, but on the contrary it was just beginning. After a time Anna vom Büchel and Elias Eller reappeared before the Society and announced that a new city was now to be built. Elberfeld, being a Babylon where no sign could be expected, was definitely the wrong place.⁹ The residents of Elberfeld were now to prepare for an Exodus. According to the couple, the End had in fact begun in 1730, even though it had not been perceived in Elberfeld. The time had been right but not the place. Only in a new Zion could one be sure of the End's blessings.

⁵ AEKR, A I, IV 33 (Acta Ronsdorfiana).

⁶ Several tracts from the Zionites have survived, among them a refutation of the Reformed Church by *Johann Bolckhauß*, Ronsdorfs gerechte Sache, wider den General-Synod, Düsseldorf 1757, and the numerous writings by *Peter Wülffing* (the theorist of the Zionites), *Der geistliche Hirten-Stab* (Düsseldorff 1735), Ronsdorffs Göttliches ABC, Ronsdorf, ca. 1750, and *Das jubilirende Ronsdorff*, Mülheim 1761. Antizionite tracts include the anonymously published *Nachricht von der schändlichen ellerischen Rotte...*; in: *Acta Historico-Ecclesiastica*, XIV, 84, 1751, 903-948, *Daniel Schleyermacher*, *Apologie*, Arnheim 1750, and two writings by *Johann Werner Knevels*, *Gräuel der Verwüstung an heiliger Stätte*, Frankfurt 1750, and *Geheimniß der Bosheit*, Marburg 1751.

⁷ *F. W. Krug*, *Kritische Geschichte der protestantisch-religiösen Schwärmerei*, Elberfeld 1851, 90; and *Bernet*, Büchel, 158.

⁸ *H. Corrodi*, *Kritische Geschichte des Chiliasmus*, III, 2, Frankfurt 1783, 338; *J. A. Engels*, *Versuch einer Geschichte der religiösen Schwärmerei im ehemaligen Herzogthum Berg* (Schwelm 1826), 5; *G. Maier*, *Die Johannesoffenbarung und die Kirche*, Tübingen 1981, 375.

⁹ *H. Klugkist Hesse*, *Die Ronsdorfer Gemeindegründung und das Wort Gottes*; in: *Klaus Goebel* (Ed.), *Von Eller bis Dürselen*, Bonn 1981, 14-25, 18.

Only there could the promise of the Bible and the prophecies of Frau Büchel take hold.

The overwhelming majority of the Philadelphia Society's members subscribed to this new gospel. Many sold their houses and left their work, and the economy suffered. Their futures were anything but certain. Their Heavenly Jerusalem at Ronsdorf, then, was to be erected remote from the main trade routes. It was situated on a hill, like the Heavenly City described in the Old Testament. Only later were they to realize that this location was not at all favorable to industry since it lacked a waterway, and wells could not be bored through the solid rock upon which it stood. Residents were nevertheless happy and pleased with the new city. By 1741 Ronsdorf had grown quickly to 400 residents living in 40 buildings. They managed to increase their number to 1,000 by 1743.¹⁰

The task at hand was to create a new social contract with progressive impacts. Ronsdorf was more open than Elberfeld. Drawing believers from all of northwest Germany, it enjoyed contact with Pietistic circles in England, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.¹¹ It was an unusual development of with the influence had become known far beyond its borders. At the same time, "Zion" or "New Jerusalem", as the settlement was then known, was no seat of freedom and tolerance. On the contrary, a chiliastic view of the community was required for residents, who were to remain firm in their convictions that Eller and Büchel were holy, that the End was near, and that Büchel was a prophetess with special powers. Those with differing ideas were not welcome in Ronsdorf. The holy couple mercilessly persecuted their critics until Eller's death in 1750. Anyone voicing opposition was not permitted into the compound, was not allowed to participate in worship services or public gatherings, was denied legal rights, and was socially ostracized.¹²

Only with the death of Eller in 1750 could the settlement's thinking begin to change, and the result was a split within the Zionites, with the majority following the chiliastic and millennialistic notions of a former Calvinistic pastor, Petrus Wülffing (1701-1776). Under his leadership the town of Ronsdorf was completely alienated from the Calvinist Church and had to form a new religious denomination, a most unusual occurrence in 18th century Germany. Other theologians who shared Eller's and Wülffing's radical ideas were the former theology student, Johann Kne-

¹⁰ Klugkist Hesse, *Gemeindegründung*, 1981, 18-20; Goebel, *Kirche*, III, 1992, 513.

¹¹ Klugkist Hesse, *Gemeindegründung*, 1981, 20.

¹² H. W. Nieden, *Die religiösen Bewegungen im 18. Jahrhundert und die evangelische Kirche in Westfalen und am Niederrhein*, Gütersloh 1910, 105; Goebel, *Kirche*, III, 1992, 514. According to AEKR, A I, IV b 29, 5 the Zionites compared the nearby Lutherans with the Canaanites of the Old Testament, who were besieged by the Israelites, re. by the followers of Eller; see AEKR, A I, IV b 29, 22.

vels, and pastor Daniel Schleyermacher (1697 – after 1765), the grandfather of the famous theologian Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834).¹³

Knevels had long been a dedicated Zionite and had had direct dealings with Eller and Büchel. His goal was to make a career for himself as a millennialistic preacher, but in 1745 he met with a bitter defeat in an election for the office of the settlement's minister.¹⁴ Although he did not receive a single vote from the elders (*Gemeindedeputierte*), it was not until five years later that he left the community in anger and grief. In exile he composed two very sharp criticisms that reveal the inner structure of the group and have become for us today an important source for understanding the Ronsdorf experiment.¹⁵ He was out to discredit the

¹³ For *Daniel Schleyermacher* see his biography in H.-P. Eberlein (Ed.), *Album ministrorum der Reformierten Gemeinde Elberfeld*, Bonn 2003, 78-81.

¹⁴ The records of the vote taken on May 17, 1745, have been edited by G. v. Norden, *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Kirchengemeinden und der Stadt Ronsdorf 1740-1840*; in: K. Goebel (Ed.), *Von Eller bis Dürselen*, Bonn 1981, 161-186, 163. Apparently Knevels withdrew from the Zionites in stages. The final break became public only in 1750; Norden, 99. Knevels wrote in the preface to his charge on December 24, 1750, that "for nearly four years (I) have known of the work of Satan in this sect." Accordingly the inner break with the Zionites occurred in 1746, but the external break did not happen until after the appearance of the approval by the theological faculty of Marburg University on November 28, 1750. The reason for Knevels remaining among the Zionites for years in spite of disbelief is as yet unknown.

¹⁵ Knevels' writings were the *Gräuel der Verwüstung* (published anonymously in Frankfurt 1750) and the polemic *Geheimniß der Bosheit* (Marburg 1751). In recent research into both the Zionites as well as Eller and Ronsdorf the writings of Knevels have not been viewed as authentic. Partly, modern researchers use the same wording, for example in sentencing, which was once used by Knevels. His accounts of the Ronsdorf years were immediately appealing and pertinent as well as emotional, but nevertheless maligned as "hostile devices" or "ugly efforts". Knevels' judgement and condemnations on these events would be simply old wives tales, according the opinion of E. Strutz, *Elias Eller. Der Gründer der Stadt Ronsdorf*; in: K. Goebel (Ed.), *Von Eller bis Dürselen*, Bonn 1981, 26-46, 31, 43, 44. Several accounts by Knevels are now recognized for various reasons as "lies", but there are insufficient criteria for discerning truth from untruth, or even from "lies".

Whereas the earlier literature uncritically assumed the sources were authentic, the latter local research on Ronsdorf has rejected them; for this see G. v. Norden, *Die Entstehung der reformierten Zionsgemeinde in Ronsdorf und die Stellung der Obrigkeit dazu*; in: K. Goebel (Ed.), *Von Eller bis Dürselen*, Bonn 1981, 98-123, 99/100. All articles in this edition tend in the same direction. One reason may have been the extent to which Eller was positively seen as a pre-industrial German founder of enterprise. The image of Eller as a chiliastic prophet is more difficult to accept. The two however are not necessarily contradictory. A very dedicated pre-industrial worker can indeed carry out chiliastic projects. Heinrich Corrodi, a sober and knowledgeable contemporary of Knevels, judged his writings thusly: "The resentment wielded over the Ronsdorf sect should in no manner detract from their reliability and truthfulness"; *Corrodi, Geschichte*, III, 2, 1783, 334. Modern historiography, which is bound to objectivity and neutrality, must submit to this assessment.

movement and insisted that millennialism not only led to heresy, promiscuity, and hypocrisy but also that, as a state within a state, Ronsdorf became a threat to the sovereignty of provincial rulers.

The case of Schleyermacher was different. Like Knevels he was a learned theologian for the community. As an ordained minister he represented the views of the movement, and believed its status was "chosen". Every Sunday he preached from the pulpit about the unique holiness of the Zionites, but during the week he was witness to their "unholy" behavior. He saw that many Zionites did not fast and had worldly pursuits. He noted that Catholics and Lutherans who were moving in wanted nothing to do with their talk of the End of Time and a Heavenly Jerusalem. Schleyermacher expressed his doubts to Eller, which put him immediately into a position of opposition. To defend himself Schleyermacher published tracts in which he outlined why he could no longer see Ronsdorf as a Heavenly Jerusalem. Counter tracts appeared, and he ran into serious trouble. Wülffing, one opponent, ordered his house to be plundered. Schleyermacher fled for his life to Holland where he continued his work of opposing Zionites. In the course of his writings we can see the evolution of his disillusionment: from uncritical acceptance of Ronsdorf as a holy city to his first stirrings of doubt, to an inner disagreement with the notion of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and, finally, to his public polemic.

These polemics of both Knevels and Schleyermacher, as well as the loss of their two best preachers, led to a crisis among the Zionites at Ronsdorf. This very vocal opposition could not be overcome. This criticism from within proved to be the actual beginning of the end. Büchel and Eller were both dead and gone, and their ineffective successor, Wülffing, was unable to give the Zionites a new vision. Slowly the idea of Ronsdorf as the Heavenly Jerusalem disappeared among the Zionites. By November 1765 the last of the Ronsdorfers had to renounce their belief that they were "chosen", and the Ronsdorf community was reaccepted in the Reformed Synod. The Zionites' writings were burned and the popular mood of the late 18th century was simply to forget them altogether. Even today Ronsdorf has an ambivalent attitude towards its own history.

Herrnhaag

The Moravian brothers and sisters, who already possessed a worldwide communications network, were naturally informed about the Ronsdorf experiment. At their synod conference at Marienborn in 1741 news of Ronsdorf reached them when in an anonymous report it was introduced as a "new sect". The prophesies of Anna vom Büchel and the work of Daniel Schleyermacher also appeared. Both were described objectively: "The Mother of Zion possesses a spirit which answers her. Pastor Schley-

ermacher in Elberfeld is a talented man in their midst."¹⁶ The founding of Ronsdorf was compared with Herrnhag, a settlement of the Moravian Church in Hessa. The church historian, Heinrich Corrodi, went so far as to declare in 1783 an immediate influence on Ronsdorf: "He (Eller) was already 40 years old as he came upon the idea of founding a new sect similar to the Brüdergemeine (the example set by the Count Zinzendorf), which was so entirely independent on other churches that it formed a small governing body."¹⁷ Contemporaries also took note of the similarities between the two experiments: as the Zionites had emerged from the Reformed Church, so had the Herrnhuter movement grown out of Lutheranism.¹⁸

How was it that another settlement was developed after the founding of Herrnhut in the Oberlausitz region of Saxony? In an edict of 20th March 1736 Zinzendorf was banned from entering Saxony due to conflicts between the Herrnhut settlement and the Catholic Habsburgs in Vienna.¹⁹ After this restriction Zinzendorf decided to retreat to the Wetterau region in Hessa, which had been known to him since his youth. From 1736 to 1741 he visited Wetterau yearly and was instrumental in Herrnhag's development. Whether Ronsdorf exerted an influence on Herrnhag or the other way around has not been proved. It seems likely that both settlements emerged separately.²⁰ It is nevertheless clear that there was considerable common ground in the desire to build the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Originally Herrnhag had been intended to be a small settlement with exactly twelve buildings in its center. In a conference in June of 1738 Zinzendorf said the following about the establishment of the center for the settlement: "It is not the Savior's intention that it (Herrnhag) should extend in a year and a day to twenty-four buildings. Rather every possible

¹⁶ Unitätsarchiv Herrnhut (UA), R. 2. A. 5, B1a, 28. Some revelations about the Zionite mother, such as, for example, "her soul is washed in the blood of the lamb and they shall live and not die" (AEKR) A I, IV b 33, 6, 6) are in form and content comparable to Zinzendorf's language. Such an honoring of blood was prevalent at the time and not confined to the Zionites or the Moravian Church.

¹⁷ Corrodi, *Geschichte*, III, 2, 1783, 333.

¹⁸ D. Schleyermacher, *Apologie*, Arnheim 1750, 28, 30; likewise NWH, Jülich-Berg II, no. 1035 (Vol. IV), 165.

¹⁹ In 1735 David Nitschmann was ordained as the first Bishop of the Moravian Church, thus beginning a dispute over the sovereignty of the Moravian Church re. its conformity to the Lutheran Church, which questioned the Tübingsche Bedenken of 1733. This controversy was never resolved. For the abundant literature on this controversy see T. Daniel, Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorfs Beteiligung an den innerprotestantischen Einigungsbestrebungen des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts, Marburg 2000, 439-490.

²⁰ This is the result of investigation in the Nordrhein-Westfälische State Archive and in the Archiv der Evangelischen Kirche im Rheinland (both Düsseldorf), in the Unitätsarchiv Herrnhut, and in the Moravian Archive (Bethlehem, Pennsylvania).

effort should be made to hold the number to twelve."²¹ Here Zinzendorf was referring to twelve as the twelve apostles of Jesus, who were symbolized in the plan of Herrnhaag's houses. Each house was to represent an apostle and the entire settlement a salvation community. A well at the center was to symbolize Christ. In the Heavenly Jerusalem the well symbolizes Christ, as seen in Psalms 46:5 and Revelation 21:6. The well of Herrnhaag was ornamented with a christological symbol, a sphere with a star atop which represented world rule. Ostensibly such emblems were to be found on other buildings of the Moravian Church settlements which "*represented Zinzendorf's theocratic thinking much more than any other religious symbol.*"²² By 1746 a bell was mounted on the fountain-house which summoned together the congregation, as Christ calls each one to the community.²³ By the time of the first expulsion of settlers in 1750 eleven of the twelve houses had been erected around the central square.²⁴

Construction proceeded quickly and soon some one thousand called souls from various religious persuasions lived in Herrnhaag. Alongside many Reformed, former Separatists, theosophical followers of Gichtel, Inspired, Mennonites, Schwenckfeldians from Moravia, Methodists from England and Quietist Mystics all lived together. From the immediately surrounding area as well as from afar radical Pietists streamed in and turned Herrnhaag within a few years into the most inter-religious Christian settlement of the early modern period in Europe.²⁵ The newcomers

²¹ Conferenz Marienborn, June 1738; UA, R. 2. A. 1. 3. B, 4.

²² H. Merian, Einführung in die Baugeschichte der Evangelischen Brüdergemeinen, in: M. Buijtenen / C. Dekke / H. Leeuwenberg (Ed.), Unitas Fratrum (Utrecht 1975), 465-482, 470/471.

²³ UA, R. 8. 6. 7, 1 (Account of Lyn).

²⁴ The surveyor C. G. Reuter designed the settlement with twelve buildings in order to maintain a parallel to the Heavenly Jerusalem, even though the twelfth house on the square had not yet been finished; Reuters Riß-Büchlein, 1761, UA, TS, XIII, 8v; see also A. Richter, Die Siedlungen der Brüdergemeine in Europa, in: UF, LI/LII, 2003, 1-8, 7: "The three wings of the four sides of the square corresponded to the gates of the New Jerusalem." Although the settlement's center had not then been completed, the master plan was recognized in 1747 by a foreign visitor: "The arrangement of the houses composes a square with twelve entrances." UA, R. 8. 6. 7 (Account of Lyn).

²⁵ The international character of the settlement is only now in the initial stages of research. In some respects this was the world in microcosm. It drew residents from North America, the Caribbean, Guinea, Armenia, England, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Lorraine, Wales, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Gotland, Greenland, the Baltic region, and from the Habsburg Empire; UA, R. 27. 295, 41. From the nearby Wetterau also arrived interested settlers, who ultimately strengthened its radical pietist elements. One example is Anna Margaretha Fischer (1699-1774), who was awaked from the pietist preacher Schäfer whom she followed to Büdingen. Among the Inspired there she converted and later met her husband to be, Johann Martin Fischer, with whom she entered the community at Herrnhaag; UA, GN. 1774, Woche V, Teil I, 57-60.

no longer considered themselves Lutherans, Calvinists, or of any particular denomination, but rather members of a trans-confessional salvation community. After the demise of Herrnhaag, Zinzendorf held the radical pietist fraction responsible for Herrnhaag's having been seen as the Heavenly Jerusalem. According to him, the settlement "was a collection of apocalyptic dreamers from all corners of the Roman Empire, who didn't think about Christ but instead fixed their sights on a New Jerusalem ... who amused themselves with the condemnation of Babylon and thereby lost their senses to the point that they slowly ceased being decent, reasonable people."²⁶

According to the Herrnhuter example, a prayer rotation (*Stundenbeter*) was formed in the Wetterau, in which twenty-four people prayed around the clock for additional devout settlers and for God's protection of the settlement. On the one hand, the twenty-four participants enabled shifts on the hour, but on the other hand the establishment of the prayer rotation by twenty-four participants can be seen as a clear reference to the Apocalypse, which mentions twenty-four Elders praying and singing uninterruptedly before God's throne.²⁷ From 7th September 1744 to at least the end of 1745 there were four such prayer rotations at Herrnhaag, each consisting of husbands, wives, single brothers and single sisters. It appears probable that towards the end of the Sifting Time a prayer rotation was arranged in which even both genders were called to participate.²⁸

The number of new settlers was such that there was no longer space available for those wanting to join, which brought on a selection process. Before candidates were permitted to settle, a petition had to be circulated. Such petitions became necessary as well for existing members of the Moravian Church who wanted to settle at Herrnhaag.²⁹ The expressed notion often appeared in such petitions that the petitioner desired to save his or her soul on holy ground and therefore had chosen Herrnhaag. A considerable number of candidates were actually rejected because their conversion was denied. Others were expelled subsequent to their joining

²⁶ UA, GN. B. 14. 1752, 2, Beil. 31, 06.07.1752.

²⁷ Revelation 4 and 7. Heinrich Bothe, who was an opponent of the Moravian Church and who had a detailed knowledge in this area, claimed the invention of the prayer rotation had been extracted from "the four animals who didn't sleep all day and night" of Revelations; *H. J. Bothe, Zuverlässige Beschreibung des nunmehr ganz entdeckten Herrenhutischen Ehe-Geheimnisses*, I, Berlin 1751, 40.

H.-J. Wollstadt, Geordnetes Dienen in der christlichen Gemeinde, Göttingen 1966, 230-231, on the other hand emphasized, according to Spangenberg, Isaiah 62,6-7, which read: "I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You will call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth."

²⁸ UA, R. 27. 291. 058; UA, R. 27. 292. 056; UA, R. 27. 292. 021.

²⁹ UA, R. 8. 6. 7; UA, R. 22. 76. 1.

the settlement as being unworthy or half-hearted. For still others it was necessary to repeat their petition as often as three times.³⁰ As was clearly the case in Ronsdorf, only a selected group of converted would be considered as chosen from God and fit for establishing the holy settlement.³¹

For those who did manage to be admitted, it has been documented from Moravian memoirs (*Lebensläufe*) that the years spent in Herrnhaag amounted to a time of quiet, of retreat, and of fulfillment.³² For instance, Johann Michael Lauterbach (1716-1787) reported: "Just the first glimpse of this new settlement with houses built for a congregation of Jesus was very impressive for me."³³ And the Dutchman, Cornelis van Laer (1705-1774), who first partook in a communion at Herrnhaag on 13th November 1746, reported: "Here was the true tie to the Savior and bridegroom of our souls ... and with our souls we were certainly more in the Heavenly Jerusalem than on earth."³⁴

Such enthusiastic portrayals were immediately discussed in written polemics by Herrnhut's opponents. Both during and following the Sifting Time the charge of Chiliasm was made with the claim: "that the adherents of the Moravian Church think of themselves as the 144,000 from Revelations of which John spoke. One can find this in their own writings."³⁵

³⁰ E. Sommer, *Serving Two Masters*, Lexington 2000, 16. This of course did not hold for children, who in spite of not having been converted or being guilty of bad conduct could nevertheless be admitted; UA, R. 22. 05. 37. A realistic account of this picture may be found in: A. P. Hecker, *Gespräch eines Evangelisch-Lutherischen Predigers...*, Berlin 1751, 8-11. Georg Heinrich Ritterberg in 1749 was admitted out of sympathy since they did not want to refuse a fatally ill person for a fourth time; UA, GN. A. 11. 1750, 4, Beil., 92. Ritterberg died in 1750 in Herrnhaag. Whoever was fortunate enough to be taken into a service position in one of the few private families, could spend there the trial period for admission into the community in Herrnhaag. Margarethe Gont, who lived in the settlement from 1747 managed to do this, but she was not admitted into the community until 1750, UA, GN. A. 20. 1751, 6. This was nevertheless an exception. Usually admission took no more than six months. Then it was one year until one could for the first time be permitted to partake in Communion, the very high point of life there, which was usually recorded in Moravian memoirs according to the exact date (year, month, day, and time).

³¹ In Herrnhaag the Moravians mentioned already before the construction of the settlement their intention „to erect a new and enclosed separate village“, according to K.-P. Decker, „Gemeine des Lammes“ oder „Staat im Staate“? in: *Jahrbuch der Hessischen Kirchengeschichtlichen Vereinigung*, LII, 2001, 25-51, 31.

³² M. Gill, *Die Zeit der Brüdergemeine auf dem Herrnhaag in der Wahrnehmung späterer Generationen*, (unpublished theological Examensarbeit) Herrnhut 2000, 17-19.

³³ UA, GN. 1787, Beil. XIII, 2, 923. Lauterbach became the mentor (Informator) for Christian Rénatus von Zinzendorf.

³⁴ Archive of the community Zeist PA II R. 7. 8.

³⁵ J. P. Fresenius, *Bewährte Nachrichten von Herrnhutischen Sachen*, Frankfurt a. Main 1746, 620; C. Philorthodoxo, *Ungeheuchelte Theologische Unterredung...*, Jena 1746, 29. The charges stemmed from Zinzendorf's statement:

Here hymns such as "The One Hundred Forty-four Thousand" with the theme of Christ and the End-of-Time congregation, were taken as proof that the Moravian Church would indeed see itself as in this congregation.³⁶ According to the charge, the Moravian brothers and sisters erroneously believed that they dwelled in a Heavenly Jerusalem, the "spiritual abode": "The community of the Moravian Church already lives in their eternal realm, in their own Heavenly Jerusalem next to the spiritual abode, which is revealed in our time. They no longer count themselves as part of the world."³⁷

In a tract, the one-time member, A. P. Hecker, justified his decision to join the settlement Herrnhag on the grounds of the chiliastic promises their missionaries had made to him. "The Brothers boasted that, if I came to Herrnhag, I would find it much better than in Herrnhut and that I would find a blessed life and example of the Heavenly Jerusalem to come."³⁸ The settlements of the Moravian Church were seen in anti-Moravian pamphlets as the place where the dawning of the Kingdom could be

"Christ and his Believers will reign one thousand years and rule on earth. This is the first resurrection, as it is written in Revelations Chapter 20"; Büdingische Sammlung, I, 1742, 70.

³⁶ Herrnhuter Gesangbuch 2177. Another frequently criticized hymn was no. 140 of the Herrnhuter Gesangbuch: "Take heart, oh ye devout" (Ermuntert euch, ihr Frommen). Stanza nine reads: "Here is the joyful city of Jerusalem where the saved do graze / Here is the mighty gate, here are the streets of gold / Here from the Wedding Feast shall come to dwell / that bride in this valley of roses". An interesting indication of how hymns functioned as a means of reaching the Heavenly Jerusalem, may be inferred from the dedication by Zinzendorf to Friedrich III. of Sachsen-Gotha and his spouse Luise Dorothea: "And thus prays the princely pair, oh blessed community / Through this world to God's own city / That city which Saint John did coming see / And whose new hymn the princely pair now sing / To which Kings treasures do bring / where God Almighty, the Temple, and the Lamb (do exist)"; Siegfrieds Bescheidene Beleuchtung... (1744), Widmungsgedicht, s.p.

The Marchesche Gesangbuch (1731) already contained this hymn as no. 309 (1731). First printed in the Evangelia Melodica (Bremen 1700), its composer was Lorenz Lorenzen. Worth noting is the manner in which Ernst Cröger wrote of the community of Herrnhag in 1853: "so are without doubt most of today's Moravian singers gathered into the saved who saw John"; *E. W. Cröger, Geschichte der erneuerten Brüderkirche*, II, Gnadau 1853, 181.

³⁷ Allerneueste Herrnhuter-Anectota..., Frankfurt 1752, 135-136; *M. Peucker, Blut auf unsre grünen Bändchen. Die Sichtungszeit in der Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine*, in: UF, XXXIX/L, 2002, 41-94, 77. The Moravians used the word "dwelling" (Hütte) especially in relation to the physical human body. The apparent contradiction between spirit and body was dissolved in that way, that "dwelling" was used in the sense of home or "habitation of the spirit". So they saw Heaven as a habitation of the spirit. In this eschatological sense Zinzendorf characterized on June 10, 1746, the "new heavenly body" as the "immortal habitation of the soul"; *Nikolaus Ludwig v. Zinzendorf, Die an den Synodum der Brüder, in Zeyst vom 11. May bis den 21. Junii 1746 gehaltenen Reden*, o.O. 1747, 383.

³⁸ *Hecker, Gespräch*, 1751, 2.

expected: "Here, so they believe, it will finally be that the Savior becomes visible, entering into their church, in their hall (*Saal*), and their *Bethaus* (houses of prayer) to commence with them a millennial reign."³⁹ The location of this reign was to be the City of God: "Therefore the Moravian Church is considered by its members as the Heavenly Jerusalem."⁴⁰

Such a chiliastic expectation was taken as a central feature of the Sifting Time. This notion was not merely a matter of another form of piety, but, according to the testimony of Brother Gottfried Clemens (1706-1776), was a new development within Moravian thinking about the Return of Christ that was expressed openly in meetings and religious worship.⁴¹ White clothing for the women's choirs was mentioned as early as 1744, and was quickly interpreted in terms of the Apocalypse. In the beginning only women with offices were designated to wear white, but soon it spread, especially on holy days, to the entire Choir.⁴²

At the zenith of the Sifting Time, the Brothers also used white liturgical wear, white gowns with red sashes, at their love feasts and other festivals. The first record of this situation is from May 2, 1748.⁴³ The white stood for the pure joy of belonging to the congregation of the End-of-Time.⁴⁴ The white gowns were to be reminiscent of Christ and the Saints in the Heavenly Jerusalem, as an eyewitness reported about a communion of 6th September 1748: The Brothers "don white gowns, as did those in the first church in the *octava alborum*, and with the red sashes they entered the hall, making to those assembled an unexpectedly impressive sight, reminiscent of the Revelation."⁴⁵ The festive entry of the Brothers

³⁹ Hecker, *Der Herrnhuter und ihres Bruders Ludwig Zinzendorf Freundlichkeit und Demuth*, Wittenberg 1752, 18. Likewise in *Herrnhuter-Anectota*, 1752, 26-27, one finds a similar accusation that chiliastic expectation would be hostile to the governing authorities.

⁴⁰ J. Lange, *Väterliche Warnung an die der Theologie ergebene Studirende Jugend*, Halle 1744, 295.

⁴¹ UA, GN. A. 474. 1836, 1, 265. Martin Dober especially refers to this in his account of the Sifting Time, in excerpts in W. Bettermann, *Theologie und Sprache bei Zinzendorf*, Gotha 1935, 62-63. This account has been referred to frequently as a documentation of events of the Sifting Time, but it was written in 1747, when the decisive events had not yet taken place. In addition Dober was an opponent of the conditions at Herrnhag, not its defender.

⁴² G. Mettele, *Der Entwurf des pietistischen Körpers*, in: R. Lächle (Ed.), *Das Echo Halles*, Tübingen 2001, 291-341, 306. When Elisabeth Stephan (1692-1748) lay on her deathbed, she wanted to wear only white clothing to share a communion in Herrnhag with her husband; UA, R. 22. 11. 21.

⁴³ UA Trägersmappe III/28 („Weißer Talar"), letter by Dr. Träger to pastor G. Hasting, June 12, 1952. The dating (May 2, 1748) came from the manuscript of the book *Liturgik* by W. Bettermann, II, 303 (UA, S 242 / 2-2).

⁴⁴ K. Plachte, *Die Gestalt der Kirche nach Zinzendorf*, München 1938, 22; S. Kallnik, *Zur Geschichte und Gestaltung des Ortes Herrnhut als Widerspiegelung brüdergemeindlichen Selbstverständnisses*, (unpublished Diplomarbeit) Berlin 1999, 55-56.

⁴⁵ UA, JHD, 1748, according to H.-W. Erbe, *Herrnhag*, Hamburg 1988, 192.

into the meeting hall for the celebration of communion was an enthusiastic centerpiece of chiliastic ecstasy: "Many swore the Lamb of God (Christ) in person had entered the hall."⁴⁶ Some months after September 8, 1748, Zinzendorf reported that the Brothers and Sisters used these gowns "according to the model from the Apocalypse."⁴⁷ Zinzendorf, making *expressis verbis* reference to the Apocalypse, welcomed this development with these words: "These gowns at our communion are no theatrical display. Rather, they reflect both our future and what Ezechiel and John themselves saw."⁴⁸ The Apostle John was said to have seen the Heavenly Jerusalem.

In this sense it is appropriate to say that "in the Herrnhag Gemeine the distinction between the future and eternity is nearly about to be wiped away, and one is considered now to possess a heavenly joy."⁴⁹ The difference between expectation and fulfillment was no longer clear. Zinzendorf himself was able to minimize the division between the earthly and the heavenly, as he announced: "The chains about Jerusalem have been torn away."⁵⁰ On 6th June 1745 the verse Isaiah 33:20 was drawn as the Watchword (*Losung*) in Marienborn. The text read: "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken

⁴⁶ UA, GN. A. 4, 1748, 2, Beil. XVIII, 316; see also *S Eberhard*, *Kreuzes-Theologie*, München 1937, 222. *Heinrich Bothe* writes of this communion: "Since they (used) twelve long silk gowns, eleven white and one red, which were to represent the Savior and the eleven Apostles"; *H. J. Bothe*, *Zuverlässige Beschreibung des nunmehr ganz entdeckten Herrenhutischen Ehe-Geheimnisses*, II, Berlin 1752, 11-12.

⁴⁷ According to *Erbe*, Herrnhag, 192.

⁴⁸ Zinzendorf on May 24, 1749, according to *Erbe*, Herrnhag, 194. In the Brethren's Chapel Zinzendorf declared on September 30, 1749: "The precursors of our gowns were indisputably the death robes of Christ, confirmed by visions in Revelation" (UA, R. 2. A. 26. 5. b).

⁴⁹ *H.-C. Hahn / H. Reichel* (Ed.), *Zinzendorf und die Herrnhuter Brüder*, Hamburg 1977, 163; similarly by *J. Reichel*, *Dichtungstheorie und Sprache bei Zinzendorf*, Berlin 1969, 14.

For the eschatology of this period see *Eberhard*, *Kreuzes-Theologie*, 218ff; and especially *Bettermann*, *Theologie*, 122 ff. A discussion of this position may be found in *M. Brückner*, *Eschatologie bei Zinzendorf*, (unpublished Systematik-Proseminar-Arbeit) 1988, 22-24.

For Zinzendorfs understanding of time see *P. Degbaye*, *La Jérusalem d'en haut et la Jérusalem d'en bas dans la spiritualité de Zinzendorf*, in: *H. Corbin* (Ed.), *Jérusalem, la cité spirituelle*, Paris 1976, 145-153, 150. Certain Brothers could perceive ecstatic episodes of the "accomplished congregation" around Christ in the Heavenly Jerusalem. Later such visions were dismissed as illnesses. So it was with Brother Jacob Friedrich Hesse, a close friend of Joachim Rubusch: "In his last feverish illness he drew upon much of the 'accomplished community' around Christ in his imaginations in which he often cried loudly and clearly in joy, calling in ecstasy 'Jacob Hesse is here, too'" (UA, R. 22. 03. a. 41).

⁵⁰ According to *Eberhard*, *Kreuzes-Theologie*, 220. Eberhard's quotation (Hs 22; 9.VII.1750 / Hs 23, 18.XI.1750) could not be found in the Moravian Archive at Herrnhut, as it was with other quotations of this book.

down.”⁵¹ Zinzendorf believed this text could be referred to the Wetterau and declared: “Although I am unable to claim in truth that Isaiah in this verse ... indeed thought of Marienborn ..., one can at least say with certainty that there will be holy occurrences everywhere and there will be those prophecies that existed in former times, and they will be as holy as once were.”⁵²

In the public sphere Zinzendorf stood in opposition to the *chiliasmus crassus*, which subscribed to the visible reign of Christ in the world. In fact, he betrayed another opinion that Christ would work less obviously, bringing his Kingdom into “isolated” areas of “wasteland” and thereby influence the world.⁵³ In the Dutch city of Zeist, Zinzendorf preached on May 25, 1747 that „assuming there will be one (Christ’s Kingdom on earth), I believe it will be a quiet Kingdom, one of Sabbatical Reign, and that the world may not be aware of.”⁵⁴ This pronouncement of a Thousand Year Reign as a “Quiet Kingdom” or, as Zinzendorf put it, a “Sabbatical Reign” was to be his position during the 1740th.⁵⁵ And so it was that one Brother Miller could announce the festival of the Single Sisters on May 4, 1749 with the words: “Our Sabbath has arrived.”⁵⁶ During the Sifting Time Zinzendorf often mentioned that Christ’s return would happen in *silentio* and *pleura*, which emphasized and explained the honouring of Christ’s wound over these years (*Seitenwundenverehrung*), which was interpreted as the eschatological sign of his return.⁵⁷ Both notions, i.e. a Sabbatical Kingdom and the *Seitenwundenverehrung*, are contained in the phrase “celebrating Sabbath in the little side hole”.⁵⁸

The apocalypse and the theme of a Heavenly Jerusalem were prominent features in the years of the Sifting Time. These ideas were expressed in the Watchwords, which were printed as early as 1736 (for the year 1737) in both Büdingen and Marienborn. Looking at all the Watchwords

⁵¹ UA, Hs. 5, 1.

⁵² UA, Hs. 5, 4-5.

⁵³ *Uttendörfer*, Zinzendorf, 278-279; *P. Vogt*, Die Seitenwunde Jesu Christi bei Zinzendorf, (unpublished term paper for the second examination in theology) Herrnhut 2003, Cap.3.3.5; in particular *Degbaye*, Jérusalem, 147, who speaks of the possession of God’s Reign among the Moravians. Zinzendorf, Synodum, 232.

⁵⁴ On May 12, 1748, Zinzendorf mentioned that disputes among residents were reconciled during a worship service on August 13, 1727, when “the Sabbath has begun”; *Wollstadt*, Dienen, 35.

⁵⁵ UA, R. 4. C. IV. 13a, compare with hymn no. 2334, 3 of the same title and the festival of the Single Brothers on May 2, 1748, when, before the brothers gownned in white entered the hall, one Brother Lieberkühl spoke twice: „Our Sabbath comes, you know for what we wait”; UA, GN. A. 4. 1748, 2, Beil. XVIII, 316.

⁵⁷ *Vogt*, Seitenwunde, Cap.3.3.5.

⁵⁸ UA, R. 4. B. Vb. 2, 6. For more on the wounds worship, see *Craig D. Atwood*, Community of the Cross. Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem. State College Pennsylvania, Penn State Univ. Press, 2004.

from 1729 to 1750, one can see that quotations from Revelation were used with varying frequency. No verses from chapters 9, 16, and 18 of Revelation were used, and verses from chapters 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 20 were used no more than three times. In contrast, chapters 21 and 22, in which the Heavenly Jerusalem is described, were used nineteen times (chapter 21 eleven times and chapter 22 eight times).⁵⁹ In terms of content all these verses convey images of Heaven on Earth. Series with a similar content were popular, as in the 38th week of the year 1746: "Here is indeed the House of God" (September 19), "My cities shall again flourish" (September 22), "Through you shall be built what for long was wilderness, and you shall be the foundation for eternity ... that man shall live there" (September 23). From the 26th of October to the 2nd of November 1749, the Brothers received their final inspirational mottos from Revelation. Among them were: "The temple shall be opened for the works of witnesses in Heaven" (October 26), "The Lord God Almighty is your temple" (October 29), and "Behold! The tabernacle of God is with man" (October 30), and "I am soon among you" (November 2).⁶⁰

The experiment of Herrnhag did not reach fruition. The split between settlers and the leadership arose over allegiance to the new Earl Gustav Friedrich von Ysenburg-Büdingen, who begrudged the Moravian Church its presence and demanded the residents repudiate Zinzendorf. With their refusal came the expulsion of the residents through the Edict of February 12, 1750. Within three years there ensued the last of the great religiously and politically occasioned waves of emigration in central Germany. The refugees from Herrnhag fled to the communities of Herrnhut, Neuwied, Zeist, and Niesky; others found a land of tolerance in Pennsylvania. Herrnhag was no longer seen as a Heavenly Jerusalem but rather a fallen Jerusalem. A travel diary from 1760 records: "We came through Herrnhag only to see a decrepit place inhabited by dark owls. The common hall looked to be still in good shape, but all other buildings, and especially the Sisters Choir House, were very reminiscent of the destruction of Jerusalem."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Losungen that were drawn more often than Chapter 21 and 22 of Revelations were the first Chapter (Greeting to the Seven Churches, 35 times), the second Chapter (Writings to the Seven Churches, 28 times), the third Chapter (ibid., 36 times), the fifth Chapter (The Seven Seals, 16 times) and the nineteenth Chapter (Rejoicing in Heaven, 16 times).

⁶⁰ Series of watchwords with related verses and quotations were drawn before, as from November 5th, 1740 until December 8th, 1740, when, with exception of November 19-20 and December 4-5, each day a Losung was drawn from Revelation. In October 1740 a quotation from Revelation was drawn 14 times, in November again 14 times and in December 13 times. Thus daily life was influenced by the book of Revelation.

⁶¹ According to *Gill*, Zeit, 29. From time to time the verse "How deserted lies the city, once so full of people!" (Lamentations 1:1) was, instead of Jerusalem, now applied on Herrnhag; *Cröger*, Geschichte, II, 181.

Conclusion

A number of areas within this phenomenon of the Heavenly Jerusalem invite historians, theologians, and literary specialists to further research. In Ronsdorf and Herrnhaag the understanding of a Heavenly Jerusalem directly affected not only its clergy, but also the typical resident. It left its stamp on questions of art, of daily living, of writings and of architecture. While these notions may seem foreign to us today, they were once central to the utopian hopes. Ronsdorf and Herrnhaag had a surprising number of similarities. Both used a language of mysticism which contained many peculiarities. Each group emphasized the love feasts. Women played meaningful roles in both communities. Ronsdorf and Herrnhaag alike were strongly influenced by Radical Pietism. Even the physical features of the two settlements were much alike, of equal size, of having been set upon a high plateau, and of conforming to quadrilinear dimensions with communal buildings and an urban infrastructure. For residents in Ronsdorf and Herrnhaag, the Heavenly Jerusalem was not considered merely symbolic or allegorical. Rather, the settlement was to some extent indeed the actual Heavenly Jerusalem. In perhaps no other settlements of the 18th centuries can the comparison with a Heavenly Jerusalem be so clearly drawn.

Both Eller and Zinzendorf, along with Zinzendorf's son Christian Renatus, had charismatic personalities. As patriarchal leaders they knew how to rally followers and overcome resistance. These people were able skillfully to exploit the idea of a Heavenly Jerusalem in order to legitimize themselves and attract followers. The success of Herrnhaag and Ronsdorf lay in how they managed to respond to a longing for alternative societies or for a way of living not offered in conventional communities of the day. For many followers the idea of a Heavenly Jerusalem had a positive connotation, built on the expectations that inhabitants of these settlement would play a small role in the End of Time. The references to a Heavenly Jerusalem were enthusiastically welcomed by residents but sharply criticized in polemical writings. These raging polemics fulfilled the immediate aim of bringing down the Ronsdorf community, and, to some extent, had an impact on the end of Herrnhaag. Both anti-Zionite writings and anti-Zinzendorferiana shared a clear condemnation of Chiliasm.

Despite their similarities, there were significant differences between the two communities. In Ronsdorf the *chiliasmus crassus* dominated; the End of Time had already dawned, and Eller and Büchel were given extraordinary reverence and accepted as prophets while opponents were threatened with annihilation. Herrnhaag on the other hand, where the more cautious form of *chiliasmus subtilis* prevailed, reacted less aggressively towards its opponents. It extended less into the surrounding world than the Ronsdorf community.

One very important difference between the Zionites and the Moravian Church is that the former died out, the latter did not. Curiously enough, it was just the opposite for their settlements: Ronsdorf still exists; Herrnhaag does not. The price for the historical survival of social communities has been the need to give up the radicalism of the founding days and become established. In the case of the Moravian Church this required evolving from a social-religious movement to a more conventional church, as other protestant denominations have done. It was necessary to relinquish the idea of the Heavenly Jerusalem, which had served as a force like other chiliastic or millennialistic elements of the Moravian Church throughout the early 18th century.