

# The Decline and Fall of the Moravian Community in Colonial Georgia: Revising the Traditional View<sup>1</sup>

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In the 1730s the Moravians rapidly expanded their missionary networks throughout the world. They reached the shores of British North America in 1735, when ten members led by August Gottlieb Spangenberg arrived at Savannah in the new colony of Georgia. While the Moravian community in that colony did not last long and was never large, most historians have considered it important because it marked the beginning of what would become the group's very successful settlement in North America and because the reasons usually attributed to the community's decline fit in with traditions of suffering, oppression, and religious freedom important to the history of the Moravians and early America. In the first decade after the founding of Georgia by the British in 1733 many important developments in the history of the colony took place, including growth and expansion caused primarily by the nearly continuous immigration of British, Germans, and other Europeans, rising tensions with Native Americans, war with Spain, and religious conflict among European settlers, including Moravians. Somehow in the midst of these and other developments the Moravian community in Georgia disintegrated. This essay will deal with the causes of its disintegration and how historians from the eighteenth century to the present have interpreted this event. Was the community victimized by pressure from the government and inhabitants of the colony to bear arms in the war against Spain, as most of the literature emphasizes? Did it collapse under the pressure of religious adversaries in the colony? Or did something else cause its downfall? Why have so many historians taken the view that the pressure to bear arms was the chief cause for the decline of this early Moravian community in America?

American Moravian historian Adelaide H. Fries provides the most detailed modern account of how the pressure to bear arms forced the pacifist Moravians to abandon their colony in Georgia. When writing her influential monograph

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*The Moravians in Georgia, 1735-1740*<sup>2</sup>, she had access to most if not all of the relevant sources. Fries lists numerous internal problems within the Moravian community, but these were less important to her when deciding why the community collapsed. Fries clearly shows that there was significant pressure against the Moravians to bear arms, from both local inhabitants and from the authorities. When the Moravians pointed out to officials that they were exempt from military service by prior agreement between Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf and the Georgia Trustees in London, they met resentment and threats from other colonists. Then they confronted James Oglethorpe (the colonial governor), explained their pacifist principles, and convinced him not to pressure them into taking up arms. This may have swayed Oglethorpe, but other colonists still resented the Moravians' military exemption. As the pressure from local officials and inhabitants increased, the Moravians evoked a regulation forbidding servants to bear arms, and then claimed that all but two of their members were servants. When Zinzendorf gave explicit instructions in 1737 for them not to bear arms and then requested permission from the colony's Trustees in London to allow four Indian missionaries to remain while the others left if this could not be honored, the Georgia Moravians found themselves in a no win situation. The »death-blow« to the settlement came when the Trustees responded to Zinzendorf that the Moravians could leave the colony after paying their debts, but that no missionaries could remain. Fries is certain that if the Trustees had fully respected their religious principles, enough members would have stayed to form the nucleus of a larger colony, which surely would have followed them. »If the Trustees had even permitted the Moravians to stay as missionaries it might have saved the settlement...,« she wrote, but the Trustees »shut the door in their faces.« Under this pressure the community languished and finally left Georgia.<sup>3</sup>

A number of eighteenth-century accounts support Fries' view, or at least appear to on the surface. The most important of these is the view of Georg Neisser, who was in Georgia from 1736 to 1737 and later wrote a series of three unpublished treatises describing the early history of the Moravian movement in North America in which he emphasized the problem of bearing arms: In spite of the promised military exemption, Moravians »could not enjoy their wishes for liberty,« he wrote. Fellow residents »insisted upon their rendering war-service commensurate with themselves.« Spangenberg was unable to help them, according to Neisser, and »because of the prospect of still further oppression and hostility,«

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2 Adelaide L. Fries, *The Moravians in Georgia, 1735-1740*, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1905. Although her work is clearly based on original documents kept by the Moravians, Fries unfortunately chose not to include footnotes.

3 Fries, *The Moravians in Georgia*, 162-220, especially 171-187.



the Moravians decided to leave Georgia as soon as they had paid off their debts and »betake themselves gradually to Bethlehem, which, indeed, they affected.« Also, John Brownfield, a Moravian recruit and one of their last holdouts in Georgia, finally left the colony in 1745 because of the military pressure, according to a contemporary account, although this occurred so late that it can hardly be considered an example of why the entire community left – by this time only a few Moravian stragglers remained in the colony, and the »community« by all accounts had long since disintegrated. Finally Spangenberg himself, who travelled back and forth between Georgia and Pennsylvania from 1735 to 1739, suggested in a work published in 1752 that the Moravians left because of the local pressure to bear arms, even though the Trustees had exempted them.<sup>4</sup>

The theme of military pressure and suffering recorded by Georg Neisser and amplified by Fries is a powerful one that influenced many later historians, but there are other possible explanations for the Moravians' departure from Georgia. Many of the Moravians' neighbors not only resented their military exemption, but also despised their religious beliefs and practices as well. Early on George Whitefield (like John Wesley and many others) had been impressed with Moravian piety and enthusiasm in England and Georgia, but later his views changed. He had supported their efforts in Georgia and helped them get land in Pennsylvania, but by late 1740 a rift had developed between Whitefield and the Moravians. For the Moravians in Georgia, trouble came when Johann Hagen

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4 Neisser only briefly mentioned other causes for the decline of the community, namely the hot climate and the hostility of the Halle Lutheran pastors working in the Salzburger community in Ebenezer, a few miles upriver from Savannah. See Georg Neisser, »Kurzgefasster Aufsatz von der Mährischen u. Böhmischen Brüder anfänglicher Ausbreitung in den Nord-Americanischen Colonien u. Missionen vom Jahr 1732 bis 1741.« I have used the modern English translation of this work translated and edited by William N. Schwarze and S.H. Gapp. See *A History of the Beginnings of Moravian Work in America*, Bethlehem 1955, especially 16-23 and 41-42. Schwarze and Gapp also included two other early works by Neisser in this edition: »Angemerkte Vorkommenheiten bey den Brüdern in den Forks of Delaware um die Zeit des Anbaues von Bethlehem, in dem Jahr 1741« and »Kurzgefasste Berichte von den Vorgängen der Ersten Hälfte des Jahres 1742.« Taken together, Neisser's three works provide an important comprehensive early history of the Moravian settlements in North America. On John Brownfield, see entries for 27 July and 4 August 1742, 5 July 1743, and especially the entry for 16 March 1745 in E. Merton Coulter (ed.), *The Journal of William Stephens, 1741-1745*, 2 vols. Athens 1958-1959. For Spangenberg's comments see August Gottlieb Spangenberg, *Apologetische Schluß-Schrift, Worinn über tausend Beschuldigungen gegen die Brüder-Gemeinen und Ihren zeitherigen Ordinarium nach der Wahrheit beantwortet werden*, 2 vols. Leipzig and Görlitz 1752, 398-399. Note: Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.



began preaching four times per week to Germans in Whitefield's house in Savannah. In July 1740 Hagen wrote that Whitefield still thought dearly of the brethren («er hat die Brüder lieb»), but by October the situation had changed. According to Moravian reports, Hagen had argued directly with Whitefield himself over the doctrine of unconditional reprobation, and later some of Whitefield's supporters had challenged Hagen in his own house about his teaching of universal grace. When Hagen rejected their belief in the doctrine of limited atonement, they denounced him. Hagen countered with accusations of sexual misconduct on the part of the Whitefield supporters, but this only worsened his position. By the end of the year Whitefield was in a dispute with Moravians in Pennsylvania over the land he had given them for establishing a community there, and the rift between them was irreparable.<sup>5</sup>

While Moravian relations with Whitefield's followers had turned from good to bad by 1740, they began badly and never improved with the Lutherans. Indeed, some of the worst religious tensions in the early history of the colony developed between these two groups, who had been battling each other since the Moravians' arrival in 1735. Two pastors chosen by Gotthilf August Francke (the head of the Lutheran pietist center in Halle) named Johann Martin Boltzius and Israel Christian Gronau led the settlement of Salzburg Lutheran refugees at Ebenezer, near Savannah, where the Moravians lived. Francke warned Boltzius to beware of the dangerous Moravians and instructed him to watch the group closely and report on their activities, but to avoid contact with them. Under these conditions Boltzius developed a bitter hatred toward the Moravians in Georgia and elsewhere, which he expressed in his correspondence and reports to Francke. John Wesley, who admired both the Halle pietists and the Moravians, attempted to bring the two groups together in Ebenezer and help them negotiate a truce, but after a brief improvement in relations, his mediation attempt failed. The tensions between these two groups in the colony were part of a large web of interests, maneuvers, and conflicts that involved the Moravians, the Halle Lutherans, and many other

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5 Hagen to Moravians in Europe, 9 July 1740 and 5 October 1740, printed in *Büdingische Sammlung Einiger In die Kirchen-Historie Einschlagender Sonderlich neuerer Schrifften*, vol. 2, Leipzig 1742-1743, 194-196 and 173-178; Neisser, *History of the Beginnings*, esp. 19-23. On the problem between the Moravians and Whitefield in Pennsylvania see J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church, the Renewed Unitas Fratrum, 1722-1957*, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1967, 85-86. On the Moravians in Georgia see Hamilton and Hamilton, 82-85.



religious groups at that time and were an important part of the evangelical revival just then developing in both Europe and North America.

While tensions between the Lutherans in Georgia were significant, was this the primary cause of the collapse of the Moravian community there?<sup>7</sup> Probably not. The Hallensers did successfully exert pressure which led to the removal of Moravians from other mission fields where both groups worked, for example in Denmark, Danish Schleswig, and in Holstein. In these areas the Hallensers were able to gain court favor, while the Moravians were not, and this favor assisted them in their campaigns against the Moravians, as well as other enemies like orthodox Lutherans, and Swedish separatists in these territories.<sup>8</sup> But in Georgia the situation was different. There the government nominally supported the Anglican Church, but in reality tolerated all of the German groups and stayed out of the Lutheran-Moravian conflict. If anything, Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees actually supported the Moravians to some extent. Further, there was never a direct assault by the Hallensers on the Moravians, but instead verbal exchanges, arguments, and competition, mostly through third parties like Wesley or other inhabitants of the colony. In other words, relations between the two were tense, but they never exploded, and although the Lutherans at Ebenezer may have made life harder for the Moravians, it appears that they never really did anything that would have actually forced them to leave.<sup>9</sup>

The most persuasive evidence that might explain the decline and fall of the Moravian community in Georgia points not toward external factors like the pressure to bear arms against the Spanish or religious conflict with other groups,

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6 Aaron Spencer Fogleman, »Shadow Boxing in Georgia: The Beginnings of the Moravian-Lutheran Conflict in British North America,« *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 83 (1999), 629-659. There is a voluminous literature on the eighteenth-century transatlantic evangelical revival. I have relied primarily on the following: W.R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, Cambridge 1992, e.g. 44-46 and 116-159; W.R. Ward, *Faith and Faction*, London 1993; several essays in Martin Brecht and Klaus Deppermann (eds.), *Geschichte des Pietismus*, vol. 2, *Der Pietismus im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1995; Johannes Wallmann, *Der Pietismus*, Göttingen 1990; and F. Ernst Stoeffler, *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century*, Leiden, 1973.

7 Neisser (16-17) lists this as one cause of the collapse, although he ranked it well below the military problem.

8 Manfred Jakubowski-Tiessen, »Der Pietismus in Dänemark und Schleswig-Holstein«. In: Brecht and Deppermann, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, vol. 2, 446-471.

9 Later in northern Virginia, for example, the Lutherans did force Moravian itinerants (Landprediger) to flee the colony, and they used colonial authorities to help them. See Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775*, Philadelphia 1996, 117-120.



but instead toward internal problems within the community. After a few years it was becoming clear that the Moravian mission in Georgia in general was failing. Their attempt to work with the Salzburgers was blocked by the Hallensers. Their Native American mission had been halted by the war. The slave mission across the river in Purysburg, South Carolina did poorly from the beginning and ended when Georg Schullius died in 1739 and Peter Böhler departed for Pennsylvania a few months later. One of the biggest failures of the original Georgia mission was their inability to settle the Schwenkfelders there. For years this persecuted group from Silesia had sought and received refuge and support from Zinzendorf and the Moravians in Upper Lusatia. For the count, close contact and interaction with this group was an important part of his rapidly developing ecumenical plans for Europe and North America. Throughout the negotiations with the Georgia Trustees in London, the Moravians had emphasized their desire to settle the Schwenkfelders there. Early on that group tentatively agreed to the Moravian plan, and Zinzendorf, Spangenberg, and others worked furiously to keep them on course for Georgia. But ultimately the Schwenkfelders concluded that the Moravians could not meet their needs and settled instead in the Pennsylvania backcountry. Later Spangenberg tried hard to get them to forsake Pennsylvania for Georgia: Believing that the Schwenkfelders were unhappy in Pennsylvania, he expedited his plans to visit that colony in the summer of 1735 in order to attempt to persuade the Schwenkfelders to move south. After arriving there, Spangenberg met on numerous occasions with members of the group, but the Schwenkfelders would not budge. By then they had learned what many other of the small, German religious groups had learned in America – Pennsylvania had more to offer than Georgia, or any other colony. Thus yet another part of the Moravian mission in Georgia had failed.<sup>10</sup>

The way the Moravians departed Georgia supports the idea that the community left for reasons other than the pressure to bear arms. Their own records indicate that its members trickled away from the colony, many of them on their own, without official sanction or assignments from their leadership and before there

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10 On the failure of the Moravian Schwenkfelder mission see Horst Weigelt, »The Emigration of the Schwenkfelders from Silesia to America,« 2-15, and John B. Frantz, »Schwenkfelders and Moravians in America,« 101-111, in Peter C. Erb (ed.), *Schwenkfelders in America*, Pennsburg 1987; August Gottlieb Spangenberg, *Leben des Herrn Nicolaus Ludwig Grafen und Herrn von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf*, 8 vols. Barby 1773-1775, 803-804; Spangenberg's letters dated 16 June and 11 July 1735 in George Fenwick Jones and Paul Martin Peucker (trans. and ed.), »We Have Come to Georgia with Pure Intentions«: Moravian Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg's Letters from Savannah, 1735,« *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 82 (1998), 84-120.



was a significant threat from the Spanish (see Table 1).<sup>11</sup> Four of them left in 1736, another six in the next year, and ten more the year after that. Indeed by 1740 the preacher and Native American missionary Johann Hagen was the only Moravian who had come from Europe that still remained in the colony. He continued to work with a small number of English and German recruits until early 1742, when he departed for Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The last remaining recruits followed him to Bethlehem in 1745.

When the Moravians left Georgia they did not settle in one area, but instead scattered across the northern colonies and Europe. Most journeyed to Pennsylvania, and many of these settled in Germantown, refusing to contact the rest of the Moravians. Others scattered to Bethlehem, to Philadelphia, to Skippack, Nazareth, Goshenhoppen, and to the Native American mission at Matetsche. Additionally, one Moravian from Georgia went to New York, and eight returned to Europe.<sup>12</sup>

This slow withering away and scattering of the Moravian community in Georgia suggests that something other than oppression may have caused its decline. Usually oppression and expulsion causes a community to become even more cohesive in its new homeland. When the Lutherans were persecuted and expelled from the Archbishopric of Salzburg in 1731-1732, for example, most moved and settled in large groups, forming distinct, cohesive communities. Indeed, their exclusive community at Ebenezer, Georgia flourished for decades. Yet when the Moravians left Georgia, their community disintegrated and scattered throughout the northern colonies, and some returned to Europe.<sup>13</sup>

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11 Jean François Reynier, for example, left Georgia in 1738 to join the Moravians at Herrnhag, although he had no authorization from either the Georgia community or Herrnhag to do this.

See Reynier to Spangenberg, 27 August 1738, R.14.A.6.e, Unity Archives, Herrnhut.

12 Some of the recruits, like John Brownfield, Heinrich and Sybilla Barbara Beck and their three children, and Anne Catharine Krempe departed Georgia for Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1745. James Burnside and his daughter Rebecca departed in 1744, and Abraham Büninger left with Hagen in 1742. See Neisser, 6-10 and 23, and Fries, 236-242.

13 Mack Walker, *The Salzburg Transaction: Expulsion and Redemption in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, Ithaca, New York, 1992; George Fenwick Jones, *The Salzburger Saga: Religious Exiles and Other Germans Along the Savannah*, Athens 1984 and Renate Wilson, »Public Works and Piety in Ebenezer: The Missing Salzburger Diaries of 1744-1745«. In: *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77 (1993), 336-366.



Table 1 Arrivals and Departures of Moravians in Savannah, Georgia, 1735-1745

Year	Arrivals	Recruits	Births	Deaths	Departures	Total Present at Year's End
1735	10	3	0	1	0	12
1736	25	0	0	4	4	29
1737	0	5	2	2	6	28
1738	5	5	0	0	10	23
1739	0	0	0	2	5	23
1740	1	1	0	0	11	12
1741	0	0	0	0	0	12
1742	0	0	0	0	2	10
1743	0	0	0	0	0	10
1744	0	0	0	0	2	8
1745	0	0	0	0	8	0
Total	41	14	2	9	48	

Note: The date of joining the Moravian community is unknown for ten recruits who left Georgia with other Moravians. I have estimated that five joined in 1737 and five in 1738 – that is after the arrival of the main parties and the initial settling in period, but while the community was still relatively strong. Temporary recruits who joined the group in Georgia, but did not remain with them as they departed were not considered.

Source: Based primarily on Neisser, *History of the Beginnings of Moravian Work in America*, especially 6-10, and Fries, *The Moravians in Georgia*, 221-224.

The most crucial body of evidence, not yet investigated by historians that sheds light on the failure of the colony lies in the Unity Archives in Herrnhut, namely Spangenberg's »Letters from America.« Written in Pennsylvania from 1736 to 1739, just after his own departure from Georgia, Spangenberg directly addressed the issue. He had worked hard within the community and then witnessed its dissolution from afar, observing the behavior of its disgruntled former inhabitants trickling into Pennsylvania. In his private letters written during and immediately after these events took place, Spangenberg emphasized above all that an internal crisis within the Moravian community caused its



collapse – a view he did not project in his published work of 1752, which was a polemic designed to publicly defend the Moravians against their many detractors, not a history of the movement.<sup>14</sup>

Spangenberg's letters provide a realistic, detailed first-hand account of the decline and fall of the Moravian community in colonial Georgia – a view not present in his earlier »Letters from Savannah,« which were written when all was well among the Moravians, as they worked together in their communal economy during the first difficult weeks and months to overcome sickness and get started in their New World.<sup>15</sup> His later »Letters from America« describe the whereabouts and activities of individual members in Georgia, and former members who went to Pennsylvania. He wrote them in Pennsylvania, where he stayed off and on until 1739, when Zinzendorf recalled him to Europe. In 1738 Spangenberg wrote that many of the society who had gone to Georgia had come north and now lived in Germantown, or in New York, and that things were going badly for those who remained in the southern colony. Newly-arriving »Palatines« were being given hard terms as indentured servants, and the location was being turned into a »field of war« (*campus martis*). Of those Moravians remaining in Georgia, some were with Indians and some were in Savannah. Things weren't much better in the north either. There a few were trying to maintain a religious community with him, but most were on their own. By the spring of 1738 Spangenberg was living in a house near Skippack with Christoph Wiegner, Christoph Baus, and Baus' mother and sister. Meanwhile people from all religions or parties came to visit them. They lived in a place where mostly Schwenkfelders settled, but there were also Mennonites, Lutherans, Reformed, and other groups. Visitors from all groups were welcome in their house, and many came, but in spite of Spangenberg's efforts, the Schwenkfelders rejected him and by 1739 broke off contact completely. Georg Neisser (who later wrote the influential account of the Moravian settlements in Georgia and Pennsylvania) was also there, but he was a problem case – his awakening in Georgia had been exaggerated. Gottlieb Haberecht, who was in Germantown, wanted nothing to do with Spangenberg's group and talked badly about the Moravians in Georgia. (Later he joined the cloister at Ephrata, led by the German mystic, Conrad Beissel.) David Tannenberger was in Germantown and wanted to move in with them. Michael

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14 See »Briefe von A.G. Spangenberg aus America während seiner 4 Aufenthalte daselbst, 1736-1739« R.14.A.18.1, Unity Archives, Herrnhut, which includes a collection of 15 letters he wrote in Pennsylvania to various Moravians in Europe during this period. For his later publication see Spangenberg, *Apologetische Schluß-Schrift*, 398-399.

15 Jones and Peucker, »Spangenberg's Letters from Savannah.«



Meyer, Gotthard Demuth, and David Jag were in Germantown as well, but wanted nothing to do with them. (Jag later took a wife and settled in the country somewhere.) Georg and Anna Waschke and Gotthard and Regina Demuth were temporarily in New York. They were building a house in Germantown and wanted to remain to themselves. Matthias Seybold left the problems in Georgia and was in limbo – neither part of the Moravian community, nor a »free spirit« (*Freygeister*). Lastly, Augustin Neisser was learning clockmaking from the radical separatist Christopher Saur in Germantown, and was not as guilty as the others for their problems.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly something was wrong with the remnant Moravian community that had moved north from Georgia. Spangenberg described it not as a victim of war, government persecution, religious rivalry, or some other kind of »suffering,« but rather as a community experiencing a »Confusion« – a German-American euphemism for religious strife within a community. Upon arriving in 1735, according to Spangenberg, the Moravians in Georgia began a communal economy: All earnings went to the group's coffers, and each received what he or she needed. Spangenberg believed that the trouble came in Georgia (as it had in their West Indian colony at St. Croix) when they mixed business (»earning our bread«) with spreading the Gospel. Some did not want to become full-fledged members (*aufgenommen werden*) and were only loosely associated. Most joined the community to get food and other care, not to better understand Jesus, Spangenberg thought.<sup>17</sup> So the Georgia community divided into two parts: Those who remained and were still doing well, although they were under pressure to take up arms against the Spanish, and those who moved to Germantown. It was not long before most of the rump congregation left Georgia as well. By the time he moved to Pennsylvania in 1736, Spangenberg found the Moravians from Georgia living there scattered and divided. It was difficult to describe the damage done by their behavior, and he recommended that the remaining members in Georgia come to Pennsylvania, as well. There they ought to live and work together, to heal their wounds. Spangenberg suggested that they form another communal economy, in which everyone voluntarily worked together and no one was forced to follow the rules. This would be only for themselves (i.e. they had

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16 Spangenberg to Isaac LeLong, 21 March 1738; Spangenberg to Zinzendorf, 21 March 1738; Spangenberg to LeLong, 9 June 1738; Spangenberg to LeLong, 25 September 1738; Spangenberg to ?, 20 July 1739; Spangenberg to Nitschmann, 7 March 1739, in »Briefe Spangenbergs aus Amerika.«  
17 »Aber viele unter ihnen, davon aber doch die meisten noch nicht als glieder der gemeine aufgenommen waren, sondern nur unter der gemeine besorgung u. Verpflegung stunden, nicht lauterlich suchten, was Jesu Christi ist...« Spangenberg to Isaac LeLong, 9 June 1738, R.14.18.1, Unity Archives, Herrnhut.



no intention to extend this to other groups in the area), and members could leave at any time. As the Moravians from Georgia continued to trickle into Pennsylvania, Spangenberg's group encouraged them to join the economy, so that they would not have to scatter into the countryside to earn their daily bread, and thus »fall into the hands of the Tempter« (*»dem Versucher in die Hände zu fallen«*). But many of them ignored Spangenberg's call and scattered anyway, since they had left Georgia to avoid living with each other in the first place. The internal problems there had been so severe that most were not willing to try again. Spangenberg specifically stated that these problems had little to do with their unwillingness to bear arms against the Spanish: »The threat of war with the Spanish alarmed them (the Moravians), because they did not want to bear arms, but it did not do them any harm,« he wrote.<sup>18</sup> In short, Spangenberg carefully outlined what the military issues were, and even though he complained about the »field of war« in Georgia, he categorically stated that this did not cause them to leave the colony – internal problems did.<sup>19</sup>

Other Moravian spokesmen in the Georgia community corroborate Spangenberg's view of internal dissention rather than external pressure to bear arms as the primary cause of its disintegration. Johann Töltzschig, who returned to Europe in the spring of 1738 to get help for the mission and never went back, indirectly supported Spangenberg's view in his letters and report to Zinzendorf from Georgia. Like Spangenberg, Töltzschig described all of the problems the Georgia Moravians were having (including the military pressure) and stated specifically that internal dissension, not war, caused the collapse: »It was to be then, that the dear Savior had us depart, not because of the war, but because most did not want to remain with us since the country and the entire set up here did not suit or please them.«

Töltzschig then elaborated at length on their internal disputes and failures, especially emphasizing that many individuals like Peter Rose (the Indian missionary) and his wife were untrue, even rotten, and that others wanted to leave and strike out on their own. Yet Töltzschig only briefly mentioned the military pressure, noting satirically that official promises to respect their pacifism

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18 »Der Kriegslerm mit den Spaniern, darüber sie sehr in die Lerne kamen, weil sie die Waffen nicht ergreifen wolten, hat ihnen aber keinen schaden gethan.« Spangenberg to LeLong, 9 June 1738.

19 Spangenberg to Zinzendorf, 21 March 1738; Spangenberg to ?, 20 July 1739. Spangenberg informed Isaac LeLong that he would be hearing about the problems in Georgia from Johann Töltzschig, who was sent home by them (they had their reasons) and was on his way to Herrnhut (see Spangenberg to LeLong, 9 June 1738).



were only kept during peacetime.<sup>20</sup> Also, years later Georg Waschke told a Lutheran pastor in Pennsylvania how he had joined the Moravians in Herrnhut, was sent by Zinzendorf to their community in Savannah, and then left them for Pennsylvania in 1738 after seeing the »horrors and the corruption« (»*Greul u. die Unlauterkeiten*«) of these people.<sup>21</sup>

The Moravians' inability to live and work together in a communal economy and the resulting decline of the Georgia community occurred while the leadership of the colony was away – both Spangenberg and David Nitschmann had gone to Pennsylvania. The problems that developed after they left seem to have been more than Johann Töltshig, Johann Hagen, and the others could handle.<sup>22</sup> After the Salzburger, Schwenkfelder, Native American, and slave missions had failed, Hagen focused on relations with the Whitefield group in Savannah, but ultimately this led to trouble as well. Throughout it all the Halle pietist pastors in Ebenezer continued to denounce those Moravians remaining in Georgia, and the military threat continued, although no Moravians were ever actually forced to bear arms.<sup>23</sup>

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20 »Sollte es auch sein, daß uns der liebe Heiland nicht von wegen des Krieges willen hätte heißen ausgehen, so könnst es sein um dessenwillen, weil die allermeisten nicht bei uns bleiben wollen, weil ihnen das Land und die ganze Einrichtung hier nicht anstehet und gefällt.« Töltshig to Zinzendorf, 14 December 1737, R.14.A.6.d.20. See also Töltshig's report to Zinzendorf 1738, R.14.A.6.e, Unity Archives, Herrnhut. Karl Müller, *200 Jahre Brüdermission*, vol. 1, *Das erste Missionsjahrhundert*, Herrnhut 1931, 200-206, read these and other letters of Töltshig and came to the same conclusion.

21 Johann Friedrich Hanschuchs *Diaria*, 1748-1753, here 19 January 1752, AFSt/M IV H 10, Archives of the Francke Foundation, Halle.

22 Fries mentions the following internal problems in the Savannah community: a dispute over who would marry couples and baptize children, two men trying to marry the same (non-Moravian) woman, a number of men complaining to Spangenberg when he returned from Pennsylvania in 1737 that they wanted to leave, and Jean François Reynier arguing with Schulius and then departing for Europe. Also, Juliane Jaeschke was »ill-mannered, and obstructing everything« – especially causing trouble when choosing a husband, many mistrusted Peter Böhler when he returned from the South Carolina slave mission in 1740 (by which time the »bands« had been dropped and communion was no longer being celebrated in Savannah), and a dispute between the community and Judith Töltshig and her brother, both of whom left for Germany in 1740, which pleased other members of the Moravian colony greatly. See Fries, 158-159, 174-178 and 213-215.

23 George Fenwick Jones notes that neither Moravians, nor Salzburg Lutherans, nor any other Germans were ever forced to serve in any of the colonial wars, although many individual (non-Moravian) Germans did serve in the wars. See George Fenwick Jones, »The 'Dutch' Participation in Georgia's Colonial Wars,« *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 75 (1991), 771-783.



In the face of these external problems, the Moravians could not resolve their internal problems, and the colony failed.

If Spangenberg's initial views are so clear and are corroborated by other evidence, why have so many Moravian and other historians, beginning with Georg Neisser, who participated in the Georgia settlement himself, emphasized the pressure to bear arms instead? Neisser had at least two possible reasons for describing the decline of the Georgia community the way he did. First, like most contemporary historians Neisser lived through the events he wrote about and was influenced (or biased) by them. Neisser was sent from Georgia to Pennsylvania in 1737 to seek Spangenberg's help, and there were tensions between the two. In fact, Neisser worked outside the Moravian community there for the next four years and was clearly in some kind of trouble with Spangenberg, if not the entire community, although he later reconciled with them. The second reason why Neisser may have emphasized oppression and suffering above all was because this fit in better with his larger goals as an historian of the movement. Neisser felt that it was his duty to promote the cause and legitimacy of the troubled Moravian Church by demonstrating its connections to the ancient *Unitas Fratrum* in Bohemia and Moravia, which had been a severely persecuted, pacifist movement that many Protestants in the eighteenth century held in high esteem. Thus his own personal involvement in the Georgia mission, which may not have always been entirely positive, together with his later goals as an historian, seem to have influenced which issues Neisser chose to emphasize in his account of the decline of the Moravian community in Georgia, and his choices had long-range consequences for the writing of the history of the colony.<sup>24</sup>

Other eighteenth-century Moravian historians followed Neisser's lead and emphasized suffering in order to gain sympathy and legitimacy for their struggling group. In his *Alte und Neue Brüder-Historie (Old and New History of the Brethren)*, first published in 1771, David Cranz stressed the Native American mission and assistance to the Schwenkfelders as the causes of the Moravian mission to Georgia. According to him, things were going well until 1739, when the war with Spain led to the pressure to bear arms. This forced them to abandon their flourishing settlement and move to Pennsylvania.<sup>25</sup> Georg Heinrich Loskiel

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24 For an evaluation of Neisser as an historian and a discussion of the above themes see Albert H. Frank, »Georg Neisser: An Early Moravian Historian,« *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 23:2 (1979), 1-11.

25 I have consulted the second edition of Cranz's work, published a year later. See David Cranz, *Alte und Neue Brüder-Historie oder kurz gefaßte Geschichte der Evangelischen Brüder-Unität in den ältern Zeiten und insonderheit in dem gegenwärtigen Jahrhundert*, 2nd edition Barby 1772, 219-220 and 248-251.



echoed these themes in his *Geschichte der Mission der evangelischen Brüder unter den Indianern in Nordamerika*, published in 1789. He, too, wrote that the Moravian colony in Georgia flourished, that the Indian mission was going well, that they affectionately served their neighbors, and that the authorities considered them to be peaceful, orderly, and God-fearing people. All was well until the Spanish threat arose. The government exempted the Moravians from bearing arms, but other settlers resented this, so the Moravians paid off their debts and began leaving their flourishing plantations for Pennsylvania in 1738. The move to Pennsylvania was complete by 1740, and this ended the Indian mission in Georgia, which according to Loskiel had gotten off to such a good start.<sup>26</sup>

Thus three eighteenth-century Moravian historians – Georg Neisser, David Cranz, and Georg Heinrich Loskiel – developed and promoted the suffering theme to explain why the Moravian community in Georgia had failed, and their views became the standard that more than anything else shaped the views of later historians, Moravian and non-Moravian alike. These historians wrote in an era after Zinzendorf's death in 1760 when the leadership of the *Unitas Fratrum* consciously strove to improve its controversial standing and its legitimacy in the Christian world by emphasizing their separate institutional development and historical connections to the highly-esteemed ancient Unity, whose experiences were clearly wrought with persecution and suffering. Meanwhile Spangenberg's eyewitness view, which is more detailed, complete, and balanced than those of any of his contemporaries, failed to find a place in the eighteenth-century histories of the Moravian Church. Indeed, Spangenberg's remarks in 1752 on the decline of the community in Georgia, which appeared in his rigidly constructed and carefully worded published defense of the Moravians, merely repeated the language in the 1749 Act of Parliament that granted the Moravians exemption from military service in the colonies, yet never mentions Georgia or the Moravian experience there. In this case Spangenberg chose not to provide his own personal views, which he did do in many other parts of his defense. By the time he wrote his biography of Zinzendorf 35 years later, Spangenberg avoided the issue, only mentioning how the community in Georgia was established and ignoring its decline. In fact, at one point Spangenberg refers readers to Cranz's work for more information. This may have paved the way for later historians, who

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26 Georg Heinrich Loskiel, *Geschichte der Mission der evangelischen Brüder unter den Indianern in Nordamerika*, Barby 1789, Part II, 209-215. The Moravians published an English translation in London in 1794. See Christian Ignatius La Trobe (ed. and trans.), *History of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Indians in North America*, 3 vols., here vol. 2, 2-6.



essentially accepted the other Moravian historians' view and saw nothing in Spangenberg's published accounts that contradicted it. Meanwhile Spangenberg's original observations remained buried in the voluminous collections of Moravian documents in Herrnhut from this period.<sup>27</sup>

In the nineteenth century, by which time the *Unitas Fratrum* had achieved a secure, if limited, place in the Protestant world, some denominational historians finally began dealing with the internal problems of the Georgia community in their overviews of Moravian work and settlement in North America, but this took time. As late as 1827 and 1831 the English Moravian historian John Holmes and A. Bost in Geneva continued the old theme of Moravian successes, followed by the pressure to bear arms and the forced move to Pennsylvania.<sup>28</sup> It was Johannes Plitt who began the reevaluation of events in Georgia during the previous century. In his »Geschichte der Brüder Unität alter und neuer Zeit« (»History of the *Unitas Fratrum* in Past and Recent Times«) Plitt provided a comprehensive view of the Moravians' undertakings in the colony (something few historians previously or hence have done), including their missions to the Schwenkfelders and Native Americans, and their work with John Wesley. When discussing the decline of the community he never mentioned the military issue. To him the trouble came when the group proved unable to accommodate their temporal and spiritual purposes, just as had been the case in their mission on St. Croix, in the Caribbean. Their task was too difficult, members did not follow instructions on how to maintain love and community, and the operation failed. »How different was the situation of an agape community than this present one!« (»Aber wie verschieden war hier

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27 Spangenberg, *Apologetische Schluß-Schrift*, 398-399, and Spangenberg, *Leben des Zinzendorf*, vol. 4. 803-804, 872-873 (see the footnote on p. 873 for the reference to Cranz), 923, and 1035-1037. For the text of the 1749 Act of Parliament see 22 Geo II c. 30, »An Act for encouraging the People known by the Name of *Unitas Fratrum* or United Brethren, to settle in His Majesty's Colonie in America,« in: *The Statutes at Large, From the Twentieth Year of the Reign of King George the Second To the Thirtieth Year of the Reign of King George the Second*, vol. 7, London 1764, 155-156.

28 I have consulted the second edition of Holmes' work and a later abridged English translation of Bost's work. See John Holmes, *Historical Sketches of the Missions of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen*, 2nd edition London 1827, 122-123, and A. Bost, *History of the Bohemian and Moravian Brethren*, London 1834, 323-325, 340-341, and 351, the original of which is A. Bost, *Histoire ancienne et moderne de l'Eglise des Frères de Bohême et de Moravie, depuis son origine jusqu'en 1741*, 2 vols., Geneva 1831.



die Situation einer agapolischen Gemein von jeder gegenwärtigen!«), Plitt wrote.<sup>29</sup>

While Johannes Plitt appears to have been the first Moravian historian to stress the internal crisis in Georgia, his work was never published, and so it was not until 1852 that an alternative to the early histories appeared in print. In that year the first volume of Ernst Wilhelm Cröger's *Geschichte der erneuerten Brüderkirche* (*History of the Renewed Church of the Brethren*) was published.<sup>30</sup> Cröger wrote that all was well in Georgia until the pressure to bear arms in the war against Spain arose. While their refusal to do so led to significant problems for the group, they handled this well, and only a few of them moved to Pennsylvania in 1739 to avoid the problem. A difficult »sifting« (»Sichtung«) followed, as some went to Philadelphia and thereabouts, while others waited in Georgia, »to each his own« (»wo Jeder das Seine suchte«). Cröger then quoted Spangenberg's condemnation of the Georgia group: "»Thus there have to be troublemakers in the community,« writes Spangenberg, »in order for those who are righteous to be noticed.«" ("»So müssen Rotten sein in der Gemeinde« schreibt Spangenberg, »daß die, so rechtschaffen sind, offenbar werden.«")

Cröger also quoted Peter Böhler (a member of the Georgia community), who wrote in 1739 that, »the good children lost sight of their Plan. Since forever and a day they had no Communion, the bands began weakening, and they no longer wished to speak from the heart. Off the record, I heard that there was always quarreling among themselves. And some made it known that they were better than other brethren.«<sup>31</sup>

Thus Cröger became the first Moravian historian to stress in print that internal problems above all else, not the pressure to bear arms, caused the disintegration of the Moravian community in Georgia, and he used in part Spangenberg's unpublished observations of events there as one of his sources.

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29 Johannes Plitt, »Geschichte der Brüder Unität alter und neuer Zeit,« (unpublished manuscript, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem and Herrnhut). Although this particular work of Plitt's was never published, it is a substantial one, consisting of four volumes. He wrote it before 1850, and judging by his other published works, it was likely in the 1830s or 1840s.

30 Ernst Wilhelm Cröger, *Geschichte der erneuerten Brüderkirche*, 3 vols. Gnadau 1852-1854, here vol. 1, which covers the years 1722-1741.

31 »... die guten Kinder haben ihren Plan verloren. Seit Jahr und Tag haben sie kein Abendmahl, die Banden sind in Abnahme gekommen, sie sprachen nicht gern von ihrem Herzen. Unter der Hand höre ich, daß immer Zank zwischen ihnen ist. Im Aeußern haben sie's besser als irgend Brüder.« This and the other quotes above are in Cröger, *Geschichte der erneuerten Brüderkirche*, 362-364.



If Moravian denominational histories in the mid-nineteenth century began emphasizing internal dissension over suffering, at what point did historians change the common perception back to suffering, and why did they do it? In his *Abriß einer Geschichte der Brüdermission (Historical Sketch of the Brethren's Mission)* in 1901, Adolf Schulze briefly reenforced Plitt and Cröger's view that severe internal problems helped cause the dissolution of the Georgia community. But unlike Plitt and Cröger, Schulze exaggerated the successes of the colony and still considered the pressure to bear arms as equal to internal conflict when explaining why the Moravian mission in Georgia failed, even though he introduced no new evidence supporting his view.<sup>32</sup>

It was the American Moravian historians who did the most to reintroduce the notion that suffering was the *primary* cause of the failure of the Moravian community in Georgia. Adelaide Fries was not the only one, and she was not even the first to do this: The trend began in 1888, when Levin Theodore Reichel published the first American interpretation of Moravian history during this era, written in English and based on historical documents. Reichel's *The Early History of the Church of the United Brethren, (Unitas Fratrum) Commonly Called the Moravians, in North America, A.D. 1734-1748* revived the older view emphasizing suffering and found a way to deal with the problem pointed out by Plitt and Cröger: If there were documents indicating that something else caused the decline of the Georgia community, then he would marginalize these points by mentioning them in another context which could in no way cause his readers to miss the main point that the pressure to bear arms must have been the true cause of the community's decline. Reichel began by placing the beginnings of the colony in a context of pressure and persecution against the Moravians. With Moravians in Europe in trouble, Zinzendorf intended Georgia (and three other colonies) to be a place of refuge – first for Schwenkfelders, and then, when that group decided to go elsewhere, for Moravians themselves, should things get out of hand in Silesia and they be forced to flee. Zinzendorf fought off numerous enemies trying to prevent him from establishing the colony, and for awhile the Moravians in Georgia did well, even making progress on their Cherokee and Creek mission. Prosperity received a »sudden check,« however, when the Spanish threat arose. The Moravians resisted the pressure to bear arms, even to the point of receiving favorable concessions from the Trustees and the governor, but the end came, according to Reichel, when »...the jealousy of their neighbors was thereby aroused,

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32 Schulze sums up this view by stating, »Both of these causes made the situation of the colony untenable, and in spite of the appearance of blossoming, it had to be dissolved.« (»Diese beiden Ursachen machten die Lage der Kolonie unhaltbar; und trotz der schönen äußeren Blüte mußte sie aufgelöst werden.«) Adolf Schulze, *Abriß einer Geschichte der Brüdermission*, Herrnhut 1901, 23-24.



internal harmony became disturbed and the death-blow was given to the colony.« Thus they began their move to Pennsylvania, settling near Germantown, and so ends the section of Reichel's work devoted entirely to Georgia.<sup>33</sup>

Thus Reichel was able to preserve and promote the old story of suffering in the Georgia colony, while showing that he knew the documents Plitt, Cröger, and Schulze had used and the issues they had raised. Reichel even read Spangenberg's »Letters from America« (perhaps the first historian to do so), yet ignored his analysis of what happened in Georgia. Reichel attributed the internal dissent itself to the pressure to bear arms, although there is no evidence for this, and he discussed some of the details of the problems and failures of the settlement later, in piecemeal fashion and in other contexts, presumably at least in part so that they could not be linked to the community's decline. For example, he briefly mentions the slave mission to South Carolina, yet provides no hint that this represented yet another failure of the Georgia colony. More importantly, Reichel finally mentions that the Moravians did not all leave Georgia in groups, and some left without church permission, preferring to live on their own in Pennsylvania, away from the others. Still later, Reichel describes the Moravians moving around in Pennsylvania in a disoriented, purposeless fashion before settling down in German-town, a portrayal that closely matches Spangenberg's view. By using the archival evidence Reichel abided by new professional standards, yet he blatantly manipulated that evidence in a way that would allow him to preserve and reinvigorate the old story of suffering. Indeed, the most important footnote in the earlier section that told the »story« cited Loskiel, one of the eighteenth-century historians who had originally helped develop that story.<sup>34</sup>

Reichel's impact on later American Moravian historians was direct and lasting. Fries essentially adopted his technique of presenting the other evidence, yet not letting it interfere with the story of suffering. She even employed some of Reichel's language, for example, when referring to the »death-blow« to the colony.<sup>35</sup> Five years before Fries, in 1900, J. Taylor Hamilton's *A History of the Church Known as the Unitas Fratrum, or the Unity of the Brethren, during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* appeared.<sup>36</sup> This work, along with the

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33 Levin Theodore Reichel, *The Early History of the Church of the United Brethren, (Unitas Fratrum) Commonly Called Moravians, in North America, A.D. 1734-1748*, Nazareth, PA, 1888, 62-68. The quote is from p. 68.

34 Reichel, *Early History of the Church of the United Brethren*, 70-72, 76-77, and 78.

35 Fries, 187.

36 J. Taylor Hamilton, *A History of the Church Known as the Moravian Church, or the Unitas Fratrum, or the Unity of the Brethren, during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Bethlehem 1900.



updated version of 1967 co-authored by Kenneth G. Hamilton, became the standard works of American Moravian scholars on the history of the renewed *Unitas Fratrum*. Like Reichel and Fries, these historians recognized the internal problems in Georgia revealed in the original documents and pointed out by Plitt, Cröger, and Schulze, but felt compelled to return to the theme of suffering stressed by eighteenth-century Moravian historians and gave this problem the most weight when explaining the dissolution of the Georgia community. Kenneth G. Hamilton sums up this view in his slightly altered version of J. Taylor Hamilton's earlier version:

Even prior to this [i.e. death and disease in the colony and difficulties caused by the Spanish War] the Moravian colony in Georgia was languishing. It had dwindled from thirty persons to twelve because of internal dissension as well as political pressure. Some of the settlers died, others had returned to Europe or had migrated to Pennsylvania. When the Spaniards of Florida prepared to invade Georgia, the Moravians were called upon to join in its defense. This they refused to do, for at that time most of the Brethren had conscientious scruples against bearing arms. Finally six Moravians who were left in Georgia determined to go to Pennsylvania.<sup>37</sup>

In short, the most influential American Moravian historians since Reichel have tended to carefully mention all of the problems in the first Moravian settlement in North America based on their readings of the documents, yet chose to indicate that suffering was the chief or final problem, without presenting any documentation supporting their choice.<sup>38</sup>

By elevating suffering above all other causes for the decline of the Georgia community, American Moravian historians followed trends well established by non-Moravian American scholars of their time. Modern historians of religion in colonial North America have often emphasized the themes of struggle and suffering in the founding of America, as well as mission, religious freedom, and diversity. When Moravian historians like Reichel, Hamilton, and Fries wrote about a small, persecuted group that came to America and, after a difficult struggle, ultimately succeeded in planting yet another denomination in the land of religious freedom and diversity, they not only placed the American Moravian Church squarely in the middle of these traditional »American« themes, but also gave non-Moravian historians fodder for their overall argument about the American people and their history. Consequently, the brief Moravian story of piety and suffering in early Georgia appeared in numerous nondenominational histories of America throughout the twentieth century. These works, which have

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37 Hamilton and Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 84-85. Kenneth G. Hamilton made minor changes to J. Taylor Hamilton's version of these events (see Hamilton, *History of the Church Known as the Moravian Church*, 81).

38 Other twentieth-century American Moravian historians who followed this trend include Edmund Schwarze, *History of the Moravian Missions among Southern Indian Tribes*, Bethlehem 1923, 5-14, and Jacob John Sessler, *Communal Pietism among Early American Moravians*, New York 1933, 72-73.



directly or indirectly relied on Hamilton and Fries (who were more widely available than Reichel), include state histories of Georgia or special topics about that colony,<sup>39</sup> as well as surveys of religion in colonial America,<sup>40</sup> southern history,<sup>41</sup> American history,<sup>42</sup> and also monographs about religious groups or topics in the colonial period.<sup>43</sup> With few exceptions, historians of early America have stated that the pressure to bear arms caused the Moravians to leave Georgia.<sup>44</sup> In fact, in their brief allotment of space to this small chapter in American colonial religious history few even mention the other factors listed by Hamilton and Fries – factors that hardly fit into their larger themes. This suggests that if the most influential American Moravian historians had not stressed suffering above all else, then the story of how a handful of this group came and went from the colony may not have appeared at all in these histories. Yet they did choose to stress suffering, perhaps because they were American and were influenced by the same nationalist impulses that affected American historians in general. In any event, the Moravians do appear in many of the histories of colonial America, struggling to maintain their religious principles and moving to

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39 Reba Carolyn Strickland, *Religion and the State in Georgia in the Eighteenth Century*, New York 1939, 40 and 76-79; Harold E. Davis, *The Fledgling Province: Social and Cultural Life in Colonial Georgia, 1733-1776*, Chapel Hill 1976, 17-18 and 200-201; Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia: A History*, New York 1976, 48; George Fenwick Jones, *The Georgia Dutch: From the Rhineland and the Danube to the Savannah, 1733-1783* Athens, Georgia, 1992, 48-54.

40 For example, Harry M. Ward, *Colonial America, 1607-1763*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1991, 223-224.

41 For example, John B. Boles, *The South through Time: A History of an American Region*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1995, 52 and 77.

42 For example, Louis B. Wright, *The Cultural Life of the American Colonies, 1607-1763*, New York [et al.] 1957, 61 and 90; Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America*, New York 1965, 54; Edwin Scott Gaustad, *A Religious History of America*, New York 1966, 107.

43 Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*, New York 1986, 32-33, and Jon F. Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840*, Chapel Hill and London 1998, 43.

44 Exceptions include William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America*, New York [et al.] 1930, 106, and Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1960, 134, who both list sickness and death, as well as the pressure to bear arms, without emphasizing either as the most important, and Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, New Haven and London 1972, 241-243, who provides a good overall account of Moravian activities in Georgia and the shift in focus to Pennsylvania without even mentioning the pressure to bear arms.



Pennsylvania when the pressure to fight became unbearable. This has solidified the common, what I believe to be erroneous, view that the Moravian community in Georgia failed because of the pressure to bear arms against the Spanish.

Meanwhile since Cröger's work of 150 years ago, Karl Müller is the only German Moravian historian to extensively investigate and discuss the Georgia episode, and like his nineteenth-century forerunners (as well as Spangenberg and myself), he emphasized the overall failure of the mission and concluded that the settlement finally collapsed because of severe internal dissension, specifically denying that the pressure to bear arms was the reason. Müller based his findings on archival evidence in Herrnhut, relying heavily on Töltshig's letters, but not Spangenberg's.<sup>45</sup> Few other German Moravians in the twentieth century even dealt with the issue in their histories.<sup>46</sup> They had emphasized suffering in their earlier histories and used it to support the group's larger strategy of gaining sympathy and legitimacy in the Protestant world after Zinzendorf's death. But after Cröger's work appeared in 1852 and seemed to demonstrate the more complicated, less heroic nature of this small chapter in the history of the overseas mission of the *Unitas Fratrum*, perhaps German Moravian historians saw no need to deal with the issue any further (with the exception of Müller). Their legitimacy had been achieved, and they had no use for modern American notions of religious freedom and diversity. Even Schulze, who came close to renewing the eighteenth-century position, would not take the step the Americans did and place suffering ahead of internal conflict as the most important cause of the community's collapse. Thus the historiography of this brief episode in Moravian mission history reflects a divergence in style and emphasis between German accounts and the relatively newer American views.

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45 Müller, *200 Jahre Brüdermission*, 200-206.

46 Hartmut Beck, *Brüder in vielen Völkern: 250 Jahre Mission der Brüdergemeine*, Erlangen 1981, 91, takes the American view and stresses suffering (though not exclusively), but he treats the issue only very briefly and provides no new evidence or insight, nor did he intend to. Some non-German European historians in the twentieth century have mentioned the pressure to bear arms as the primary cause of the decline of the Georgia community. These include J.E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Missions*, London 1923, 78-81, who was probably influenced by Holmes' work of a century earlier and heavily stressed the suffering theme without providing any new evidence. See also Jones and Peucker, »Letters from Savannah,« 119, who mention that the Moravians left Georgia for Pennsylvania because of the military pressure. But while Peucker, who is Dutch, and Jones, who is American, worked with original documents and provided new insight into the Georgia experience of the Moravians, their analysis (and the documents they used) focused on the beginning, not the end of the mission. For the latter they provide no new evidence or insight, nor did they intend to.



Although suffering no longer appears to have been the primary cause for the failure of the Moravian community in Georgia, this should not belittle the importance of this episode in either Moravian or North American history. The history of the decline and fall of the first Moravian community on the North American continent reveals how difficult it was to build cohesive, lasting communities during the early period of their expansion. Not only external pressures but also internal tensions shaped the outlook of their settlements and whether they lasted. Also, the Georgia episode provides further evidence that the Moravian movement was no monolith controlled by Zinzendorf, or the inner circles in Herrnhut and Herrnhag. To understand how Moravian communities worked, one must investigate not only what the larger plans and struggles were, but also what was happening in the many far-flung mission communities, where small groups labored under difficult, perhaps unique conditions. There were always individuals who gave up and left the Moravians, but sometimes there were relatively large numbers who did so – so many that the community itself collapsed. Building and maintaining communities in colonial North America was a difficult task for any religious group, and the Moravians were no exception. The Georgia episode is also important because it was connected to large-scale religious conflict between the Moravians and their many enemies on both sides of the Atlantic. It was a direct prelude to explosive events involving Moravians and other German-speakers in the northern colonies during the Great Awakening. While in Georgia the Moravians dealt with major figures and groups in the ongoing transatlantic evangelical awakening, including John Wesley, George Whitefield, the Halle Pietists, and the Salzburg refugees. Indeed, these events were closely-watched by religious leaders and observers from Silesia to London to North America. Perhaps a better way to view their early history in Georgia is not primarily as a case of oppression and suffering, but rather as a failed prelude to building bigger and better things to come, which would impress many and threaten some.

### Aaron S. Fogleman, Der Niedergang der herrnhutischen Gemeinschaft im kolonialen Georgia

Der Versuch der Herrnhuter, in Savannah (Georgia) eine Niederlassung zu gründen (1735), musste schon 1742 aufgegeben werden. In der Literatur wird der Grund dafür meist in der pazifistischen Haltung der Herrnhuter gesehen, die nicht bereit waren, Waffen zu tragen, was während des Krieges mit Spanien zu Spannungen mit der Obrigkeit geführt hätte. Der Autor bestreitet diese Erklärung und kommt aufgrund der Quellen im Unitätsarchiv zu dem Ergebnis, dass die Gemeinschaft in Savannah durch interne Meinungsverschiedenheiten über die gemeinsame Haushaltung auseinander gefallen ist.