

# The Moravians and the Philadelphian Church Era

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3:7 *“And to the angel of **the church in Philadelphia** write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;*

3:8 *I know thy works: behold, **I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it:** for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*

3:9 *Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*

3:10 ***Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.***

3:11 ***Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.***

3:12 *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

3:13 *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

**T**he history of the church Age is prophetically outlined in the letters to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. **Ephesus** was the Apostolic Church, **Smyrna** was the Suffering Church from Nero to Constantine (AD311). **Pergamos** was the State Church established by Constantine and **Thyatira** was the papal Church beginning with Gregory the great (AD590).

The Reformation Church is described in the Church of **Sardis** beginning 1517 and the **Philadelphian** Church describes the Great Missionary Church of the 18th and 19th centuries. The

**Laodicean Church** is descriptive of the Charismatic Ecumenical Church that began with the “tongues” movement in 1900.

### *Count Zinzendorf*

**C**ount Zinzendorf was born on the 26th. May, 1700 in Dresden and was descended from one of the most ancient noble families of Austria. His father died six weeks after the birth of his son. Zinzendorf’s mother married again in 1704 and Zinzendorf was brought up by his grandmother, Henrietta Catherine von Gersdorf on her estate of Hennersdorf.

Zinzendorf’s education was Pietistic, a religious movement in Germany about the end of the 17th century. Pietism practiced “true piety” and Zinzendorf believed that true Christianity consisted in a **personal relationship with God** or, as he expressed it “**Christianity of the heart**”.

After having finished his study of law in 1719, he travelled in Holland and France and felt himself at home wherever he found **personal faith** which he named, “pure religion”.

Having returned from his travels, Zinzendorf attempted to enter the ministry, but in consideration of his family was obliged to relinquish his wish, and took a position as Councillor in the Saxon Government in Dresden.

While working for the Government at Dresden Zinzendorf held meetings in his own house and edited his first four collections of hymns, 1725-1731.

In 1722 Zinzendorf provided refuge for persecuted believers from Moravia on his estate and soon there was a steady flow of immigrants seeking religious freedom from all over Germany. In order to settle doctrinal differences among the new immigrants in the village of Herrnhut Zinzendorf gave up his post in Dresden 1727.

In 1738 Zinzendorf was exiled from Saxony and with his followers, settled in Wetteravia where the Moravian Church continued to grow.

## *Modern Missions*

The story of the Moravian Church is the story of modern missions. Wherever the persecuted believers went they preached Christ crucified and people were converted. Their ministry reached across the world and was the forerunner of the great revivals under Wesley, Whitfield, Moody, Hudson Taylor etc.

Christian communities were established in Germany, England, Ireland and America from which they sent missionaries to Labrador, West Indies, South Africa and beyond. They continued this missionary effort for more than 100 years with up to **1,000 missionaries on the field.**

While quite young, Zinzendorf wrote hymns, and is reputed to have written about two thousand. John Wesley translated some into English including:

Jesus the Lord our righteousness

and,

O come, thou stricken Lamb of God.

J E Hutton in his book, *The Moravian Church* described the Christ-centred message of the Moravians as follows:

“Christ had done three marvellous things for the sons of men.

1. He had given His life as a “ransom” for sin, and had thereby reconciled them to God;
2. He had set the perfect example for them to follow;
3. He was present with them now as Head of the Church;

Thus, when they went out to preach, they made His Sacrificial Death, His Holy Life, and His abiding presence the main substance of their Gospel message.”

### *The Moravians and Israel*

The Moravians had a great love for the Jews and this is illustrated from the life of Count Zinzendorf as told by J E Hutton:

“For some years the Brethren conducted a mission to the Jews. For Jews, the Count had special sympathy. He had vowed in

his youth to do all he could for their conversion; he had met a good many Jews at Herrnhut and at Frankfurt-on-the-Main; he made a practice of speaking about them in public on the Great Day of Atonement. In their Sunday morning litany the Brethren uttered the prayer, "Deliver Thy people Israel from their blindness; bring many of them to know Thee, till the fulness of the Gentiles is come and all Israel is saved."

The Moravians loved the unlovely and cared for the downtrodden and Hutton recalls:

"As charity, however, begins at home, the Count and his brethren began their new labours among the degraded rabble that lived in filth and poverty round the castle. They conducted free schools for the children. They held meetings for men and women in the vaults of the castle. They visited the miserable gipsies in their dirty homes. They invited the dirty little ragamuffins to tea, and the gipsies' children sat down at the table with the sons and daughters of the Count. They issued an order forbidding begging, and twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, they distributed food and clothing to the poor.

One picture will illustrate this strange campaign. Among the motley medley that lived about the castle was an old grey-haired Jew, named Rabbi Abraham. One bright June evening, Zinzendorf met him, stretched out his hand, and said: "Grey hairs are a crown of glory. I can see from your head and the expression of your eyes that you have had much experience both of heart and life. In the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, let us be friends."

The old man was struck dumb with wonder. Such a greeting from a Christian he had never heard before. He had usually been saluted with the words, 'Begone, Jew!' His lips trembled; his voice failed; and big tears rolled down his wrinkled cheeks upon his flowing beard.

'Enough, father,' said the Count; 'we understand each other.' And from that moment the two were friends. The Count went to see him in his dirty home, and ate black bread at his table.

One morning, before dawn, as the two walked out, the old patriarch opened his heart. 'My heart,' said he, 'is longing for the dawn. I am sick, yet know not what is the matter with me. I am looking for something, yet know not what I seek. I am like one who is chased, yet I see no enemy, except the one within me, my old evil heart.'

The Count opened his lips, and preached the Gospel of Christ. He painted Love on the Cross. He described that Love coming down from holiness and heaven. He told the old Jew, in burning words, how Christ had met corrupted mankind, that man might become like God.

As the old man wept and wrung his hands, the two ascended a hill, whereon stood a lonely church. And the sun rose, and its rays fell on the golden cross on the church spire, and the cross glittered brightly in the light of heaven.

'See there, Abraham,' said Zinzendorf, 'a sign from heaven for you. The God of your fathers has placed the cross in your sight, and now the rising sun from on high has tinged it with heavenly splendour. Believe on Him whose blood was shed by your fathers, that God's purpose of mercy might be fulfilled, that you might be free from all sin, and find in Him all your salvation.'

'So be it,' said the Jew, as a new light flashed on his soul. 'Blessed be the Lord who has had mercy upon me.'

The story of the Moravian Church is the story of the Philadelphia Church era (Rev.3:7-13) from 1700 to 1900. J.E.Hutton's book entitled, *The Moravian Church* gives a detailed record of this exciting period of Church history and may be downloaded from the internet.

The story of the Bohemian Brethren and how they suffered at the hands of the Pope's armies, and how this developed into the greatest missionary movement in human history led by the Moravian Church, is a latter day Acts of the Holy Spirit. **It should be essential reading for every student of Bible prophecy.** It describes the Philadelphia Church Era of the Church Age. ●