

*At Home in Cities, Temples, Tents, and Nests: “Heimat” as Metaphor in Zinzendorf’s Sermons on the Litany of the Wounds*

“Heimat” (engl.: home) is commonly regarded as an untranslatable German word, entangled with the cultural and political history of the nineteenth century. Yet the hope it carries — for a place of wholeness and belonging — is deeply rooted in Christian tradition. While the term’s semantic history has been studied extensively in literary and linguistic scholarship (Bastian 1995; Blickle 2002; Oesterheld 2021), its theological implications across confessional contexts remain largely unexplored.

This paper examines the metaphorical use of “Heimat” in Zinzendorf’s writings, focusing on his sermons on the Litany of the Wounds. Drawing on modern metaphor theory, I read these metaphors not as rhetorical ornament but as instruments of theological thought, and trace their work across three fields.

Eschatologically, “Heimat” figures the hereafter — most prominently in the Moravian idiom of “going home” for dying. This usage is orientational: it conceptualizes life as a journey and directs action accordingly, while also shaping the valuation of the earthly realm and of the body, described in turn as a “hut” or a “tent”. Soteriologically, “Heimat” names not only an absent, promised dwelling but a present experience of salvation: in the Litany of the Wounds, Christ’s side wound becomes a refuge the believer can already inhabit. Finally, I ask what these usages imply for questions of belonging in the Moravian Church at a time of heightened mobility and missionary expansion, where the homelessness implied by following an exiled Christ meets the idea of being at home wherever God sends one.