

Paul Peucker, Moravian Archives (Northern Province)

*Zinzendorf, Slavery, and the Curse of Ham*

In Moravian theology, the Curse of Ham played an important role as Zinzendorf's frequently cited farewell letter to the enslaved on St. Thomas from 1739 confirms. However, a close reading of this letter reveals nuances that have previously been overlooked. In 1993 Dutch missiologist Jan van der Linde argued that Zinzendorf during his later years taught that the Curse of Ham had been "completely" dissolved. In light of the continued Moravian ownership of slaves and their reluctance to speak out against the institution of slavery, the question is what exactly Zinzendorf meant when he claimed the Curse of Ham had been lifted. This article argues that Moravian unwillingness to encourage the enslaved to gain freedom and their pronounced indifference regarding the legal status of their enslaved are part of their Pietist ideals of Christian equality and humility.