

Vanessa Romero, Moravian University

*The French Moravian Diaspora, 1806–1870*

This paper/lecture focuses on the Moravian French Diaspora between 1806 and 1870. 1806 is when we can find again the first traces of the Diaspora (correspondence from Huguenot pastors to Herrnhut) to 1870 when the Moravians were ousted out of France because of the War of 1870. Studies on the eighteenth-century Moravian French Diaspora have been done in the 1890s, the 1920s, and again a decade ago mainly by the Swiss scholar Dieter Gembicki (the Moravian Diaspora ceased to exist in France during the French Revolution). But the scholarly research is inexistent for the nineteenth century. I want to know what happened to the transnational network once the Reformed religion was allowed again in France. I will base my research on correspondence between Huguenot pastors and Herrnhut (some letters are published but the majority is still in the archives) and Switzerland (especially Montmirail). I will also examine the minutes/reports of the Moravian Ministers' Conferences on the Diaspora in Herrnhut as they were translated in French and disseminated throughout the Diaspora. I will demonstrate that the Moravians had a significant influence on the "réveil des cœurs", or religious awakening, that started in the 1820s. According to many scholars of the nineteenth through the twenty-first century, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, religion in France was declining, it was cold and lifeless. Pastors didn't talk much about Redemption. Huguenot rationalist sermons lacked piety and focused mainly on salvation by good works. The clergy was not well trained. The Bible was not studied in depth and was ill interpreted. The French Huguenots, both pastors and "friends", found Moravian writings, and especially encounters with Moravians, edifying and they slowly started to affirm conformity to Moravian principles, especially living life in Christ's blood and redemption. They were looking to the Moravians for education and encouragement, which they found. This renewal in piety and better understanding of Christ's sacrifice as predicated by the Moravians led Huguenot pastors to lead the "réveil" and transform French religious life.