TEN SACRED SONGS

for Soprano, Strings and Organ

by

J. DENCKE, J. F. PETER, S. PETER
J. HERBST, G. G. MULLER, J. ANTES

EDITED BY HANS T. DAVID

English Text Adapted by CARLETON SPRAGUE SMITH

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INTRODUCTION

The term “Moravian” is commonly used to designate the members of the “Unitas Fratrum” or “Unity of Brethren.” This was founded by a group of followers of John Huss in the middle of the 15th century, and became the first Protestant or Reformed Church. The Church had its roots in Bohemia and Moravia; hence its members are known in Germany as “Bohemische Brüder” and in England and the Colonies as “Moravian Brethren” or briefly “Moravians.” The Brethren practiced at times against the term but the usage persisted, and finally they themselves agreed to use the denomination “Moravian Church” for the “Unitas Fratrum” in England and America.

The religious wars of the 17th century caused an almost complete annihilation of the Bohemian and Moravian Protestants. A “hidden seed” however was preserved by brethren faithful to the Unitas. During the 18th century a revival took place. Under the leadership of Count Zinzendorf a vigorous Renewed Church was organized. Missionary work now became one of the principal duties of the Church, and settlements were established both within and beyond the borders of Europe. Many of the people who took part in the colonization were Germans.

The first Moravians to reach America came to the West Indies in 1732. Three years later other groups went to South America and Georgia. Adverse conditions and the discrimination to bear arms however induced the Georgia settlers as early as 1740 to remove to Pennsylvania. They were employed at first by one of the outstanding religious figures of the day, the Anglican evangelist George Whitefield, with whom they had become friendly in Georgia. It was for him that they began a large stone house at what is now Nazareth. Px. But the cooperation between Whitefield and the Brethren collapsed after a short time. Just then another group of Moravians arrived from Europe to start a settlement in Pennsylvania; and aided by those who had been working for Whitefield, they founded the town of Bethlehem, which received its name from Count Zinzendorf on Christmas Eve 1741.

The following year, Whitefield and his property in Pennsylvania to the Unitas. The large stone house was finished and became the nucleus for the settlement at Nazareth. Today it is the Museum of the Moravian Historical Society. A third settlement was started a few years later on a tract of land in Lancaster County and called Leit, after the barony on which the Brethren had first settled. Moravian congregations were also established in Lancaster, York and other places. There the Moravians however formed only a part of the population, while non-Moravians were refused admittance at Bethlehem, Nazareth and Lititz. In the 1750’s North Carolina became a further field of Moravian colonization. The new settlements were organized as an independent Southern Province of the Church while those in or near Pennsylvania were referred to as the Northern Province. Bethlehem was the chief town of the Northern and Salem (now Winston-Salem) of the Southern Province.

The Moravian settlements in America were distinguished by a musical life of amazing intensity. They sang in the Congregational services as well as religious activity. Moreover, the Moravians made greater use of string and wind instruments in their religious services than any other religious group in America. At first the instruments merely joined the voices in unison, but soon ambitious instrumental parts were introduced and an elaborate musical service developed. That instruments were so copiously used by the congregations of the Unitas may be interpreted as a German characteristic.

A Collection Musicae, or group that met regularly to practice vocal and instrumental music, was organized at Bethlehem by 1744. This Collegium Musicae not only supplied the community with excellent church music, but its members gathered informally to play symphonies by Carl Friedrich Abel, Christoph Friedrich Bich, Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and chamber music by Johann Christian Bach. The concerts were performed by members of prominent families. A list of programs performed at Nazareth from 1790 on has been preserved. In 1806 the Collegium Musicae at Bethlehem was recognized, adopting the name of The Philharmonic Society. It gave an impressive series of concerts for many years among the compositions offered were Haydn's Creation (from 1811), and the Seasons, performed regularly for decades. Such accomplishments are the more remarkable as few of the people who participated in the performances were professional musicians. Most of them were ministers, teachers and church officials although the players sometimes included the bookbinder, the watchmaker and the blacksmith.

Concerted church music was introduced into the service of the Moravians in the 1760’s, Christian Gregor, the most prominent composer among the European Brethren devised a type of anthem which became popular among the Moravian composers. This was generally written in a simple two-part or three-part form with a prelude, interludes and a postlude for the instruments. In the colonies, music of any kind was scarce for a long time and therefore contributions were welcome. Thus an exceptional opportunity arose for local Moravian musicians to try their hands at composition. How many of them would have composed under other circumstances is doubtful, but the constant need for music led to the discovery of real talent.

The present series contains representative examples of the music written by Moravians in America. A list of the composers and titles proper to Colonial America is given in a separate paper. Each composition follows, arranged in chronological order, according to the date when each began to participate in the musical life of the community.
HEHL, Matthias Gotfried
born in Germany 1750, came to America 1751, d. 1787.

GRUBE, Bernhard Adam
b. in Germany 1715, came to America 1748, d. 1808.

DENCKE, Jeremiah
b. in Germany 1725, came to America 1761, d. 1795.

ANTES, John
b. in Pennsylvania 1740, went to Europe 1764, d. there 1811.

PETER, Simon
b. in Holland 1743, came to America 1770, d. in North Carolina 1817.

PETER, Johann Friedrich
b. in Holland 1749, came to America 1770, d. 1813.

VAN VLECK, Jacob
b. in New York 1751, d. 1831.

TILL, Johann Christian
b. in Pennsylvania 1762, d. 1844.

A grant from the Petrose Fund of The American Philosophical Society to the Moravian Seminary and College for Women for a study of the music in question was made in 1932. Under this provision a catalogue of the American compositions which were

*MÜLLER, Georg Gotfried
b. in Germany 1762, came to America 1784, d. 1824.

*HERBST, Johannes
b. in Germany 1735, came to America 1786, d. in North Carolina 1812.

MICHAEL, David Moritz
b. in Germany 1751, lived in America 1795-1814, d. in Germany 1825.

BECHLER, Johann Christian
b. in Germany 1784, lived in America 1806-1836, d. in Germany 1837.

RICKSCCKER, Peter
b. in Pennsylvania 1791, d. 1873.

WOLLE, Peter
b. in the West Indies 1792, came to Pennsylvania 1800, d. 1871.

HAGEN, Francis Florentine
b. in North Carolina 1813, d. 1907.

written by Moravians in America, has been compiled. In all, approximately 250 compositions have been preserved in the Pennsylvania Archives of the Moravian Church.

Notes on the Outstanding Moravian Composers

JEREMIAH DENCKE was born at Langesblau, Silesia, October 2, 1725. He became organist at Grafenfrits and was called to Herrnhut in 1748. Later he served the European Moravian settlements in various capacities. He came to America in 1761 with Johann Friedrich Peter senior and Immanuel Nitschmann. Peter, minister to the Bethlehem congregation, was the father of Simon and Johann Friedrich Peter. Nitschmann became one of the most active members of the Collegium Musicum and it was he who copied most of the early concerted church music now found in the Moravian Archives at Bethlehem.

Dencke was first "Brüderlehrer" at Christiana in 1772 and 1773, then as warden of the Bethlehem congregation, this office being particularly difficult during the Revolutionary War when the Brethren's House was used as a hospital. He was pastor successively at Bethlehem, Lititz and Nazareth. The last years of his life were spent again at Bethlehem where he was overseer of the married people until his death in 1795.

*Composers whose music appears in this series

Dencke's exceptional musical ability is proved by the fact that he was considered worthy to be organist at Herrnhut, the Moravian center in Germany. Presumably he was the first Moravian in America to perform and compose concerted church music. Most of his compositions were written for a solo soprano, strings and organ. A few of these were later made into choruses, possibly by Dencke himself. In addition several independent choral compositions exist.

The earliest composition which Dencke is known to have written in America is a simple anthem for chorus, strings and organ, composed in 1766 for the opening of the Provincial Synod at Bethlehem. This date is the earliest found on any American Moravian manuscript.

Dencke's most important works are three sets of sacred songs for soprano, strings and organ, which are preserved in copies by Johann Friedrich Peter. The first was composed in 1767 for the annual festival of the small girls; the second was written for the children's Christmas service of the same
year; and the third for the Christmas service of the congregation. In 1768, Denck's contribution to the festival of the small girls, consisting of four pieces, is reproduced in the first volume of this series. The four songs are numbered 1, 3, 7 and 8. The intervening numbers, which were probably not by Denck, may have been hymns. Denck's compositions are well written and have hardly a trace of provincialism. His music, the oldest of its type composed in Colonial America, so far as we know, has qualities which were seldom equalled later.

JOHANN FRIEDRICH PETER was born at Herrensdorf in Holstein on May 19, 1746. He attended various educational institutions in Holstein and Germany and arrived at Bethlehem on May 18, 1770. He left immediately for Nazareth, to serve as teacher of the little boys, a position he held for three years. Returning to Bethlehem he kept the Church diary and performed other similar duties. In September, 1779, Peter moved to Lititz for six months and then to Salem, North Carolina. Here he remained for ten years, serving over two years as a minister "ad interim." In 1786 he married Catharina Leitsebach, who is said to have been the leading soprano of the Salem Church Choral. In 1789 he left for a short stay at G-oecham, Maryland, and then proceeded to Hope, New Jersey. Three years later he returned to Bethlehem, where, except for a two years' sojourn in the small settlement at Mountjoy, he spent the rest of his life. He died at Bethlehem on July 19, 1813.

Peter was undoubtedly the most gifted among the American Musicians, and it is for this reason that so many of his works are included in the present series. A short account of his career by Albert G. Rau appeared in The Musical Quarterly for July, 1937. Since then, a considerable number of Peter's compositions have been discovered. They prove that he began composing in 1770, almost immediately after he arrived in America. His first attempts were very cautious and it was not until he returned to Bethlehem that he dared to write an anthem for four-part chorus with independent obbligato instruments. Gregor, who visited the American Province from 1770 to 1772, may have encouraged the young musician. Peter, in any case, copied down a large number of compositions by Gregor, who sent them to him before his return to Europe; at the same time Peter began composing himself on a larger scale. He wrote originally at 70 parts and with instrumentations of which at least 56 are preserved. The present collection includes seven of Peter's larger vocal works and two of his rare sacrest songs for soprano solo with instruments.

The instrumental accompaniments in Peter's early anthems consisted of strings and organ, and the choir was so small that only a single set of parts was necessary. When Peter returned to Bethlehem in 1773, however, he found an efficient small orchestra at his disposal. It is evident that he had only a few strings as he made only one copy of each string part, but some of his anthems require eight or ten wind instruments, including flutes, clarinets, bassoons, trumpets (voiceless "clarinet") and horns.

Peter's choruses must have increased gradually, for in later years he provided at least a double set of parts. He divided this chorus into two sections, but seldom used it antiphonally, as a real double chorus. Texts were so scarce that no single composition has two tenor parts. In his last works Peter combined a soprano alto, tenor and bass in the first chorus, with two sopranos (called Cantos I and II) and then alto in the second chorus. While the soprano alto of the first song and in unison with the alto of the second, and alto of the second, the second soprano of the second chorus was usually written in parallel octaves with the single tenor. As the Liturgical has no regulations in regard to the association of the sexes, we may assume that only married women sang in the first chorus with the men, while the unmarried women, forming the second chorus, were placed in a different part of the church or at least a different section of the gallery.

In addition to his sacred music, Peter wrote a set of six quintets for two violins, two violas and violincello in 1769, shortly before he left Salem. There had been, we may conjecture, exactly five string players who could play competently, but no music in which they could all take part: so Peter simply provided them with such music. He succeeded admirably. His quintets, all of which appear in the present series, are among his most brilliant and inspired works; they are also the earliest examples of chamber music known to have been written in America. Peter never again wrote anything similar; perhaps he felt that writing secular music was not consistent with a true spiritual life.

JOHANNES HERBST was born July 23, 1735 at Kropben, Germany. He was 51 years old when he received a call as minister to the congregation at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, arriving there early in 1787. Four years later he became preacher at Lititz and stayed there for twenty years. In 1811, he was elevated to the bishopric and was stationed at Salem, North Carolina, where he died the following year.

Herbst was the most prolific composer among the musicians who served the Moravian Church in America. He seems to have been thoroughly trained as an "Anleitung zum Generalbass-Spielen, besonders für Choralisten," which he copied or compiled, proved. His compositions, however, are less original and more uneven than Peter's, who, incidentally, was Herbst's junior by eleven years. In general, Herbst wrote academically though very neat and then spontaneous ideas appear in his compositions. He seemed to have been a well-grounded pianist, and one may be inclined to think that local conditions could have made but little impression upon his work. It must be stated, however, that Herbst changed his musical style considerably in the later years of his life. At that time he made several second versions of his own compositions and wrote a small number of new ones which are free and more florid than most of his earlier work; there can be little doubt that these show the influence of his surroundings.

Herbst must have had rather a systematic mind. He wrote a book of church organ parts with a
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by J. DEINCKE, J. F. PETER, S. PETER, G. G. MÜLLER, J. HERBST, J. ANTES

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No. 8. Selig, wer in Jesu Wunden
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No. 11. WOLLE, PETER

Für mich, o Herre
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No. 12. HAGEN, FRANCIS F.

His dereln, mein Ständlein schlägt
Anthem for Chorus, Strings and Organ
TEN SACRED SONGS

Preface

This collection includes the most significant examples of sacred song composed by Moravians in America for use in the church service of the early settlements.

The works of the six composers represented are arranged, as nearly as it can be determined, in chronological order. Biographical notes on Dencke, Johann Friedrich Peter and Herbst are given in the general preface to this series. Footnotes in the score refer to the original manuscripts.

I. to IV.

The Moravian communities were divided into "choirs" comprising people of similar age and position such as unmarried men, unmarried sisters, married people, boys, girls, and children. Each of the choirs celebrated an annual festival. These solos by Jeremiah Dencke constituted his contribution toward a festival for the girls' choir. Intermixed among these pieces were four others which have been lost.

These requiresses here differ greatly in style and character. The first uses certain elements of the recitative and the chorale with a concerted accompaniment. The second is a short arie with a contrasting middle section, but no arioso recapitulation. The third, which is longer than the others, is less inspired but gives a clear idea of Dencke's technical facility. The last, a dignified composition, offers a good contrast, its octaves, in the general style of a chorale, deserving special attention.

The set is preserved in a score by J. P. Peter, written on February 9, 1778. The system includes 5 staves each, the bass being scantily figured. For the present edition, an organ part was added, written in the manner common among Moravian composers. Each organ part consists of an almost complete reduction of the parts, scores being provided only in exceptional cases. Figures were added in order to enable the organist to improvise a simplified accompaniment if he wished, but in general the more elaborate reduction was probably used with small alterations in performance, as well as at rehearsal.

V. to VI.

"Leite mich in Diener Wahrheit" by Johann Friedrich Peter was composed in 1770 at Nazareth. It is the first composition he wrote in America, presumably the first he ever attempted, and remains a vital testimony to Peter's genuine talent. The holograph score in which it appears includes Peter's first seven compositions. He made this interesting little collection in 1774, after he returned to Bethlehem.

"Der Herr ist in Seinem Seligen Tempel" was composed at Salem, North Carolina, in 1799. We may presume that it was written for Peter's wife, Catharina Leintz, slightly more than six months after their wedding, and apparently it was the last solo song Peter wrote. Unusually detailed dynamic marks indicate the care with which Peter devised the composition, an intense and yet delicate piece of music.

The organ part of both compositions was added by the editor.

VII.

SIMON PETER was Johann Friedrich's elder brother, born on April 2, 1743 at Heerendijk, Holland. He came to America in 1770 with his brother, first serving as teacher at Nazareth Hall, the Moravian boys' school. Then he was transferred to Bethlehem, where among other things he trained the first double bass player in the community. In 1784, he went to North Carolina and spent the rest of his life as organist of various congregations in the Southern Province. He died at Salem on May 29, 1819.

"O Anblick, der mirs Herze blicht" is the only composition by Simon Peter preserved in the Archives of the Northern Province. It was copied by his brother Johann Friedrich Peter, so it may have been composed between 1784 and 1790, when both the brothers lived in the Southern Province. The organ part was presumably made by Johann Friedrich Peter.

VIII.

GEORG GOTTFRIED MÜLLER was born on May 22, 1762 at Gross Honnedorff near Hersbruck in Saxony. He came to America in 1784. We find him first at Nazareth and then at Leitza, where he was minister for a number of years. Later on he served in the same capacity at Berrsho, Ohio, again at Philadelphia and finally at Newport, Rhode Island. He retired to Leitza where he died on March 19, 1821.

Müller must have been an accomplished and sensitive musician. He was well known as a violist and the leader of the orchestra at the Brethren's
House at Leitza. His compositions reveal a distinct talent. "Mein Heiland geht ins Leiden" is a good example of his style. Only the organ part has been preserved, a copy by Hannah Weber, an unmarried sister, who was organist at the Sister's House at Bethlehem and made herself valuable by copying music as well as Church communications. The present score is reconstructed from this organ part which bears a note in Müller's handwriting: "obligate Orgel o. Fl(aut) o." The structure of the composition seems to indicate that a pair of flutes rather than a single flute was required. The composition is presumably written in the 1790's.

IX.

"Ich gehe eilen in der Kraft des Herrn" by Johannes Herbst is carefully executed and shows fine details particularly in the accompaniment.

X.

JOHN ANTES was the son of Henry Antes, an influential friend of the Brethren and later a member of the Unitas. Young Antes was born in 1741 at Fredericksburg, Pennsylvania. From the first he was interested in what we may call musical instrument making. He is said to have built a quarter of stringed instruments but only a single violin, which he made at Christiansbrum near Nazareth, is preserved in the Museum of the Moravian Historical Society. Later he invented a machine to turn pages with the foot while playing. He left America as early as 1764 and never returned, but lived for a number of years in Egypt, where he was tortured by a Bey who attempted to extort money from him. This crippled him for the remainder of his life, which was spent in England. He died in 1811.

Antes composed, evidently abroad, a number of anthems which have melodic charm and are similar in style to Haydn's simpler works. While he was in fact an American Moravian, he left the country too early to exert considerable influence here.

"Go, Congregation, go!" exemplifies the truly religious spirit of the Moravian composers. It was copied by J. F. Peter in the 1790's. Peter apparently liked Antes' compositions for he copied a considerable number of them even more carefully than was his usual custom.

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IX. JOHANNES HERBST

Ich gehe einher in der Kraft des Herrn

*I Will Go in the Strength of the Lord*

Andante

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncelle e Basso ad lib.

Canto Solo

Organo

Andante

I will go in the strength, in the strength of the Lord

Ich gebe einher in der Kraft des Herrn
I will go, I will go, I will go in the strength of the Lord, in the strength of the Lord, I will go, I will go in the strength of the Lord, in the strength of the Lord.
in the strength, the strength of the Lord, I will go.

her in der Kraft des Herrn, des Herrn, ich gehe ein.

in the strength, the strength of the Lord, I will go.

her in der Kraft des Herrn, des Herrn, ich gehe ein.