

SOME ASPECTS OF MORAVIAN THEOLOGY

Description of Moravian understandings of Spirit, Church, Heart Relationship, Sifting Period, etc. — A. Freeman

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Primary Moravian Theological Statements:

The Ground of the Unity, The Church Order of the Unity which contains theological material (such as on church, ministry (this has been newly revised), sacraments, etc.) not in the Ground, the Book of Worship, especially the Easter Morning Liturgy. The North American Churches use a Catechism which seems related to the Westminster Catechism, but this has really fallen into disuse. There is also the Moravian Covenant for Christian Living which is supposedly signed by Moravians. Since the 1960s this has had a doctrinal section at the beginning.

Resources in the Ground of the Unity, The basic Moravian Creedal Statement

Church

Para. 1 Christ calls church into being and calls it to service and mission

Para. 2 Faith in Trinity. Christ redeemed us. He is present in Word and Sacrament and directs us through his Spirit. Simul justus et peccator.

Para. 4 In this revised paragraph on Scripture only God is the source of the life and salvation of the church. Previously it was stated that Scripture was. This is a return to the Moravian formulation about the nature of the church.

Para. 6 Unity and ecumenical concerns

Para. 7 No distinctions in the church.

Para. 8-10 Role of witness and mission in life of church.

Para. 11 Jesus alone Lord of church which is sustained only by God's grace.

Spirit

Para. 3 Work of Spirit

Scripture and Creeds

Para. 4 Scripture and tradition. Doctrinal systems cannot be produced from Scripture. [Please note here that in the second paragraph for the first time there is a Moravian statement on tradition. In the first paragraph it is made clear that while Scripture is our norm and standard, only the Triune God is the source of the life of the church.]

Para. 5 Creeds and Confessions

Some Shorter Definitions:

Sifting Period: The period from 1743-1750 where the Moravian approach to religion was "sorted out", where there was excessive use of experience and language and where practical responsibilities were diminished in favor of experience. It was like a time of adolescence for the development of the 18th century Moravian Church as the Church moved on to maturity.

The Spirit:

Zinzendorf gradually became aware of the role of the Spirit. He moved beyond a theological understanding to an experiential understanding where he believed he better understood how the Spirit functioned in the Church. His understanding of the role of Christ in the Church came to be affected by the understanding of the Ascension in Heb. 10. Here Christ sits down to rest after this atonement and ascension and the Spirit becomes his witness. This did not diminish Zinzendorf's emphasis on the present relationship with Christ, but he did understand the Spirit to be the mediator of this and that the Spirit would care for the Church on behalf of Christ, much as a Mother cared for the family when the father was away. Thus the life of the Christian and of the Church came from the Spirit which was not a new thing but intimately connected with Christ and his atonement. The Spirit did not mediate its own business, it mediated Christ's business.

Most Moravians today know little of Zinzendorf's treatment of the Spirit in the 18th century. They primarily think of the Spirit in connection with the experience of Aug. 13, 1727, when after the Communion service at the Lutheran parish church in Berthelsdorf a sense of oneness and common spiritual experience came upon the Herrnhut community. This is considered an experience like Pentecost. Before that the community had been divided by differences. A number of practical things were done in 1727 by Zinzendorf to deal with divisions: he gave pastoral care to the Herrnhut community, he had the members of the community sign "Manorial Injunctions and Inhibitions" representing common commitments, predecessor of the present "Moravian Covenant for Christian Living."

Amazing things did happen after this experience. By 1732 Moravians launched into their world mission, sending missionaries to the West Indies.

Moravians today constantly seek for a renewal of this experience, but it has not yet happened. Some Moravians have been influenced by the charismatic movement but this would not be a strong influence in our Church today.

Church

The Church has its **marks**, such as the Word rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered, but it is primarily constituted by relationship with God. In the Renewed Moravian Church this is usually

defined as primarily **relationship** with Christ who enables relationship with God. The ancient Moravian Church talked about relationship with the Trinity responded to in a trinity of faith, love and hope.

God in essence is relationship. For Zinzendorf the primary model for the Church is the relationship expressed in the Trinity and the model which brings the church into being is Jesus' mother and John (beloved disciple) **gathered around the crucified Jesus** (John 20). The relationship is not only with God or Christ, but this relationship creates relationship with all those who share it. Thus there is **no Christianity without community**. This is expressed in using the German word *Gemeine* for both the Church as a whole and for congregations. The Church is a community constituted by what all share in common. Most Moravians today are very clear about the Church being constituted by relationship with Christ and each other, but this is often more implicit than explicit.

The Church is constituted by its relationship with the Triune God. The new revision of Para. 4 of the Ground of the Unity indicates that

The **Triune God** as revealed in the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments **is the only source of our life and salvation**; and this Scripture is the sole standard of the doctrine and faith of the *Unitas Fratrum* and therefore shapes our life.

The previous version indicated that Scripture was the only source and it was felt that this was out of harmony with Moravian theology.

Christ and the Spirit are the immanent manifestations of the God who Godself is the source of the Church's life and mission. The Moravian understanding of the Church is well expressed in the Chief Eldership of Christ and the role of the Spirit, though many Moravians today are not aware of the significant role of the Spirit in the 18th century Moravian Church. The Chief Eldership of Christ was proclaimed to the Moravian church on Nov. 13, 1741, a festival still celebrated to memorialize the significance of this realization. On December 19, 1756, a special celebration was held to memorialize the Mother Office of the Holy Spirit. Both of these celebrations were the expression of theological insights from praxis which had matured not only in the thought but the experience of the Church. The Church lived from the grace of the relationship with both Christ and the Spirit.

The understanding of Christ as Chief Elder was no claim to a special relationship of Christ with the Moravian Church. Rather was it an expression of the realization of the relationship which Christ bears to all churches --- and an attempt to put it into practice. The decision to recognize Christ as Chief Elder was precipitated by a historical crisis. In 1727 twelve persons were elected to the office of Elder to administer the matters of the Herrnhut congregation and from 1735 these persons functioned as General Elders, headed by Johann Leonhard Dober. When Dober decided that the responsibilities of this office were more than he could manage, he resigned. The Church then attempted to elect another Chief Elder, but was not able to do so successfully, including approval of the selection by lot. The question was then posed as to whether Christ wanted this position, and the lot for the first time was affirmative. Though this was precipitated by an incident, this was also an expression of the relationship of the living Saviour to the decision making processes of the Church, as well as the general life of the Church. The significance of this office for the decision making processes of the Church is indicated in a comment after the Sifting Period, where Zinzendorf stated that the Elder Office of Christ was made public too soon and should have been limited to the circle of the Elders, implying its special relevance for them.¹

1. Myer, Dieter, *Der Christozentrismus des späten Zinzendorf: Eine Studie zu dem Begriff »täglicher Umgang mit dem Heiland«*, Bern: Herbert Lang; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1973.»

Because of the Sifting Period, 1743-49, a time of excessive use of the language of the wounds, marriage and erotic imagery to express the relationship with Christ, particularly within the congregations in Wetteravia, Zinzendorf had to make correction in the expression of this relationship of Christ to the Church. For a while he suspended the Elder Office of Christ to spare Christ the shame for what had happened. In 1751, at the 10 year Jubilee of the declaration of the Elder Office of Christ, Zinzendorf spoke of a new beginning.² This new direction gave birth to a preference for the term "Lord" for Christ, rather than "Elder", in the late 1750s. He even suggested the celebration of a "Lord-Festival" on the first Sunday of Advent.

The idea of Elder, outside of the assembly of the workers, is an abstract idea. I have long thought, why do we not introduce the name *our Lord*. *Our Saviour* is a term originating with the Pietists which is not to be deserted. We will say it a thousand times when we speak of his wounds. But in the communal life it is not convenient, and there the Apostles *our Lord* pleases me much more.³

By "Lord" Zinzendorf meant Christ as "Housefather", not Pantocrator. As "Elder" was an expression of the relationship of Christ to the decision making process of the Church, so "Housefather" is the expression of the relationship of Christ to the life process of the whole Church. At the last Festival of Christ as Elder that he was to experience, in 1759 he said:

If one wants to indicate most completely what the Saviour is to the whole church, the "brotherhood", to the smallest as well as greatest, to the brothers and sisters of the Lord's Supper and the bees on the corpse; if one views the workers as members, and nothing more, as if they all stood in one place so that no apple could fall to earth, if they all fell at the feet of their Saviour and paid him homage: how would the congregation of souls, the members of the whole church, pay him homage? Then one comes to the point that I have previously often called to your attention, and the object of the 13th of November should be: He is our Lord. I do not understand Lord in monarchical or royal terms, but in terms of the character of a housefather. The whole people, if they as thirty thousand or more stand on one spot, are his family. One calls Lord the one to who one subjects oneself as his property, the one who orders and forbids and troubles himself about everything.⁴

In his last years Zinzendorf felt that the dangers of the Sifting Period were over and that he could feel much more positive about the church's following of its Lord. In 1756 he collected biblical texts about the nearness of the Lord which he bound as a Daily Text Book, covering from June 1, 1756 to December 31, 1757. His last effort consisted of designing a great "Thankfest" which he wanted celebrated in 1760, but did not live to experience.

Parallel to the celebration of Jesus as "Elder" and "Lord" was the celebration of the "Mother Office" of the Holy Spirit on December 19, 1756. Whereas the description of Jesus as "Lord" and "Elder" had to do with church governance and the obedience of Christians to the one who determines their lives, the "Mother Office" of the Spirit expressed the way the Spirit cared for the members of the church, as Anna Nitschmann (Zinzendorf's second wife) was spiritual mother to the women of the congregation. This

2. Meyer, *Der Christozentrismus des späten Zinzendorf*, pp. 55-56.

3. Meyer, *Der Christozentrismus des späten Zinzendorf*, pp. 63.

4. Meyer, *Der Christozentrismus des späten Zinzendorf*, pp. 64-65 (from JHD 9/16/59).

realization of the fellowship with the Spirit is not to be separated from the fellowship with Christ, but is a broadening of the Elder office of Christ. The Spirit keeps us in fellowship with Christ.

The "Mother Office" of the Holy Spirit even came to over-shadow the festival of November 13, though Moravians today do not know this:

Since we have paid homage to the "Mother", according to my understanding this Festival (Nov. 13) should cease. It was a Festival, a Day, which had to be introduced as long as we did not have sufficient acquaintance with the heavenly Mother, and we had not yet devoted ourselves to her as long as we still needed to have a human mother.⁵

The author is not presently aware of what happened to this Festival of the Holy Spirit after the death of Zinzendorf. It seems clear that it never really overshadowed the Festival of Christ as Elder, Nov. 13. Perhaps its emphasis only lived on in the celebration of the Festival of August 13, which commemorated the spiritual awakening of the Herrnhut congregation in 1727, often regarded as the Moravian Pentecost. However, the place of this Festival within the vision of Zinzendorf does stress the role of the third Person of the Trinity within the life and practice of the church, an emphasis often neglected by Moravians in favor of the relationship with the second Person.

Zinzendorf believed that **mission** was a mark of the Church. There could be no living Christian community without mission. Most Moravians would be conscious of the role of world mission in the Moravian Church but would often not think of their congregations as not really being church without mission, local and world, even though this seems clear in the Ground of the Unity. There is a new stirring of a sense of world mission in the Moravian Church today.

The Heart Relationship

The Heart Relationship precedes, but does not exclude, the Head Relationship with Christ (or God) and the Head Understanding of Christ (or God). What this means is that the reality of God and the relationship with God often precedes the reflection upon and attempt to understand this relationship. That this is so makes religion available to those who have limited intellectual ability. It also explains how justification is by grace alone. There can be no relationship without the action of each party in the relationship to make it possible. Thus no relationship can occur only by the action of one of the parties. Particular issues are introduced when the relationship is not between equals. God is other and we cannot even become aware of the possibility of relationship without God's action. God is holy and we cannot become aware of the possibility of relationship with the holy except by grace. Seen relationally justification is really acceptance into relationship and reconciliation, the creation of a relationship we could not create.

Moravians (though at times they have thought of themselves as non-theological) would not be adverse to theological formulation but would want to first call attention to the reality which the formulation describes and without which it is wasted effort. Lutherans would probably begin with the theological formulations, but most always assume that the words represented, led to and facilitated the reality. Lutherans remind Moravians of the need to have theological statements and do theological reflection while Moravians remind Lutherans of the need to be rooted in the reality upon which we theologically reflect. Moravians need the Lutheran complementarity. I would hope that Lutherans would feel that the Moravian complementarity would also be helpful.

5. Meyer, *Der Christozentrismus des späten Zinzendorf*, p. 62 (source not cited).

Moravians would tend to see the Spirit as personal and a mediation of the person of Christ. The Church is created not just by what it does or the authority given it, but by the relationship with Christ and the Spirit. Church governance actively looks to Christ as Chief Elder, mission looks to the leading of Christ.

Sifting Period

The years 1743 to 1750, which are part of this period, are called the "Sifting Time". Here Zinzendorf's focus on experiential religion was carried to excess by some: neglect of practical responsibilities, excessive involvement in religious experience and practices, excessive "experiential" language focusing on the blood and wounds of Christ and spiritual marriage. This was particularly true in the Wetteravian congregations and Zinzendorf's son, Christian Renuus, was deeply involved in this. Zinzendorf finally modified these extremes in 1750 and closed the Wetteravian congregations. In 1752 Christian Renuus dies. The excesses of this period were an outgrowth of a legitimate concern to deal with religion experientially, for religion was at its heart the relationship with and experience of the Saviour. Religion is experience, not concepts. It is a reality. It is sometimes said that although this time had many subjective elements, it was also an expression of the concern of Luther (and Zinzendorf) to regard Christ's work as objective rather than subjective. The vivid language gave objectivity to the sources of salvation. There is much wisdom that came out of this difficult time which needs to be heard in the contemporary concern for the appropriate role of religious experience.

What I think is important to recognize is that the Moravian Church went through a historical process in which it tried to sort out the nature of that which brought it into being (the relationship with the Savior and the Spirit), the nature of its life as arising from Christ and the Spirit, and the nature of its community as created by Christ and the Spirit and its life in response. The Sifting Time was recognized by Zinzendorf and many Moravians as a time of excess which needed correction. However, the foundational truths which gave birth to the excess were never denied: that the essence of Christianity lies in the relationship with Christ and the Spirit, that not only belief but life ensues from this, and that a unique type of community is created by this.

The Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is very important to Zinzendorf's approach to religion. Religion is a matter of realities perceived by the heart, particularly a relationship with the Saviour. However, the Saviour has ascended to take his rest, and so both the Saviour and the will of the Father need to be communicated through the active participation of the third person of the Trinity.⁶

Zinzendorf indicates a growth in his understanding of the Spirit. In 1738 he said:

I did not know what I should make out of the Holy Ghost and I was very happy when the Saviour in 1738 gave me the first conclusion about that It happened to me as to Basilus. I had not understood the Holy Ghost's divinity, and whoever knew me, knew that I never spoke of it.

⁶. Zinzendorf based his view of Christ's Ascension, sitting down at the right hand of God, and taking his rest after his earthly ministry on Hebrews 10:12-13, a passage which for him better supported the continuing role of Christ as mediator of the Godhead. Here it is not Christ who subjects the cosmic powers so that all might be given to God (as in I Cor. 15:28), but the powers are subjected to Christ.

He says that he had believed that the Spirit was the third person of the Godhead, "But I was not able to say how that was so, but only thought of him *abstracte*." That he should grow in his understanding of Christian realities was perfectly natural, for one is dealing with what is experienced rather than what can be thought out. He says, "Theologians make the mistake or have the prejudice that they are able to understand everything at the same time. Therefore they have no new blessings, for they are quite complete when they finish their education." He then goes on to say:

The Holy Ghost has known me well, but I have not known him before 1738. Therefore I carefully avoided entering into the matter until I so clearly understood the Mother-Office of the Holy Ghost. Since I have known him as Mother, it is natural to me. I arrived at my completed conclusion in the Torbay, when I went to America the second time in 1741.⁷

In the *Augsburg Confession Discourses* of 1747-1748 He expresses criticism of the Apostles' Creed and Lutheran theology contemporary to him for limited treatment of the Spirit. Of those (not the apostles) responsible for the very brief statement about the Spirit in the Apostles Creed he says, they "were not overstocked with Knowledge about the Holy Ghost, as may be seen by their very concise Line of treating him."⁸ In Spangenberg's *Antworten* he reproaches Lutheran theologians for their neglect of Luther's teaching on the Holy Spirit.⁹

The Spirit is primarily a Christian experience, although there was some experience of him before Christ made the uniquely Christian experience of him possible. All of humankind knew something of him experientially, though they knew nothing of the Father until he was revealed by Christ.

Indeed the Holy Ghost is the Nurse of Mankind, and they always had some dark Notion of it; for this Divine Person, in his Energy at least, was not so properly unknown under the Old Testament, like the Father, as inaccessible by reason of Man's Offence. They knew of one who *moved* (or brooded) *upon the Face of the Waters*, Gen. 1, as the spiritual *Chavah*, the Mother of all living. Among the Heathens Satan described a Minerva, who educated and form'd young Heroes; and thus when Wisdom must appear too divine a thing for Man to ascribe to himself, the Acknowledgement was however turn'd from the true Mother and Nurse.¹⁰

However, before the time of Christ to be filled with the Holy Ghost was "an extraordinary State, one of the strangest and most unusual Things."¹¹

The most singular manifestation of the Spirit of God is in the person of Christ.¹² However, since Zinzendorf argues for the legitimacy of variety in religious experience, he becomes well aware that there is no singular way of receiving the Spirit from Jesus. The first communication of the Spirit to his disciples was in the upper room when he breathed upon them in a special act of consecration (John 20). At Pentecost the hundred and twenty received the Spirit (Acts 2). However, Thomas, who was not present when Jesus breathed out the Spirit in the upper room, would have missed the special act of consecration

7. Augustus Spangenberg, *Apologetische Schluss-Schrift*, (1752), p. 576.

8. *Twenty One Discourses or Dissertations upon the Augsburg Confession*, (12/23/47), pp. 47f.

9. Augustus Spangenberg, *Darlegung richtiger Antworten auf mehr als dreyhundert Beschuldigungen gegen den Ordinarium Fratrum*, (1751), pp. 128f.

10. *Maxims, Theological Ideas and Sentences out of the Present Ordinarii of the Brethren Churches (1738-1747)*, ed. by John Gambold, London: J. Beecroft, 1751, (From the Discourses at Marienborn and Herrnhag in 1747), pp. 275-276.

11. *Twenty One Discourses or Dissertations on the Augsburg Confession*,(1/6/48), p. 108.

12. *Ibid.* p. 108, and *Maxims* p. 276.

by Jesus if he had only been able to receive the Spirit at Pentecost. Thus "...upon him our Saviour does not breath, but agrees to another Ritual he himself had pitch'd upon, ver. 25.27. tho' still the Spirit flows from the human Body of JESUS." When Thomas lays his hand in the Saviour's side, he received the Spirit. Notes Zinzendorf, "This makes the manner of Thomas's Ordination so important to us."¹³

Of course, the reason the way Jesus used with Thomas is important is that Zinzendorf felt that the experience of Thomas was close to that of the Moravians. The side wound of Jesus then becomes the place from which the Spirit issues forth into the world, bringing all of the little spirits which are the seed of the spiritual life of persons.. Not having been "en vogue" before,

He then first, when the Spear pierced that dear Lamb thro', gushed out along with the incorruptible Blood and Life of the Lamb, and at the same Time, with the original Seed of all those little Spirits which were to be distributed during this Period of Time into the human Individuals (John vii.38,39) taking the whole Host of Souls in his *pleroma* together with him.¹⁴

It is interesting to note that as Zinzendorf sees Christ's Atonement as dealing with original sin and removing all humankind from its guilt and influence so that if sin again occurs it occurs because of human relapse, so he understands the Spirit to have been poured out on all humankind and to have worked among all peoples in appropriate times and seasons so that the absence of the Spirit only occurs by a forfeiture of the times of grace.

Our Saviour being dead, and his Blood having been poured out, and his Side having been opened, the Holy Ghost, like a Stream pent up, broke out again; he burst his Way thro', he took the whole Earth for his Bed; just as one Part of its Surface is covered with Water, in like Manner was the whole World, at least gradually, covered with the Holy Spirit. He once more brooded over the Whole, as at the Time of the Creation, and then went on afterwards incessantly operating upon the Minds of Men; now he made himself perceptible in this Place, and then in another.¹⁵

The difference between such working of the Spirit and his working in the believer is that whoever believes in Jesus through the activity of the Spirit and who is "brought into a Participation of the Death of Jesus, into his Blood and Wounds, in such a one he will formally take up his Abode afresh; such should by this Means be exempted from the lamentable Case of living without the Conversation of the Holy Ghost, as the rest of the world did."¹⁶ The Spirit does not just work on the believer, but abides in her/him and becomes the source of faith and life.

In his eighth discourse on the Augsburg Confession Zinzendorf discussed the "procession" of the Holy Spirit. He acknowledges the controversy between the Western and the Orthodox Churches over procession from the Son, and indicates that such passages as John 15:26 and 16:7 do not indicate a procession from the Son in regards to *essence*, but *mission*.

13. *Maxims*, pp. 284-285.

14. *Twenty One Discourses or Dissertations upon the Augsburg Confession*, (12/16/47), pp. 33-34. (Here Zinzendorf speaks of the little Jesus-like spirits which are given by the Holy Ghost to each individual.)

15. *Ibid.*, (1/6/48), pp. 109-110.

16. *Ibid.*, (1/6/48), p. 109.

That Mission, and Procession out of one's Essence, are not the same Thing, nobody can deny. But seeing the Holy Trinity, for wise Reasons, suffers Mankind, when they soar above their Sphere into the Divine Essence, and hyper-metaphysical Definitions thereof, never to define satisfactorily about it; therefore we also shall without scruple pass by such theoretic Discussions, and keep to the Heart-Truth, viz. that the Saviour has entrusted the Holy Ghost to speak and act in his Name, to repeat what He has said, and to take his People very particularly under his Care, in the same Manner as he himself would do if he dwelt amongst us bodily.¹⁷

To further illustrate his understanding of the Spirit's mission as proceeding from the Son, he uses the analogy of a father who goes on a journey and entrusts the care of the family to the mother. While the father is gone, the mother refreshes the family's memory of the father so they will know him when he returns. Thus the Spirit cares for the Saviour's children and reminds them of him until he returns.¹⁸ This analogy should not be pushed so far as to assert the absence of the Saviour in the present, for the Saviour is present in the Spirit.

Thus the Saviour and the Spirit are so intimately related that the Spirit is sometimes called "our Saviour's Spirit." He did not become present until Christ completed his work. He pours out of Jesus' side wound like a pent-up stream to cover the whole earth. He preaches and convinces persons to believe in the Saviour and his merits. He becomes the instrumental cause of our salvation, while the Saviour and his sufferings are the principal cause.¹⁹

All that the Holy Ghost speaks with you, are his (Jesus') Words, it is as much as if He himself spoke to you; every Thing that he takes in Hand with you, is the same as if Jesus took it in Hand with you; He has left him in his Stead with you; He is a Man, and accordingly in a Sort is retired now into his Closet, he has set himself down to take his Rest, and has left you his busy, omnipresent Spirit, that Spirit who is sufficient for all spiritual and human Creatures, behind him; he is to keep you within his School, and shall have the plenipotentiary Authority at the same Time to procure you, in his Name and upon his Account, every Thing that you need and must have from Him in this Tabernacle: He is to be the Steward and Dispenser of the Degrees of Graces, of Happinesses, of Sensations, or Experiences and Official Gifts, which you are to have; he shall take it *out of mine*, says our Saviour.²⁰

The reality of the Spirit in the life of the Christian Zinzendorf argues "not only from Revelation(i.e. Scripture), but also from Experience."²¹ One becomes clearly aware of his dependence on the sayings about the Spirit in the Gospel of John (14-16) and his probable reliance on I John 5:6-12, besides John 19-20, for the idea that the Spirit proceeds out of Christ's side wound. Though his and the church's experience of the reality of the Spirit has contributed to his awareness of the role of the Spirit (note his comments on a growing awareness in 1738-1741), Scripture and the Scriptural portrayal of Jesus provide the boundaries for his understanding. His religion therefore cannot degenerate into any undefined mysticism, spiritualism, or docetism.²²

17. Ibid., (1/6/48), pp. 104-105.

18. Ibid., (1/6/48), pp. 105-106.

19. Ibid., (1/6/48), p. 114.

20. Ibid., (1/6/48), p. 115.

21. Ibid., (1/6/48), p. 106.

22. Both Paul and the Johannine literature struggled with the proper role of the Spirit and Christian experience in relationship to the historical Jesus. The Johannine treatment of this is to be found in I John 4 and John 14-16. The primary Pauline

Zinzendorf's emphasis on the Spirit clearly indicates that religion is not a human creation where one grasps God as an object and reflects on him, giving expression to a conceptual system. Rather is it something largely of grace: it depends on God's action and participation and cannot be gained merely from study. The Holy Ghost stands

...in such a near Connection with our Hearts, that when we speak to the Saviour and the Father, when we pray, and want to bring certain divine Matters together, which extend beyond our Reach, yet necessarily occur, he then prays them over with us; and if he does not pray them over with us, as Parents are wont to repeat the Morning and Evening-Prayer before little Children, nothing pertinent comes out of it, we ourselves do not know what we would be at, yea if he himself does not join the Matters together, which we would be thinking, as well as the Words we would be speaking, there is neither Head nor Tail in it.

Our having learnt it, our having read it in Books, our having deduced it mathematically, or being endowed with an admirable Eloquence to utter our Ideas upon Occasion, is not of the least Signification: for as long as the Holy Ghost has not been present at it, as long as He has not formed the Words and the Thought, as long as we do not owe the Fund and Impulse to Him; an experienced Child of God can immediately hear and discern, that there something is talked or maintained, which is not the Language of the Holy Ghost, and consequently also no certain Truth. And here a Person may labour and toil as much as he will, and may be possessed of the most incomparable Parts and Memory, and have a very good Intention too; yet, if he has not learnt it of the Holy Ghost, a *sibilus* will always attend it, and it will never rise to *Shiboleth*.^{23 24}

Parallel to the celebration of Jesus as "Elder" and "Lord" was the celebration of the "Mother Office" of the Holy Spirit on December 19, 1756. Whereas the description of Jesus as "Lord" and "Elder" had to do with church governance and the obedience of Christians to the one who determines their lives, the "Mother Office" of the Spirit expressed the way the Spirit cared for the members of the church, as Anna Nitschmann was spiritual mother to the women of the congregation. This realization of the fellowship with the Spirit is not to be separated from the fellowship with Christ, but is a broadening of the Elder office of Christ. The Spirit keeps us in fellowship with Christ.

The "Mother Office" of the Holy Spirit even came to over-shadow the festival of November 13:

Since we have paid homage to the "Mother", according to my understanding this Festival (Nov. 13) should cease. It was a Festival, a Day, which had to be introduced as long as we did not have sufficient acquaintance with the heavenly Mother, and we had not yet devoted ourselves to her as long as we still needed to have a human mother.²⁵

The author is not presently aware of what happened to this Festival of the Holy Spirit after the death of Zinzendorf. It seems clear that it never really overshadowed the Festival of Christ as Elder, Nov. 13. Perhaps its emphasis only lived on in the celebration of the Festival of August 13, which commemorated the spiritual awakening of the Herrnhut congregation in 1727, often regarded as the Moravian Pentecost. However, the place of this Festival within the vision of Zinzendorf does stress the role of the third Person

discussion of it is in I Cor. 12-14. Both biblical traditions relate the experience of the Spirit to the confession of Jesus as Lord or Christ, to the expression of a quality of life (love), to the mission of the church, and to responsibility to the church.

23. In Judges 12 the Gileadites tested the Ephraimites by their ability to pronounce this word.

24. *Twenty One Discourses or Dissertations upon the Augsburg Confession*, (1/6/48), pp. 106-107.

25. Meyer, *Der Christozentrismus des späten Zinzendorf*, p. 62 (source not cited).

of the Trinity within the life and practice of the church, an emphasis often neglected by Moravians in favor of the relationship with the second Person.

Church

To properly understand Zinzendorf's views regarding the nature of the Church the terms *Kirche*, *Religion*, *Sekte* and *Gemeine* should be considered. In order to maintain clarity in his use of these terms they will be retained in the German. The plural of *Religion* is *Religionen* and of *Gemeine* is *Gemeinen*.

Kirche

The *Kirche* (German for "church") itself is invisible and not to be equated with the visible and historical Christian traditions and institutions which Zinzendorf calls *Religionen* ("Religions"). To the *Kirche*

belong all souls who through the Word, through the voice of Jesus, wherever they are, let themselves be woken to life, who are desirous of salvation, who love Him, who belong to him in time; and who someday come from the east and west, north and south, and will sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in heaven.²⁶

It is this invisible Church which cuts across all confessional lines:

Therefore we want to place minimal limitations on the true right-believing Church of Jesus Christ, but believe that in the various religions of the Lutherans, Reformed, Mennonites, even in the Roman Catholic there are persons who are blessed; However, with this proviso, that they gained salvation not through their confession but merely through the true faith in Jesus Christ and his merit.²⁷

Religion

The Term *Religionen* is used for the great historical Churches,²⁸ the confessional bodies, such as Lutheran and Reformed. To these people give external allegiance as *Christianern* ("Christians") rather than *Christen* (those defined by Christ and bearing his name).²⁹ Zinzendorf never denies that teachings

26. *Öffentliche Reden von dem Herrn, der unsere Seligkeit ist, und über die Materie von seiner Marter, die Derselbe also vocirter Pastor bey der einzigen damals zu Philadelphia in Pennsylvanien bekanten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeine in ihrer Kirche daselbst im Jahr 1742 gehalten hat*, 3rd. ed., London und Barby: Clemens, 1760, (2.7/18.42), p. 14.

27. Hermann Plitt, *Zinzendorfs Theologie*, Drei Bände, Gotha: F.A. Perthes, 1869, I, (from *Freiw. Nachlese XIII*, p. 1544), p. 458.

28. *Jeremias, ein Prediger der Gerechtigkeit, allem redlichen Predigern in der evangelishchen Kirche einfältig und als ein Exempel vorgestellt (1739)*, reprint of 2nd revised ed., Berlin: Franklin and Comp, 1830, p. 15.

29. *Inhalt dererjenigen Reden welche zu Berlin vom Iten Januar 1738. bis 27ten Aprils in denen Abend-Stunden sonderlich für die Manns-Personen gehalten worden*, 3rd ed., Lensburg and Altona: Korte, 1743., (3.2.38), p. 29.

In all languages one says, a Christian, and in our German alone one says, ein Christ, and that is the right word. In no way are we called by the name of Jesus or Christ in the sense of a religious denomination, as if Christ were our teacher, as if Christ were our prophet, our lawgiver, as if He were the founder, the author of our religion, as it is sometimes expressed by a pagan historian, as for example in Lucian. "The founder of this religion was crucified." In this sense we are not Christians. Rather, we are Christians in the same way that, in our European countries, a wife takes the name of her husband and afterwards is called not by her maiden name but by her husband's name. Thus every soul who has the right to call herself by this name, "because she was taken out of Man"(Gen. 2:23) belongs to Christ, is Christian

exist within these historical traditions and bodies which are right and faithful (e.g. his attitude towards the Augsburg Confession) and that there are true Christians in every Christian tradition along with the nominal members. The Saviour sees to this.³⁰ Zinzendorf saw something of value in every *Religion*. Each had its treasure. Thus he did not encourage separatism, nor was he among those Pietists who did not see the value of the Church. In fact, he said to those within the *Religionen*, "Whoever wishes to help his Religion must not consider it a "Babel", but a broken Zion, and do that from the heart."³¹ Anyone acquainted with the history of the Moravians in this period will remember the extreme reticence they had concerning receiving a member from one of the *Religionen*. They usually insisted that each person remain a loyal member of their own confessional body and carried out the *Ecclesiola in Ecclesia* (little church within a church) concept of Spener and Francke wherever they went. Moreover, Zinzendorf affirmed the unique value of each Religion through the *Tropus*³² concept. The *Tropoi Paediae* were "ways of teaching" which characterized each historical tradition. Even within the Moravian Church for about the first 100 years separate membership lists for the Lutheran, Reformed and Moravians were retained.

Not only did Zinzendorf advocate a respect for and renewal from within these confessional bodies, but he also strongly spoke out against indulging in criticism in the matter of the form of religion:

This critical and sarcastic spirit is a pestilence of our times, and ruined to the ground for the Savior more than one Gemeinde which doesn't deserve the name. ... With this opportunity it very specially lies upon my heart, how all my brethren in the Religions, therefore in the presence of our dear teacher, are quite seriously to seek (in so far as there remains in their minds, especially from the perspective of the academy, one and another *idea secundaria* for the despising of form, liturgy, external administration and imparting of the sacraments, the confessional, ordination, etc.) to purify themselves from that in the blood of Jesus.³³

Sekte

In regards to the word *Sekte*, in an essay titled "Simple (Unmassgebliche) Thoughts on the Name and Meaning of the Word Sect," he showed that from the external and historical point of view a Christian group can be called a *Sekte*, if one means nothing else than "a association of such persons who prefer the party of a person or an idea, although not always exclusive of other teachers and doctrines."³⁴ Thus the term may be used if it has no exclusive implications, though on the whole Zinzendorf is wary of the term. The Gospel is no sect, but the only universal religion. Christians are not sectaries of certain earthly teachers, but Christians have one Teacher, come from God, Who said that His teaching was not His, but that of Him who sent Him.

Gemeine

Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures on Important Subjects in Religion*, trans. by George W. Forell, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1973, p. 77.

30. Plitt, I, P. 460.

31. *Jeremias*, 1939, p. 20.

32. *Tropos* is the transliteration of the Greek and *Tropus* is from the Latin. Both are used. The plural of *tropos* is *tropoi* and of *tropus* is *tropi*. *Paideia* is a transliteration of the Greek word for training or discipline. Thus a *tropos paideias* is a way of discipline, and Zinzendorf uses this to describe the approach of each religious tradition.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 227f. The German is very complicated and I am somewhat unsure of the translation. The point is to avoid the critical spirit of the times and to purify such criticism in the blood of Jesus.

34. Plitt, I, (from *Freiw. Nachle IV*, pp. 456ff), p. 470.

The term *Gemeine* was the term which Zinzendorf most frequently employed for the Church. This was quite distinct from *Religion*. This term was used for the real Church which lived with and from Christ and expressed the reality from which it lived -- as a living organism.

And I always make a great Difference between a Congregation and a Religious Denomination in general; and with respect to a Congregation am of Opinion, that she stands in no Need of any new System, being herself a System of God, a System, which the Angels themselves study: so on the other Side, in the Religious Denominations, from whence the Congregation-Members are descended, from whence they have their old Knowledge, and in which they also like to remain, there one must, to be sure, premise and settle certain Points, to be a Directory for all such Persons as are now getting spiritual Eyes and Ears, and with whom a Metanoia is going forward.³⁵

Bettermann explains the use of the term *Gemeine* in the German of the eighteenth century in the following fashion: *Gemeine* and *Gemeinde* are two forms of the same word. Where Luther used the term *Gemeine*, the eighteenth century used both forms in a similar way. In the nineteenth century *Gemeinde* emerged as the only form. whereas the term *Gemeinde* came to designate a local congregation, *Gemeine* amongst the Brethren in the eighteenth century had another meaning. *Gemeine* refers not only to the local congregation, but also to the Church as a whole, and wherever the local congregation is meant the orientation of the local to the whole invisible Church is always seen. Thus the local *Gemeinen* are joined in a living unity.³⁶ The *Gemeine* in its universal sense is then made up of all *Gemeinen*, both within and without the established *Religionen*, and also the heavenly *Gemeine*.

The original, the true *Gemeine* is the Trinity: "The only true Gemeine, the only foundational Gemeine, the only genuine original Kirche is the Holy Trinity."³⁷ Any *Gemeinen* formed on earth were made after this pattern. The first earthly model of this *Gottes-Kirche* was the creation of humanity. Because of the failure of this, God acted again and said:

the church, which had been formed in my heart from eternity, must still be: and that went so far that the Creator became human in his own person and passed through the stages of human life; and there he hung on the cross ...: so he hung there is all stillness, and established the model of the Kirche, which had been betrayed, which did not wish to come into being, which had not wanted to be created for 4,000 years, doing this nakedly and simply at the cross, and declared his John and his mother to be the first cross brother and sister.³⁸

Thus Christ, his mother, and John became the earthly model of the heavenly *Gemeine*, relationship brought into being at the cross. The reader will remember Zinzendorf's emphasis on the side-wound of Christ as the birth place of the Church. In this sermon he speaks of the arms and the wounds of Christ as being the only place for all Christians.

The possibility of this relationship did not depend upon understanding or ability to consciously respond, thus Zinzendorf reduced it to the relationship of the embryonic Jesus and John the Baptist:

35. *Twenty One Discourses or Dissertations on the Augsburg Confession*, transl. by F. Okeley, London: Beercroft, 1753, pp. 42-43.

36. W. Bettermann, article in *Jahrbuch der Brüdergemeine*, Gnadau, Unitätsbuchhandlung, 1935/36. pp. 16f.

37. *Der Öffentlichen Gemein-Reden im Jahr 1747*, p. 78.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

I reduce it to two persons. John and Jesus, both in their mother's womb, and their mothers, in any case together constituted a Christian religion; there began the feeling, the experience and the inner movement which today in Christianity is regarded as dream and imagination.³⁹

All *Gemeinen* then are patterned after a heavenly relational reality and partake of this heavenly reality, the *Ur-Gemeine*. They are all called into being by Christ, find their existence in his sacrifice (really in the side wound and through the real and continuing presence of his blood in the world), and are nourished by his blood in the Lord's Supper.⁴⁰ Remember that Zinzendorf viewed Christ's blood as really present in the world along the line of the old Lutheran teaching on Communion.) These are realities which constitute the life of the *Germeine*.

This understanding of the Church as a counterpart of a heavenly reality gave the Church an eschatological reference; it both was in the world and pointed to the heavenly reality which it represented. As Zinzendorf describes it: Jesus has "g iven us a certain sketch of the primal temple, of the primal Gemeine ..."41 The extent to which this governed Zinzendorf's thinking on the Church is realized by few Moravians in this country. The Liturgy of the worship service was viewed as the participation by the congregation in the heavenly worship, the division of the church according to age and station ("choirs" of the married, single, etc.) was considered expressive of the nature of the heavenly *Gemeine*, and the organization of the cemetery, or God's Acre, into choirs also had this purpose behind it. The Churches were not dark and mysterious gothic buildings, but bright, with a great deal of window space and extensive use of white both on the interior of the place of worship and as the liturgical color. The surplice which was adopted for use at the Lord's Supper was not a white liturgical gown, but after the manner of those robed in white in the book of Revelation and it reminded the congregation that they belonged to a heavenly reality.⁴² Bettermann quotes the Communion hymn:

Here one draws near a meal
which in the heaven's Saal
I scarcely imagine more complete.
Here one comes
to Christ's flesh and blood.⁴³

The relationship with the Savior, and thus with God, would be the primary mark of the Gemeine. Second to that would be its relationship with the Spirit who cared for the Church as a Mother. The Spirit called persons to the Ascended Jesus and assisted in carrying out his mission. The *Gemeinen* were congregations of God in the Spirit transcending all denominational lines. Such a concept he sought to bring into reality in 1742 when in the Pennsylvania Synods he urged the unity of all German speaking Protestants in Pennsylvania. He believed that the Spirit itself, or Himself, had a decisive effect upon the nature of the *Gemeine*. During the Synod of 1750⁴⁴ Zinzendorf spoke of the "Gemein-Geist", the Holy Spirit in regards to its influence on the *Gemeine*, "das agens, motor, Spiritus activus" ("the agent, mover, active Spirit"). This Spirit is the "je ne sai quoi" (absolute essential) or the "Schibboleth" of the *Gemeine*. The effect of the "Gemein-Geist" on the hearts of the members of the congregation is the "Gemein-Sinn"

39. *Der Predigten die der Ordinarius Fratrum von Anno 1751. bis 1755. zu London gehalten hat.,* Abth. II, (1.17.53), pp. 153f.

40. Bernhard Becker, *Zinzendorf im Verhältnis zu Philosophie und Kirchentum seiner Zeit*, Leipzig: Hinrich, 1886, p. 402

41. *Oeffent. Gemein-Reden*, 1747, p. 84.

42. Cf. Wilhelm Bettermann, *Theologie und Sprache bei Zinzendorf*, Gotha: Klotz, 1935, p. 122ff.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

44. Spangenberg, *Apologetische Schluss-Schrift*, (Synodal Protocoll 1750), pp. 542ff.

(common mind) and when this is put into action it is called the "Gemein-Plan" (common plan). The "Gemein-Wille" (common will) is the common willingness to contribute to the purpose for which the Saviour has brought the members of the *Gemeine* together. The "Gemein-Gefühl" (common feeling) is that "inne werden" (inner becoming) which the "Gemein-Geist" causes us to experience from time to time. Thus the life of the Congregation or Church is dependent upon the Spirit and the Spirit creates a *Sinn*, *Plan*, *Wille*, and *Gefühl* which is expressive, not of the individuality of the members of the *Gemeine*, but of their unity. Moreover, as one might understand from previous consideration given to revelation and interpretation as *öconomisch*, the Spirit would lead the Church to forms and institutions which would be appropriate to the Lord's purpose for the Church in every situation. In other words, form shall not determine the *Gemein-Geist* but the *Gemein-Geist* shall determine the form.

A third mark of the *Gemeine* was mission. Christ had given his church a mission. Each one of the Gospels concludes with some equivalent of a commissioning of his disciples. In John Jesus sends his disciples as his Father had sent him (e.g. John 17:18). Both the life and activity of the *Gemeine* carry out this mission. Its life expresses the very relationship which Christ calls the church to facilitate for others and which gives those exploring the Gospel as experiential referent. In I John 1:3 others are invited into the fellowship with the Father and the Son which constitutes the life and fellowship of the community.

1995 UNITY SYNOD ACTIONS AND MATERIALS of Theological Interest

August 13-25, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

REBAPTISM

REPORT NO. 1. FAITH AND ORDER COMMITTEE

WHEREAS some Unity Provinces face such problems as persons baptized as infants seeking a second baptism, persons seeking baptism who have no record of a possible previous baptism, or persons coming to the Moravian Church from sects which may have an inadequate understanding of baptism; ⁴⁵ and

WHEREAS some persons seek a second baptism, particularly with a desire for immersion and as a personal faith response; and

WHEREAS we desire to affirm the practice and theology of baptism contained in paragraphs 675-678 of the Church Order of the Unity and the resolution in § 812 of the Unity Synod of 1981; and

WHEREAS we desire to avoid the appearance of sanctioning rebaptism and to affirm the legitimacy of baptism of infants which bears adequate witness to God's saving action; and

⁴⁵ . The issue of persons having no record of baptism in infancy was a special concern of the Province of the Czech Republic. This issue will pass away in the future with the demise of the Communist society and the disappearance of the need to hide church affiliation. The receiving of requests for an adult experience of baptism, usually in the form of immersion, was expressed as being the experience of several provinces. The question of whether baptism in the sects was adequate was an issue raised by the African and Caribbean Provinces. Thus this report expresses the concerns of a number of provinces. Proposals were received from the Czech Church, Kingsley Lewis and Leon Matthias, and Jan Schalkwijk which initiated the discussion of this issue.

WHEREAS we consider baptism to be very important and at the same time, in the spirit of the Ancient Unity, we consider baptism to be a “ministerial,” that which serves the “essential” of God’s saving action; and ⁴⁶

WHEREAS the Unity Synod of 1988 (§ 811) requested each Unity Province to consider the appropriate pastoral response to the problem of rebaptism or second baptism;

Be it resolved:

1. That all provinces of the Unitas Fratrum educate its congregations in the Moravian understanding and practice of baptism.
2. That the Unitas Fratrum affirms the legitimacy and propriety of the three forms of baptism: sprinkling, pouring and immersion; allowing any of the three, according to the wishes and practices of a particular Province, if the other forms be not denied.
3. That the Unitas Fratrum expresses appreciation for those who desire rebaptism as a way of experiencing the meaning of baptism, but believe that the theological implications of such rebaptism make it unacceptable and suggest that such desires be expressed in a “Rite for the Reaffirmation of Baptism” which could be designed by the Provinces which desire to do so.
4. That where it is not certain, because of lack of records, whether a person has been baptized previously, one option is to use the words, “If you were not baptized, I baptize you
5. That where the validity of a previous baptism is in question because of the beliefs or practices of a sect from which a person comes, baptism need not but may be performed at the discretion of the pastor and Elders without it being considered rebaptism.
6. That where persons have gone elsewhere to receive rebaptism, because baptism is a “ministerial” such rebaptism ought not to be considered a basis for exclusion from the congregation; pastoral care should be provided which both supports the person’s spiritual needs and clarifies the theology and baptismal practices of the Moravian Church.

The resolution on rebaptism was passed by
Unity Synod by 45 votes for and 4 abstentions,
none voting against. August 23, 1995.

SCRIPTURE

REPORT NO. 2 FAITH AND ORDER COMMITTEE

Whereas Moravians have attempted over the course of their history to formulate adequate and timely confessions regarding Scripture, and

⁴⁶ . The Ancient Moravian Church from the time of Luke of Prague divided matters of church and theology into three categories: that which was “essential” unto salvation (relationship with the Triune God responded to in faith, love and hope), that which was “ministerial” (serving the “essential” but not having value independent of it), and that which was “incidental” (the different ways in which things were done). Scripture, Sacraments, Church, Preaching all served or were “ministerial” to the one and only “essential” (relationship with God). This is the special insight of Moravian theology. (This footnote was a part of the report itself when it passed.)

Whereas, debate has been occasioned in the North American Provinces over the precise meanings of the current confessional statement adopted by the Unity Synod of 1957, known as the *Ground of the Unity*,⁴⁷ and

Whereas the Northern and Southern Provincial Synods meeting in 1994 and 1995 have petitioned the Unity Synod of 1995 to amend the *Ground of the Unity*, § 4, God's Word and Doctrine,

Be it resolved that § 4, God's Word and Doctrine in the *Ground of the Unity*, shall read as follows:

The Triune God as revealed in the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments is the only source of our life and salvation; and this Scripture is the sole standard of the doctrine and faith of the Unitas Fratrum and therefore shapes our life.⁴⁸

The Unitas Fratrum recognizes the Word of the Cross as the center of Holy Scripture and of all preaching of the Gospel and it sees its primary mission, and its reason for being, to consist in bearing witness to this joyful message. We ask our Lord for power never to stray from this.⁴⁹

The Unitas Fratrum takes part in the continual search for sound doctrine. In interpreting Scripture and in the communication of doctrine in the Church, we look to two millennia of ecumenical Christian tradition and the wisdom of our Moravian forebears in the faith to guide us as we pray for fuller understanding and ever clearer proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But just as the Holy Scripture does not contain any doctrinal system, so the Unitas Fratrum also has not developed any of its own because it knows that the mystery of Jesus Christ, which is attested to in the Bible, cannot be comprehended completely by any human mind or expressed completely in any human statement. Also it is true that through the Holy Spirit the recognition of God's will for salvation in the Bible is revealed completely and clearly.^{50 51}

47 . The difficulty experienced with the formulation of 1957 was a wording adopted by this Synod which had never been used by the Moravian Church before. Moravians have always called Scripture "the only rule (norm, standard) of faith and doctrine." In the statement of 1957 it was for the first time also called "the only source" which was interpreted by some Moravians as meaning "the only source of information about everything." Moravians have also always believed that God was the source of their life, not just the book, as important as it is, which bears witness about God. Jesus in John 5:39 says that people search Scriptures because they think to have eternal life in them, but rather do they bear witness to him, the One who is the source of life. (This footnote was a part of the original Report as passed.)

48 . This paragraph is essentially what was recommended by the Northern Province, N. America, Synod with the following changes: "attested to" was changed to "revealed in" and the words "of the Unitas Fratrum" were inserted after "doctrine and faith." These changes had been suggested by faculty at the Theological College in Mbeya, were communicated to the Faith and Order Committee, and accepted.

49 . Here the Committee changed "Scriptures" to Scripture to fit the use of the singular in the first paragraph which then presented Scripture as a whole as authority, as a Canon.

50 . The Southern Province suggestion of the addition of the second sentence in the paragraph, as interpreting the first, was accepted by the Committee with some modification. The word Scripture here was also changed to the singular. One amendment was made on the floor, adding to the last paragraph, the next to the last sentence, the words "by any human mind or expressed completely in any."

51 . The Northern Province suggested changes in the first paragraph. The Southern Province accepted the recommendation of the Northern Province and also suggested changes in the third paragraph. The Committee on Faith and Order of Unity Synod then introduced additional revision. Thus the resulting statement has had the participation of the international Unity. (Footnote in the original Report.)

The resolution changing the *Ground of the Unity's* statement on Scripture was passed *without an opposing vote or any dissent* on August 23.

MINISTRY

REPORT FROM THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE Proposals from the Bishops' Conference Changes in the Church Order of the U.F., Section on Ministry⁵²

682 The constituted orders of the ministry in the Moravian Church are those of Deacons, Presbyters and Bishops. Those who are ordained are authorized to administer the Sacraments in the Moravian Church. This ministry of the ordained is an expression of the ministry of the whole people of God and a response to the call and gifts of Christ who is Chief Elder of the church and its ministry. The orders are expressions of service rather than rank. Only One is recognized as having authority in Himself: Jesus the Christ who also served.

(a) Deacon

685 The ordination of a Deacon admits him/her to the first order of the ministry. As a Deacon he/she has authority to serve in the pastoral office and to administer the Sacraments under the Rules and Regulations of the Church in effect for such an office.

The ordination as a Deacon embodies the understanding of ministry as service, which underlies all the orders. The newly ordained minister is normally guided and nurtured in establishing his/her work in the ministry by a Presbyter who lives nearby or someone appointed for this purpose by the Provincial Board. In the event of the reception of an ordained minister from another denomination into the ordained ministry of the Moravian Church, the minister shall be received as a Deacon.

(b) Presbyter

686 Deacons are consecrated to the office of Presbyter after a number of years in the ordained ministry. In the service of consecration the Church spiritually encourages the Deacon, recognizes his/her professional and spiritual maturity, affirms his/her ministry since ordination and renews its own commitment to serve Christ.

For the individual, the service of consecration should be an occasion to give witness to the Christian faith and to rededicate him/herself to the ordained ministry.

(c) Bishop

687 The Renewed Unity received the episcopacy as an inheritance from the Ancient *Unitas Fratrum*. Today we regard the episcopacy in the Renewed Unity in a different way from that of the Ancient *Unitas Fratrum*. Formerly, a Bishop had a Church-governmental and administrative function. In our day, however, this function is not necessarily linked to the episcopal office. We hold to the understanding, common both to the Ancient and Renewed Unity, that only Christ is Head of the Church and pastoral oversight is exercised in responsibility to Him.

⁵² . The basic reasons for the changes in the section on ministry were: to emphasize that professional ministry is derived from the ministry of the whole people of God, to assert that ordination to the Diaconate presents one with the foundational meaning of ministry, i.e. service, to affirm consecration to the Presbyterate as a time for recognizing professional and spiritual maturity and for the reaffirmation of ministry both by the minister and the congregation, and to connect Episcopacy more intimately with the life of the whole Church where bishop is pastor to the Church as well as to the clergy and conservor of the Church's doctrine and unity.

A Bishop of the Moravian Church is consecrated to a special priestly pastoral ministry in the name of and for the whole Unity.

The office of Bishop represents the vital unity of the Church and the continuity of the Church's ministry, although the Unity does not place emphasis on any mechanical transmission of the apostolic succession. The office and function of a Bishop is valid throughout the Unity as a whole.

Duties of Bishop

688 A Bishop as a Bishop has responsibility primarily for providing pastoral care to pastors and the Church, and assisting the Church in its faithfulness to Christ and the Gospel.

All Provincial and District Boards shall consult a Bishop or Bishops in all matters concerning the work in the Province or District which fall within his/her sphere of responsibility.

A Bishop has a special duty of intercession for the Unity, and also for the Church of Christ as a whole.

Bishops in active service should be enabled to visit congregations for the deepening of their spiritual life.

The opinion of a Bishop (Bishops) shall customarily be sought and given due consideration and weight in matters of doctrine and practice.

A Bishop represents the Church in the act of ordination.

Only bishops have the right to ordain or to consecrate to the various orders of the ministry, but only when they are commissioned to do so by a Provincial Board or Synod.

A Bishop, however, has the right to decline a commission to ordain, should he/she wish to do so.

In exceptional cases the ordination of a Deacon may be performed by a Presbyter in the name of and by commission of a Bishop.

A Bishop (Bishops) should share in the decisions regarding the training of candidates for the ministry and should maintain a special pastoral relationship with such candidates throughout their training.

The Synod of the Bishop's Province may also add administrative responsibility by electing him/her a member of the Provincial Board.

A Bishop may be assigned by his/her Province to represent the Province in ecumenical gatherings and before governmental agencies.

Passed August 22

A Comment on the Sacraments, Proclamation of the Word and Ministry

The Ancient Moravian Church understood sacraments, church, Scripture, ministry as ministerial to the one essential, relationship with God to be responded to in faith, hope and love. Thus the ministerials are necessary inasmuch as they serve the essential. Thus Word and Sacraments would be very important for Moravians as long as they are put to the proper use, in the service of the essential, the reality which they re-present. In terms of Eucharist, this would be an argument for real presence. In the proclamation of the Word this would be an argument for allowing God to use the moment of preaching to offer grace and justify together with creating gracious relationship. For Moravians it would be important to understand these instruments of God's grace rightly, but it would be even more important to let them function or be rightly.

As to ministry, Moravians have since 1467 have had an episcopacy which they accepted and utilized for historical reasons, but have not considered this as an office necessary to the existence of the Church. In the Ancient Church bishops were diocesan, while in the Renewed Church they were primarily for ordination and spiritual care, though in some provinces bishops have been elected to executive positions. The present Moravian Church is continuing to struggle over how best to use its episcopacy, and a gathering of international bishops which met in Czechslovakia in 1992 made recommendations which have been accepted by the Unity Synod in Tanzania in 1995. Moravians begin by ordaining a person a Deacon, which office symbolizes ministry as service, patterned after Christ's ministry as servant. There is only one ordination, and the understanding of minister as servant continues whatever further rank is given. After a period of maturing professionally and personally there is consecration as Presbyter. The only thing a Presbyter can do which a Deacon cannot is become Bishop. A bishop is also consecrated, not ordained. For Moravians both the Deacon and Presbyter would be equivalent to the pastor and minister of the word and sacraments in the ELCA. Our Deacon would not be the type of Deacon the ELCA has been discussing. Our Bishops are Bishops for life and are not in an executive position unless so elected. Yours are executives and, as I understand it, not for life. Our Bishops are now beginning to fulfill functions related to the pastoral care of the Church, the Unity of the Church, and the conservation of the Church's doctrine. With Moravians ordination would only be by a bishop, but at the request of the Provincial Board. A Bishop could not initiate ordination by himself.