

## Book Notes

Craig D. Atwood. **Jesus Still Lead On: An Introduction to Moravian Belief – Studies of the Moravian Covenant for Christian Living and The Ground of the Unity.** (Bethlehem PA: Moravian Church – Interprovincial Board of Communication, 2004).

Reviewed by David A. Schattschneider

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It was a simple request that led me to the discovery of this valuable resource. “Some of our newer members are wondering what really are the Moravian ‘essentials,’” said the leader of an adult Sunday School class in a nearby congregation. “Do you think you could spend four Sunday mornings discussing what Moravians believe?”

Craig Atwood’s study guide is very useful in answering a question like that. The guide provides an abundance of good material and the user is encouraged to adapt the contents to whatever schedule and format is planned. Atwood begins with an introduction laying out the basics of how to lead a discussion group (which experienced leaders will skip but novices will find helpful). The gem buried in this section is a two-page statement (pp. 13-14), “Introduction to the Study of Moravian Doctrine.” This is an excellent summary of the Moravian ‘approach’ to the study of doctrine and how such an enterprise can be “a great privilege and should be a joyful and energizing experience.” (p. 13). It is a fine statement about an oft-neglected topic.

The guide is divided into two parts — one for each document. The format is also the same for each: historical introduction describing the development of the document and then sessions devoted to paragraphs of the document, each

containing a brief commentary and questions for discussion. Part I contains 22 sessions on the *Covenant* and Part II has 24 sessions on *The Ground*.

The historical introductions are very useful in understanding the development of the modern Moravian Church and how these documents grew out of specific circumstances. These pages bring together in one place a lot of information which is otherwise scattered around in many sources. The discussion of the 1957 Unity Synod is especially good.

The commentaries present a nice flow back and forth between the distinctive Moravian insights being discussed and their connection to the larger ecumenical Christian scene.

With the questions, Atwood attempts to draw out the implications of the documents for the life of the contemporary Church and for individual believers.

The format works best with the *Covenant*. In the 2001 edition, the *Covenant* is divided into 35 numbered paragraphs under 6 major headings. Atwood has chosen to devote a single session to some single paragraphs and at other times to combine several numbered paragraphs into a single session. The arrangement of the material in this manner makes sense and having the 2001 edition at hand enables ones to easily understand

how the guide is addressing the document.

*The Ground*, in its 1995 edition, has 11 major headings, but each contains several unnumbered paragraphs, so the format is a little more problematic. Atwood has spread all this material over 24 sessions. The entire text of *The Ground* is covered but occasionally long paragraphs are split between several sessions. The reasons for this arrangement become clear to the reader and make sense theologically. But, it is necessary to use this section of the guide with the 1995 edition

nearby so as to be able to understand how the text is being divided.

There is a growing interest in these two foundational documents among North American Moravians. This particular study guide was developed for a yearlong study at Home Moravian Church, Winston-Salem NC. Atwood is to be commended for making this excellent resource available to the wider Church.

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C. Daniel Crews, **This We Most Certainly Believe** (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives Publication, 2005).

Reviewed by Craig D. Atwood

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There has long been a need for a succinct and accessible introduction to Moravian faith and doctrine for lay persons. Br. Crews' book meets that need nicely. Though short and mercifully free of theological jargon, Crews covers many of the key aspects of Moravian doctrine. Though the book has been endorsed by each of the bishops of the Southern Province, it is not clear whether it is intended as an official statement of the church or the personal statement of the author.

Those who are familiar with *The Ground of the Unity* and The Easter Morning Litany will certainly recognize this book as a clear statement of traditional Moravian beliefs. Br. Crews' presents Moravian belief as Christocentric rather than dogmatic; devotional rather than prophetic. For Crews, doctrine is a teaching tool rather than an arena for theological dispute.

Br. Crews directs the readers' attention to the nature and work of Christ in redemption and discipleship, but he does not enter into the controversies over salvation that are vexing many American churches today. Nor does he attempt to resolve the other hot-button issues of human sexuality and personal morality. Rather, he calls readers to explore the fundamental affirmations of Christian faith: the Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement, and the church. In doing so, Crews reminds Christians that controversies should be discussed in the context of faith rather than politics.

This booklet would be a good starting place for an adult class on Moravian belief, and it is a welcome addition to the other resources provided by the Moravian Church, such as the Gemeinschaft III program.