



THE HINGE

*A Journal of Christian Thought
for the Moravian Church*

MOSES LECTURES IN MORAVIAN STUDIES

Special Double Feature:

2005 - *Writing a Moravian Hymnal Companion*

by Albert Frank

1997 - *Luke of Prague: Theologian of the Unity*

by Daniel Crews

Featured Sermon by Alton Pollard

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The Hinge is a forum for theological discussion in the Moravian Church. Views and opinions expressed in articles published in *The Hinge* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board or the official positions of the Moravian Church and its agencies. You are welcome to submit letters and articles for consideration for publication.

One of the early offices of the Moravian Church in Bethlehem, Pa. was that of the Hinge: “*The office of the Hinge requires that the brother who holds it look after everything and bring troublesome factors within the congregation into mutual accord without their first having to be taken up publicly in the congregation council.*” September 1742, *The Bethlehem Diary*, vol. 1, tr. by Kenneth Hamilton, p. 80. *The Hinge* journal is intended also to be a mainspring in the life of the contemporary Moravian Church, causing us to move, think, and grow. Above all, it is to open doors in our church.

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Notes from the Editor

This issue of *The Hinge* is longer than usual and it follows a different format because we have a special Moses Lectures double-feature. The 2005 Moses Lectures in Moravian Studies sponsored by the Center for Moravian Studies at Moravian Theological Seminary were given by Albert Frank in Bethlehem, Pa., Winston-Salem, N.C., and Dover, Ohio. In those lectures Br. Frank discussed the process of writing his authoritative study of the hymns in the 1995 Moravian Book of Worship. Since these lectures were largely informative rather than provocative, they did not lend themselves to the normal *Hinge* format of including responses to the lectures. Instead, the editorial board decided that this would be a wonderful time to publish Daniel Crews' 1997 Moses Lectures, which had not been previously published.

Br. Crews discusses the life and work of Luke of Prague, the most significant Moravian theologian before Comenius. Since Luke used hymns as well as catechisms and confessions of faith to express the theology of the Unity, it seems appropriate to include these lectures with those of Br. Frank. Both lecturers offer to the contemporary Moravian Church the wisdom and insights of previous generations of Moravian theologians, hymn writers, and liturgists.

The pages that follow demonstrate that our church has engaged in deep and productive study of Scripture and the Christian life through the centuries. In these days of theological controversy and political turmoil, we can learn a great deal from our ancestors who knew how to express theology in poetry and music. For many readers this may be the first opportunity to read a substantive discussion of the Moravian Church's understanding of the differences between things essential, things ministerial, and things incidental. This understanding of doctrine and practice can be beneficial to the Moravian Church today, and it can be a gift that we give to the larger Christian Church.

Also in this issue we have a sermon preached by one of the prominent scholars of African American religion as part of the Clark Thompson Lecture series at Home Moravian Church. We are grateful to Dr. Pollard for sharing his thoughts and words with us. We also have letters to the editor.

2006 will be an important year for the Moravian Church in America. Both provinces will hold synods. Synods are the highest governing authority in the Moravian Church, and it is important that delegates be informed and prepared for synod. The websites of both provinces contain useful information about the governance of the Moravian Church. In 2006 *The Hinge* will be devoting issues to how Moravians read Scripture, revitalizing Moravian worship, and justice for women.

2005 MOSES LECTURES

Writing a Moravian Hymnal Companion: Walking in the Footsteps of Müller, Erxleben, Adams and Williams

Albert H. Frank

LECTURE ONE

Introduction

I am deeply conscious of the responsibility which is mine today as I enter the line of those who have presented the Walter Vivian Moses Lectures in Moravian Studies at the Seminary. Not only is the subject area of vital personal importance, but the opportunity to share the story of writing the *Companion to the Moravian Book of Worship* is a welcome joy.¹

The legendary Bishop Moses was respected and somewhat feared among the student body of this institution which he served for over thirty five years, but that did not remove him from the realm of student pranks during the 1920's. One student was well-known for stretching curfew and sneaking in just before the Bishop, who was then the resident professor, secured Comenius Hall for the night. One evening the students determined to teach their peer a lesson and laid for him with a bucket of cold water at the top of the open center stairwell. Patience had its reward and they finally heard the front door open and footsteps cross the first floor. At the right moment, they upended the

bucket and heard an appropriate exclamation in Latin from below. Knowing it to be their revered professor, they hid away and escaped the ire of the modern-day Moses who had not escaped the waters of the sea.

My lectures today begin as a story which might be told adapting the imagery of the American poet Robert Frost (1874-1963). "Two roads converged in a yellow wood..." is a good expression of the background of this project.

American Moravian Hymnals

We travel first the Autobahn of American Moravian Hymnals: The first American Moravian hymnal was the *Hirten Lieder von Bethlehem*, published in Germantown by Christoph Saur in 1742 during Zinzendorf's visit to North America. Originally 112 pages with 368 hymns, it was expanded and reprinted in 1754 in London. From that time until 1876 various text-only format hymnals in both German and English were used in the American Moravian congregations, with some Danish hymnody used in Wisconsin in the mid-19th century.

The Rev. Dr. Albert Frank is the Assistant Director of the Moravian Music Foundation and teaches Moravian history at Moravian Theological Seminary. He also served as a pastor in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Most of these were revisions or reprints of worship books from Europe, with editorial changes made in the liturgical forms to fit the egalitarian life of the United States. The preface to the 1876 hymnal notes that the first English hymnbook of the Moravian Church printed in the United States appeared in Philadelphia in 1813.² However, even the 1876 book was another volume with words-only format providing 930 hymn texts and 28 doxologies and benedictions.

Yet the content was decidedly different. Several factors can be identified that explain these changes.

1) Many more Moravians hymns had been written since 1742. These had found their way into general usage in the American congregations, e.g. hymns of Christian Renatus von Zinzendorf, Christian Gregor, James Montgomery, and Christian Ignatius La Trobe.

2) English hymns had been in use and were favored among non-German members. The texts of Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts, and Frederick Wm. Foster were used frequently so that the members would be understood as Americans rather than strange European transplants, tenaciously clinging to their former ways.

3) American hymns were beginning to be used furthering the “we belong” attitude. Hymns such as “Softly now the light of day” by George Washington Doane from New Jersey, “I love thy kingdom, Lord” by Timothy Dwight of Massachusetts, “More holiness give me” by Philip P. Bliss of Pennsylvania, “My faith looks up to thee” and “Yield not to temptation” by Ray Palmer of New England, and “Pass me not, O gentle Savior” by Fanny Crosby of New York

all appeared in the 1876 Hymnal indicating the acceptance of American texts and tunes.

4) There was a brief section of four hymns headed REVIVALS reflecting the frontier phenomenon, and the non-denominational approach to collections of worship songs which were often oriented to revivalist outreach ministries and frequently did not even include any Christmas or Easter selections.

The 1876 *Liturgy and Hymns of the American Province of the Unitas Fratrum or the Moravian Church* was prepared by a committee consisting of Edmund A. de Schweineitz, Lewis R. Huebner, Lewis F. Kampmann, Herman A. Brickenstein, and Amadeus Abraham Reinke. The 1878 Provincial Synod thanked the committee for their work and called for a new tune book by a working committee to be chaired by F. F. Hagen.³ This was never published, nor have I found any manuscripts of such a volume in the archival collections. While Hagen had presented a study paper to the 1878 Synod calling for the abandonment of German chorale hymns in favor of American gospel music, he does not seem to have seized an opportunity when it was presented to him. In fact, the last American Moravian tune book which is in the collections was that prepared by Peter Wolle in 1836.

One of the major contributions, however, of the 1876 hymnal was the inclusion of evening and seasonal liturgies. These had not been previously available in the worship books of the congregations, and their inclusion was a step toward some standardization and enrichment of worship. While they were an adaptation of the liturgical-song (*Liturgische Gesänge*) format used in the European congregations,

they were more spoken than sung. In many smaller congregations this moved the Church Litany aside as the normative Sunday morning liturgy and allowed for variation and the use of “shorter” forms which came to be favored in the morning services. Some of the hymn stanzas that appeared in those liturgies were new, but were never acknowledged as to authorship — a good Moravian practice, although it drives a scholar to distraction [or single malt Scotch]. It should also be noted that the introduction of the pulpit as standard American Moravian church furniture was a universal phenomenon by this time.

In 1891, the *Liturgy, Offices of Worship and Hymns* appeared giving the tunes in numerical sequence according to the amplified Gregor chorale system with multiple texts given for each tune. A valuable and cherished resource for musicians and hymnologists, it was an awkward book for congregations because of its length and small type-face. The addition of the school-oriented Offices of Worship, largely developed by John Taylor Hamilton, made the work useful for the parochial schools. Moravian musicians John Frederick Wolle and Massah Miksch Warner were involved in this work.

A final American German language hymnal appeared in 1901 largely to serve the congregations in the Fourth and Fifth Districts, now known as the Western and Canadian districts. That the German language was still in use among many of the recent immigrants was a normal phenomenon. We must also acknowledge the influence of Karl A. Mueller, longtime (1903–1941) field secretary and subsequently president of the 4th and later Western District, who was remembered as having said that he felt himself to have a divine commission to

preserve the use of the German language in the American Moravian Church. And Bishop Mueller was partially successful. The Ladies Aid group of the Bruderheim Moravian congregation in Alberta still had meetings in the German language into the 1960’s lamenting that younger women were not joining the group.

The Northern Provincial Synod of 1913 appointed a committee of nine (Morris W. Leibert, chairman; Samuel H. Gapp, Francis E. Grunert, Ernest S. Hagen, Frederick R. Nitzschke, Maurice F. Oerter, William N. Schwarze, Christian A. Weber, and J. Fred Wolle) to prepare a new hymnal, plus a committee of five (John S. Romig, chairman; Henry A. Gerdson, Albert G. Rau, Augustus Schulze, and Arthur D. Thaeler) on liturgies. Southern Province brethren later joined the committee.

The 1920 Synod continued the committee and the book appeared in 1923 with 952 hymns, new communion liturgies occasioned by the wide-spread use of individual communion cups, and some liturgical revision. Yet, by and large it continued the long heritage of *revision* and owed much of its content to the 1876 hymnal. The enlargement of the section of evangelistic hymns to eight titles reflected the climate of the country at the time of Billy Sunday, Dwight L. Moody and others. This was the big black book on which anyone of my generation grew up and which served the church until 1969.

The need for a new hymnal was apparent by the early 1950’s when post-war America was experiencing revitalized interest in church life and resultant growth. A fourth printing of the 1923 hymnal was not the desired answer, and

a committee chaired by Raymond S. Hauptert worked from 1952 until 1969 when a new *Hymnal and Liturgies* appeared. It was out-dated by the time it was printed, although it served the church until the *Moravian Book of Worship* appeared twenty-six years later. While the 1969 red book provided better biographical data than any previous book, it took a step backward in restoring all of the chorales to the Gregor harmonies. Unfortunately, it appeared on the eve of the hymn explosion that changed the worship thoughts of the wider church. *In quick summary, all of the worship resource books which had appeared through 1969 were peas in one pod.*

A New Book of Worship

Early in the 1980's the Northern Province determined that a new worship resource book was needed and a preliminary committee was formed, chaired by Albert H. Frank, to make recommendations to the Provincial Elders' Conference. The Southern Province joined the committee as a venture in faith on the part of their PEC. Following the report of the committee that new materials were essential, an inter-provincial committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Bishop Warren A. Sautebin and the rest, so to speak, is history.

As indicated, the previous worship books of the American Moravian Church had mainly been a series of revisions of what had gone before. A common practice of the life of the wider Moravian Church as well, this led committees to function by testing the usage of the then current hymns, desires of congregations to include new hymns and revision of liturgies, and basically print a newer

collection of the elements of worship within a well-defined and understood tradition.

Every hymnal since 1876 was an expression of what had gone before, and each book had its own problematic issues to solve. That the books would lag behind the times was not a new phenomenon since that gave reality to the tendency of things liturgical to lag thirty years behind current language usage and culturally driven change. Two examples of the issues which had to be faced might be helpful. Many people had indicated their desire to include "How Great Thou Art" that had become known through the Billy Graham crusades of the 1950's in the 1969 *Hymnal*. This hymn didn't make it in the 1969 *Hymnal* because of expensive copyright considerations. Until the *MBW* appeared, copyright cost structures had changed and it is now included. The 1969 hymnal included "God Save the Queen," recognizing that the Canadian congregations are part of our provinces. While no one would argue of the need of salvation on the part of the British Royal family, it must be noted that "O Canada" had already replaced the British national anthem in Canadian life by 1969.

Dr. John R. Weinlick (1908-1980), former dean and professor of historical theology at Moravian Theological Seminary, identified several characteristics of Moravian hymns which were as true for the 1969 American Moravian hymnal as they were for the 1754 British edition. Among the entries on Weinlick's list were 1) the hymns are basically of the German-chorale style, 2) the hymns are predominantly Christocentric, and 3) four-part congregational singing is facilitated by the long-standing familiarity of the congregations with a basic body of tunes used for and with

several different texts. That has now become an historic description of former things.

Each successive edition of the American Moravian Hymnal, like those of the British Province, moved a step further away from the standard corpus of “our” hymns. The German and Czech hymns of previous generations were reduced in number as the books included more and more of the English language hymns which “everyone” was using. As I mentioned, the 1923 American edition contained a section of evangelistic hymns which reflected the revival movements in the United States in the early 20th century. When the revision of that edition was undertaken, at least one member of the 1923 committee who had agreed to serve on the committee leading to the 1969 hymnal resigned because of the deletion of what he considered to be essential Zinzendorf texts that were destined for the circular file by the new committee. Change did not always come easily or with universal approval.

A first look at the 1995 *MBW* shows that something new has happened in Zion and the tried and true isn't necessarily any longer the norm. While it was understood that the 1995 book would be a transitional worship resource for the Northern and Southern Provinces, the road has in fact taken a 45° turn. Only two hymns from the *Hirten Lieder von Bethlehem* appear in the *MBW* — “Once He Came in Blessing,” (270, 273) and “The Savior’s Blood and Righteousness” (776).

“Once He Came in Blessing” by Jan Roh/Horn has been expanded from two to four stanzas while “The Savior’s Blood and Righteousness” has been reduced from seventeen to five stanzas. When one considers that the original “Zinzendorf” text for “The Savior’s Blood and Righteousness” had

33 stanzas one can begin to understand what has happened in Moravian hymnological disciplines and usage.

Contemporary hymn texts have been included in the *MBW* which are much more issue-oriented — peace and justice, recon-ciliation, the Reign of Christ replacing Ascension and Second Coming, and stages of life all find their places. New tunes appear which are in unison, and do not allow for four-part harmonization. Canons and camp-type songs have been added. Texts have been altered for reasons of inclusive language and to remove imagery which is no longer readily acceptable, e.g. “Fatherland” in Zinzendorf’s “Jesus, still lead on”. And I must note that while those changes are justifiable for newer members of the church and outreach concerns, the alterations in familiar texts from the 18th and 19th centuries have caused a degree of discomfort for older members who only used the hymnals as prompters when memory didn’t suffice. Then, too, one can enter into the endless debate over theological changes in the texts which occur when imagery is altered and newer language is adopted.

Truly, this blue book is a new worship resource which needed careful introduction in the congregations and there was an acknowledged need for explanatory information presented through the genre of a handbook/companion such as is available for those of the Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and Methodist denominations. Workshops were developed under the leadership of Jill Bruckart and many suggestions provided for a smooth transition. These worked in some places, although we find some congregations that still cling loyally to the red book and where some

older members still speak longingly of the black hymnal of 1923.

Other Worship Resources

We must also note that there is an obvious unspoken assumption connected with the *MBW*. Some hymns having long pedigrees and still in use in some of our congregations are not within the covers of the *MBW*. One such stanza “Bethany, O Peaceful Habitation” is found at the end of the Acts of Sunday in the *Readings for Holy Week* and in that place only. The preacher choosing to speak on the opening verses of John 12 may well want that stanza, and so must reproduce the words or words and tune from the supplemental resources.

This all-too-common practice led to the conclusion that the *Companion* should provide information on all hymn stanzas in the *MBW*, supplemental Holy Communion liturgies, occasional services found in the Manual, and the *Readings for Holy Week*. I am happy to report that with one exception in the Acts of Easter Sunday, something has been found about every stanza. This is not to say that all of the puzzles have been solved, but at least first uses found.

As good examples, the stanzas “Lord God of hosts, O may our praise” and “An Infant We Present to Thee” which are found in the Liturgy of Grace, and Baptism liturgy respectively can be traced to the 1876 Hymnal where they first appeared. They do not appear in the hymns sections of any of the hymnals, indicating that they were written for the 1876 liturgies by a member of the committee who remained anonymous. We know that both Edmund de Schweinetz and Lewis

Kampmann were capable poets, but that is where we must stop. The records of that committee are almost non-existent and the PEC minutes are in a virtually illegible German script and even less helpful.

Previous Hymnological Studies

To help German Moravians understand our heritage, a reference book about the hymns, *Das Hymnologisches Handbuch zum Gesangbuch der Brüdergemeine*, had been prepared and published in 1916. This was the work of Joseph Theodor Müller (1854-1946), historian and archivist of the European Continental Province. Müller had previously written the articles on the Bohemian Brethren’s Hymns and those on Renewed Moravian Church hymns which had appeared in the first edition of Julian’s *Dictionary of Hymnology* in 1888, and prepared the *Handbuch* as a seventh-inning stretch in the midst of writing his larger three volume *magnum opus* on the history of the Ancient Unity.

An unpublished supplemental manuscript work is *Die Kleine Choralkunde* prepared by Gottfried Theodor Erxleben (1849-1931), a German Moravian minister. That manuscript work can be found in the Moravian Archives at Herrnhut. Erxleben had prepared an edition of the earlier work on hymns and anthems suitable for various occasions of the church year published in the revised 1891 edition of the *Hilfsbuch für Liturgen und Organisten in den Brüdergemeine* for organists, choir directors and clergy. His *Choralkunde* was a work produced in retirement.

The Müller work came into my library in 1999 when I spent several months working on

the staff of the Herrnhut archives, and a copy of the Erxleben arrived in the Northern Music Foundation office in 2002. Both have added greatly to the details of Moravian hymn studies which had been a serious topic of interest since I had first discovered the indices and citations in the 1923 American Moravian hymnal.

The establishment of the Moravian Music Foundation in 1956 provided an agency which could be of assistance in the introductory tasks of new worship resources as well as the recycling of older musical treasures. The Hymn of the Month series which had run for many years as a tool to help congregational music leaders and pastors provided a background. The engagement of the director of the Music Foundation as musical editor for the *MBW*, and involvement of board members and staff as consultants and committee members added to the partnership. After several years of experience and discussion, it was determined that the Assistant Director of the MMF should be commissioned to prepare a handbook for the *MBW* and the work began in 2001.

Connection between Researcher and Research

Returning to Frost's imagery, and being very aware of the need to let you in on the full hermeneutical circle of things, I must report my own walk along the Personal Lane of Moravian Hymnals: How does one become interested in hymn studies and the worship treasury of the church? I would have to identify several influences leading to this for me.

First, I was born into a Moravian family whose members were musically involved. My

maternal grandfather was a brass choir member, and his wife an organist. My mother and her sisters were choir members. My father was both an instrumentalist (violin and clarinet) and singer. Participation in the junior choir, school choruses and drama developed my interest in performing. A love of history and the discovery of the musical source notes in the 1923 hymnal were inexhaustible sources of fascination when sermons were not arresting for my wandering mind.

Second, I know and value the musical work of Henry L. Williams (1923–1996), librarian of Moravian College and Theological Seminary. A friend from my youth in the Delaware Valley, his commentaries at Delaware Valley Moravian Music Festivals, vast hymnological library which lined one entire wall of his dining room, a ready sharing of his most recent findings, and long evening conversations over the requisite cup of tea in front of a cozy fire all added much to that growing mass of trivia which might one day be worth something.

Third, there was an opportunity for hymnological studies at Moravian Theological Seminary when three of us (John Christman, Daniel Crews and I) worked with John R. Weinlick in the spring of 1970. A careful historical review of Christian hymnody through the centuries and an introduction¹⁰ to the sources of hymn studies provided an interesting semester of intellectual food to say nothing of Georgine Weinlick's freshly baked apple pies topped with cheddar cheese and served with a good cup of coffee.

Fourth, there were four and a half years of service to the Moravian Church on the island of Tobago in the southern Caribbean. During those years, the present British Moravian Hymn Book was introduced replacing the 1911 edition.

This meant changes in both liturgy and hymnody which necessitated working with musicians and lay preachers on how to transition to the new book and win people to it. The road was rough and filled with pot holes because the new tune books were not available as quickly as the hymn texts, and the educational process continued for several years. I must note that the hymn texts were sold as soon as they arrived because of the need to put something in the hands of congregations and to keep the new stock from mildewing in the tropical climate. How does one lead in that sort of process without studying the material along the way?

Finally, there was the work by Charles B. Adams entitled *Our Moravian Hymn Heritage* which appeared in 1984 providing a wealth of data about the “Moravian” hymns in the 1969 *Hymnal and Liturgies of the Moravian Church*. Adams had served as piano player for the work of the hymns committee, as well as previously chairing the committee which produced *The Moravian Youth Hymnal* in 1942. The first of its kind for an American Moravian hymnal, the Adams work utilized the monumental six volumes of Johannes Zahn on German hymn tunes as well as English Moravian sources, although not dealing with either Müller or Erxleben.

Occasional hymn studies appearing in the church publications of both the American Provinces and the British Province continued to keep my appetite whetted. The introduction of the *MBW* in 1995 again called for transitional leadership and learning yet more. In 1996 the Moravian Church was invited to showcase the new book for the Annual Convocation of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada

at Oberlin, Ohio, and I was privileged to lead an evening Singstunde which allowed us to feature our best amid a great group of singers and scholars.

In retrospect then, I can see the hand of the Savior preparing me for a task which I would never have dreamt of embracing until retirement and then probably as another set of undisciplined rough notes. Bits and pieces of the puzzle only became clear as focus was provided by the call of the church through the Music Foundation to pursue an avocation for disciplined reasons in the service of the denomination. The prospect of spending two years researching and writing about the hymns of the church was too enticing to refuse, and so the great venture began in 2001 a few months after another one had begun in my life. It was time to travel a road heretofore not taken.

Research Process

After the decisions concerning what was to be included and what format to adopt, the painstaking, detailed work began. It was determined that every hymn should be presented with data about the writer, translator, composer, and additional information provided concerning occasions that called forth the text and usage details of interest. Realizing that there are many repeat authors, composers, and/or tunes, the decision was made to provide information for the first use and refer to prior entries for subsequent appearances. While necessitating the turning of pages more frequently, it still beats a wheelbarrow to carry the book.

Then there came the challenge to find sources and data for every entry. The printed sources such

as Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*, the German Moravian sources previously referred to, and standard hymn-story works such as Bailey's *The Gospel in Hymns*, and denominational hymnal companions were obvious. The Henry L. Williams *Hymnological Collection* that had been relocated to the Archives following his death in 1996 is conveniently located and a rich storehouse of information not only of printed material but of marginal notes. Manuscript sources such as the Erxleben *Choralkunde* and personal sharing on the part of colleagues in the USA, Germany, England, South Africa, and the Caribbean also were utilized.

In this area of consideration, a decision was made that the *Companion to the MBW* would have primary focus on Moravian hymns and tunes. Information for ecumenical worship material is usually available in other resources that are available in local Christian bookstores, libraries, or the internet. Moravian entries would need more attention since the sources for information are often at some distance and in other languages.

About that time, Herrnhut Archivist Paul Peucker sent me a copy of the Erxleben manuscript work that gives background for the tunes and their sources that accompanies the 1916 Müller *Handbuch*. David Blum and Barbara Strauss of the Moravian Music Foundation Board offered their assistance tracking down internet material. Specialized questions from German and British Moravian sources could be willingly answered by Christoph Waas, a German Moravian pastor who serves on their hymnal revision committee, Paul Peucker, and Joseph Cooper, a British Moravian bishop and former fellow student of Henry

Williams, whose contacts and knowledge always proved helpful.

And so the work began, writing entries, revising, emailing back and forth between the MMF offices (Nola Knouse and I long ago lost count of the number of emails and faxes) and learning the Hamiltonian lesson of the need for trusted colleagues to manage the dangling participles, gerunds, and grammatical loose ends. Two members of the MMF Board willingly joined the team. John Bullard is a retired United Methodist pastor with Moravian roots who taught religion at Wofford College in Spartanburg, S.C. An organist and hymn-afficianado himself, his years of reading undergraduate papers had honed his grammatical skills to a finely sharpened edge. A longtime friend of both John's and mine, Graham Rights joined us to read, make substantive suggestions from his vast Moravian collections and recollections, and added his good wife to the team. Sybil is a retired English teacher whose experience and guidance helped all of us and whose consistent search for excellence kept us from falling into the morass of confusion and easily-made errors.

The issue of scripture referencing is always difficult. If this is to be done, what format should be used? While some denominational and commercial publishing house hymnals list a scripture text above every hymn, there are two obvious objections to that format:

1. What about hymns with multiple references?
2. What about hymns for which there are only far-out connection texts that might have some influence if they had the bubonic plague? Additionally, one must ask what is to be done with

stanzas for which there are multiple references in the King James translation (recognizing that most of our older English hymns were written when the King James was the standard biblical translation available), but which are not clear in the newer translations or paraphrases? And it must be noted that textual alterations occasionally change imagery that eliminates a clear scriptural reference, e.g. in the case of “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” (772) which lost the image of Ebenezer, the Old Testament stone of help. Also, can scriptural attribution be done consistently for every hymn under consideration? A quick look at Bailey’s *The Gospel in Hymns* provides a clearly negative answer to that.

After several false starts on that road, it was determined that scriptural indexing was outside the scope of the *Companion*. The *MBW* contains a section entitled “Biblical References and Allusions in Hymns,” that must suffice. Additionally, the team was very aware of David Blum’s concordance to the *MBW* that provides internal listings for words and images in the texts. To include further scriptural apparatus would only serve the cause of lengthening the volume, multiplying work and preparation time and increasing the cost.

Long days, occasional nights and very early mornings at the computer kept the process moving. Encouragement came from the entire team both in the USA and Europe, and byways were traveled which would have been overlooked had it not been for the questions which my colleagues raised, as well as answered. To each of them, a special word of thanks has to be repeated, as must the role of my wife be lauded for encouragement and language skills.

Publication

Finally in 2003 the end of the work was in sight, and we felt good that we had identified information for all but one of the writers, translators and composers whom we could identify. Hilda Margaret Dodd, writer of the text “Hands to Work and Feet to Run” (649) had been elusive, but our number one computer researcher came through. It was too late to make the printing of the book, but the information is in hand as an addendum and will be added when a reprint happens. And other information keeps appearing. By the beginning of 2004, the book was taking final shape and ready for printing decisions.

An idea to issue the work as a spiral volume was considered and rejected by the MMF team. The likelihood of another companion appearing in the next fifty years is slim, and the need for some permanence in format was obvious. The Adams work is no longer in print and copies of the paper back format which exist are falling into pieces. A generous gift to the MMF from the Butterfield Trust provided the funding to enhance a revolving publications fund and the *Companion* was deemed the first project. Goslen Printing in Winston-Salem was engaged and the baby was delivered late in June 2004 after an elephantine pregnancy.

So, how does one write a hymnal companion? With a lot of good partners in the venture, a supportive organization behind the venture of meeting an identified need, a wealth of data upon which to draw, and in the case of the Moravian Church international interest and informational support. And I must gratefully acknowledge the contribution of modern technology which allowed for rapid interchange of information, and

processing which is a lot easier now than in the days of handwritten manuscripts or carbon-paper copying. I constantly marvel at Müller's work which was all done by hand and as a detour along the journey to his *magnum opus*, the 3-volume *Geschichte der Böhmischen Brüder* which was his primary focus for over 40 years.

As one last note, I must acknowledge the death of Bishop Joe Cooper this year after a lengthy struggle with cancer. Joe's ability to track things down, provide genealogical notes on some of our British Moravian hymn writers, and cheerful encouragement were always just an email away and reminded all of us of the need to work our mines of information while the sun shines.

LECTURE TWO

Lessons Learned And Stories To Be Told

Working on the *Companion* brought to light a lot of hitherto forgotten, unknown or overlooked discoveries that have proven to be grist for the mill. Humor and insights have been found adding to the significance of the texts. In this lecture, I will share some of them with the hope that they may inspire folks to do more digging and sharing.

1. Hymns are the Work of the Community

While John Wesley and followers have advocated singing hymns in their unaltered entirety, Moravians have never had such hang-ups. A quick glance through the *MBW* indicates the presence of many composite Moravian hymns, i.e. hymns with stanzas by various authors brought together into one "hymn."

A hymn such as "The Savior's Blood and Righteousness" is a classic example. Long-touted as a "Zinzendorf hymn," it is known that the first stanza was written fully a century before Zinzendorf's mission trip to the Caribbean in 1739. It appeared in 1638 at Leipzig as the last lines of a stanza beginning, "*In Christi Wunden schlaf ich ein*," by Paul Eber. This was known to the Count who added an additional 32 stanzas while on shipboard in the harbor of St. Eustatius in 1739 on his return voyage from Saint Thomas⁴. The 1783 German Moravian *Gesangbuch* (399) has a total of 20 stanzas which were often thought to have been original work by the Count, but it has since been shown that not only the first, but also the fifth stanza was an addition to the Count's poetry. That same stanza, again appearing as stanza five in the 1967 German *Gesangbuch*, came from the pen of Christian Gregor who edited the 1778 *Gesangbuch* (1036) where that stanza does not appear. Some later editor included it with no attribution until the 1967 book.

All of which is to say that *hymns are often the work of the community that uses them*. It also points out the need for committees producing hymnals and worship resource books to do their scholarly work well. The committee for the 1969 *Hymnal and Liturgies* had Henry Williams as its secretary. He secured the services of Jean Woodward Steele of Westminster Press to do research and preparation for the authors' and composers' indices. Williams had met Steele during his years as a pastor in Philadelphia and his association with the Hymn Society chapter in the City of Brotherly Love. The current hymnal revision committee of the Continental Province

includes scholars who are doing their painstaking research at each step of the process. To do this work after a book has appeared is needlessly more complicated and often leads to mistakes and omissions.

Let me return, however, to a practical application of this. Moravians have never felt bound to sing an entire hymn at one sitting. In some cases such as Zinzendorf's hymn-commentary on the Augsburg Confession with its 162 stanzas, no congregation would ever have dreamt of doing so. Single stanzas are often adequate for a situation or the omission of a stanza can strengthen an occasion. At one time, a service of dedication was held on Saint Croix for new buildings at the conference campsite. "Jesus Still Lead on" was one of the hymns used. But since the buildings included two new cabins and a bath facility, the use of the third stanza beginning "When we seek relief from a long-felt grief" was a bit of a hilarious mistake. Lesson: *Use the stanzas you need and choose them wisely.* The use of more short hymns is to be encouraged, rather than singing all nineteen stanzas of Thomas of Celano's *Dies Irae*.

2. Global Moravian Hymnody

How do hymns make their way to other places in the Unity? There was a time when this was a clearly defined issue. The mission personnel carried tunes and worship materials with them wherever they went. Christian Gregor visited the North American congregations from 1770 to 1772 and had musical influence here. Christian Ignatius La Trobe made school inspection visits in South Africa where his work is still known.

In 1894 Ernst Johannes Theodor Enkelmann went from Ebersdorf, Thuringia to serve as book

and music manager for Kersten and Company in Paramaribo, Surinam. Can one believe that he didn't take materials with him or have them imported from the Moravian printerries of Germany when need arose? This entire process has now been speeded up by cassettes and CDs. Recent close contacts with the Brass Bands in South Africa have shown that there is a core group of tunes which are identical in Europe, the American Provinces and South Africa as indicated in the *Companion* article on the Herrnhut Tunes. A CD from Neu-Gnadenfeld in northwestern Germany has demonstrated that not all of our churches in any province have the same traditions making the study more fascinating.

Then, too, many of us have heard that Bishop Edward Rondthaler learned our present tune for "Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand" (494) on a visit to England, and brought it back to the United States where it was included as a second tune for the Alford text in the 1923 *Hymnal and Liturgies*. Research has failed to add anything more to this oft-repeated attribution. We know that Bishop Edward attended five General Synods of the Unity from 1879 to 1914 and that his travels often took him through the British Isles, but I can find no evidence for when he would have learned the tune or brought it back across the pond with him. That it first appeared in the 1923 *Hymnal* suggests that it might have been on his trips in 1909 or 1914, but that is conjecture based on the lack of any documentation.

Bishop Kenneth Hamilton was responsible for the Bortnianski tune that appeared in the 1969 *Hymnal* for the Bickersteth communion text "Till He Come, O Let the Words" (413) which Hamilton remembered from his years in

Nicaragua (1919-1937.) He held out for that tune which the committee eventually found in Ira Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos*.

Roy Ledbetter served as assistant pastor in Königsfeld, Germany where he learned the hymn "Sonne der Gerechtigkeit" which we now have in translation done by Ledbetter and Daniel Crews (521). Why the *MBW* committee chose to use a Lutheran musical setting rather than that of our own European Moravian *Gesangbuch* is an ongoing puzzlement.

A hymn of significant interest is what we now know to be the ordination hymn of the Bohemian Brethren (519), "Come, let us all with gladness raise." The *MBW* indicates that the *Radujme* was written either in 1457 or 1467. If in 1457, it was written to celebrate the founding of the Unitas Fratrum. If written in 1467, it was prepared for the ordination of the first ministers of the Unity. The text was translated into German by Michael Weisse for the 1531 Hymnal of the Brethren, and then into English for the 1911 British Moravian Hymnal by Evelyn Renatus Hassé, bishop of the Moravian Church and great-grandson of Henry Cossart who was Zinzendorf's agent leading to the Parliamentary recognition of the Moravians as "an Ancient Protestant Episcopal Church" on May 12, 1749.

It was unfamiliar in the United States until 1952 when it was sung at an ordination service on April 20 in Central Moravian Church, Bethlehem (Sunday bulletin). On that day, Henry L. Williams and Paul de Schweinitz. Couch were ordained Deacons by Bishop S. H. Gapp. Williams had studied at the British Moravian ministerial training college in 1949-1950 during which time he learned the hymn and its historical

importance. Bishop Gapp had participated in the consecration of Bishop Va lav Vancura at Mlada Boleslav in July 1946 when the hymn was sung (*Moravian Messenger* account of the service), as well as the consecration in London of Bishop Soren Ibsen two weeks earlier when it was probably used and so the request from Br. Williams was easily agreed to by the old bishop who had served as chairman of the 1923 hymnal committee following Leibert's death in 1919.

And what about the supposed second translation of the same Czech text which we know as "Join we all with one accord" (525)? The British nor American Moravian hymnals offer any solutions beyond the ubiquitous M or Moravian 1904. This was a topic of some interest for Henry Williams who found an anonymous translation in the Moravian of 1904. His best guess was that this was done by the editor S. H. Gapp or one of his younger brothers, J. Walter Gapp, who was a student at Moravian College and Theological Seminary at the time, but no information has come to hand to further the solution of the puzzle. Bishop Gapp's papers are silent as one would expect and we have none from J. Walter. Succeeding generations are invited to join the team of researchers, but in the meanwhile we must satisfy ourselves by accepting a Pauline mystery (I Cor. 13:12).

But, let's retrace our steps a few feet here. In working further on this hymn for another assignment, I recently found that there is some scholarly question about the authorship. While the British Moravian Hymn Book notes that the text was written by Gabriel Komarovsky in 1467, the Czech hymnal and that of the Continental Province both use the 1457 date and assign it to

Matthew of Kunwald. Müller in his article on this hymn in Julian's Dictionary looked at a copy of the 1561 Kancional in the Herrnhut Archives with the marginal notes by John Blahoslav (Bishop, historian and hymn editor of the Brethren) who noted it as from Matthew. Since none of the other worship books give any indication of their source for Komarovsky, I believe we are safe in asserting that the *Radujme* should be attributed to Matthew of Kunwald.

3. Translations

This is as good a place as any to raise the issue of hymn translations. The various worship resource books have listed translators where known or used the standard M for an unknown Moravian translator. At times hymns will pass through several translations to get to the person in the pew. Yet, a few words must be said about the translation discipline.

1. It is difficult. Idioms often defy a literal translation and can be used in a variety of ways. In 1931, members of the General Synod that met in Herrnhut could see the Böhmisches Berge (Bohemian Mountains) by looking south. They also knew the Böhmisches Berge as the difficult problems of mission administration facing the synod.

2. Language changes through the years. e.g. The German *Fräulein* which I learned in high school as the correct word for an unmarried girl/young woman is now no longer in general use. The shop girls make it very clear that they are to be addressed as *Frau*. Further, eighteenth century texts often contain diminutives that we would understand as nicknames. They are

no longer in regular usage and to translate into contemporary language with that sense would be incorrect. That is a concern with the alternate translation for "Morning Star" which was done by Martin Houser (323)... *Jesulein* may be cute and authentic in a 17th century text, but it simply will not do in 21st century German usage and hence English translation.

3. I have been working on translating a favorite German hymn-text "Du meine Seele singe" off and on for over two years now and struggle every step of the way. There are no predictions when, if ever, it will be finished. Bishop Kenneth Hamilton once wisely observed in conversation that to translate poetically is a gift and a discipline all its own.

D. Bohemian Brethren's hymns are another issue to be considered. We Americans have been largely dependent on the German translations of the original Czech texts. Most of what we have come through the work of Michael Weisse in the German hymnal of 1531, and Weisse was known to be a less than slavishly literal translator when his purposes lay in a different direction. Comenius' hymn texts were written a century later and the only Comenius hymn that appeared in the 1969 *Hymnal* "When my lips can frame no sound" has been dropped from the *MBW*.

With the renewed interest in Comenius connected with his educational work and the 400th anniversary of his birth in 1992, several of his hymns were translated into German by Theodor Gill. These could be readily gotten by an energetic translator and made available, plugging a leak in the ship of our worship resources. Or even better, a Czech speaker such as Jaroslav Vajda could translate them from the original texts.

And the process continues in reverse. The beloved hymn text “Sing Hallelujah, Praise the Lord” was written in English by John Swertner as filler for the 1789 British Hymnbook. It appeared as “Conclusion,” and was sung to a strange British tune. It was finally omitted in their 1975 hymnbook. Meanwhile, it was coupled in America with a tune by Johann Christian Bechler that he wrote on Staten Island around 1814. Its earliest manuscript copy has the words for a hymn that celebrated the return of peace after the War of 1812. It has regularly appeared in American Moravian hymnals since the *Offices of Worship and Hymns*, a happy marriage of text and tune.

In 1999 Johann Christian Bechler was discussed at the music conference “In himmlische Harmonie” in Herrnhut and three of his hymn tunes were sung, including 159, D. All of them were instantly encored by an overwhelming request. Bechler who died in Herrnhut in 1857 was slightly remembered in Europe as a bishop of the church but not as a composer prior to that conference. A Moravian Theological Seminary student had heard that presentation, translated the text into German in 2000 and it was used bilingually for her wedding celebrations in Bethlehem and Ebersdorf in May and July 2001. It has arrested the attention of European Moravians including members of their currently working hymnal revision committee, and so the story continues.

4. Ordination Doxologies

The last two hymnal committees in the American provinces have struggled with the ordination doxologies. The musical settings are not easy and have severely challenged some

smaller church choirs to the point that they have been sung by soloists or even omitted at times. While we know that musical settings have been in use since the mid-eighteenth century and that Gregor’s settings were published with his 1784 Choralbum, those in current use were composed by Christian Ignatius La Trobe ca. 1795. There is also a setting of the doxology for the ordination of Deacons composed by Bishop Peter Wolle for an ordination he conducted at Gnadenhütten, Ohio on April 2, 1854.

But my Sherlock Holmes nature also led me to ask questions concerning the source of the texts. Since these doxologies and the Festival Doxology both appear anonymously in the liturgical collections of the church, were they written by the same person? When did they first appear?

Edwin Kortz in his study on the development of the American Moravian liturgy noted that the Festival Doxology “Unto the Lamb that was slain,” appeared first in the *Liturgien Büchlein* of 1757 where it was attributed to the *Cantore Fratrum Ordinario* who has been identified by Hanns-Joachim Wollstadt in his 1966 study as Count Zinzendorf. A musical setting was composed by Christian Gregor as early as 1755.

So with that part of the puzzle solved, can we attribute the ordination doxologies to the *Cantore Fratrum Ordinario* as well? Holmes had his Watson and Frank has his Peucker and Waas, both of whom had valuable suggestions to make.

The *Jüngerhausdiarium* records an ordination service in Herrnhut on May 12, 1758 at which Zinzendorf presided and preached, 45 deacons and deaconesses were ordained, 9 presbyters and

2 bishops consecrated. Let your imagination wander a bit and consider how long that service must have lasted? In the entry, the diarist noted that the ordination doxologies “*aus der Liturgien unserer alten griechisches Kirche*” (from the liturgy of our old Greek church) were sung. These are the doxologies as we know them textually today.

Why the Greek Church? David Cranz in his history of the Brethren’s Church wrote that the Brethren always sought to prove their connections with the Eastern Church to link up with Cyril and Methodius and thus disclaim any connection with corrupt Rome. This can be seen in the claim that the Easter Morning Liturgy was adapted from the Greek liturgy as well as the hymn stanza “Most Holy Lord and God” coming from the Trisagion of the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. It also finds expression in the idea that our surplices have some relation to those of the Greek Church. The connection with the Greek Church would have appealed to Zinzendorf, as well as the radical anti-Roman Bohemian/Moravian refugees who had their roots in the Bohemian Brethren.

Does it change anything? Not really. But it sheds light on how we understand our tradition and how that sense of historical connectedness keeps us involved with ecumenical activity even when we deal with internal criticism for doing so.

5. Alterations

A word about the all-too regularly encountered abbreviation “alt.” following information about the hymn-writers and/or translators. In many cases, the indication of textual alteration is there to alert the singer that archaic language has been

edited out: thee and thou have been replaced as much as possible. At times, one might wish that the original text had been left alone, but as James Russell Lowell reminded us in his hymn “Once to Every Man and Nation”... “Time makes ancient good uncouth.” At times, “alt.” can also refer to a recasting by the author himself. My own Passion Week hymn text “Jesus in Geth-semene” (347) was reworked at the request of the committee.

I just heard of yet another possibility for an alteration. On Easter Sunday morning we were waiting for the throngs to take their places on the God’s Acre in Winston-Salem. Jay Hughes told me that Bishop J. Kenneth Pfohl had advocated an alteration in the text of “Sleep thy last sleep.” The last lines of the text currently read: “though dark waves roll- o’er the silent river,/thy fainting soul Jesus can deliver” (805). Bishop Pfohl felt strongly that the last words should be “Jesus will deliver” — not a possibility but an assurance of the care and redemptive activity of the Savior.

6. Texts and Tunes

There is one last area of illumination: how do we determine the marriage of texts and tunes? This can be done by the text writer who writes with a specific, existing tune in mind. I do not compose music, and so my texts are always written with a tune in mind which provides the meter and mood. I shall never forget a day at college chapel when the stanza “What language shall I borrow” appeared in the liturgy, and the organist chose a tune which fit the meter. However, singing “What language shall I borrow,” which we normally sing to the Passion Chorale, to “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus” was more than the Moravian students

could handle. So, the task of a hymnbook committee is a delicate one.

In the early work for the *MBW*, copies of many of the hymn texts written by Bishop Allen Schattschneider were sent to the committee. One stanza especially appealed to them and made the cut of several rounds of decision making. It appears as “Bless, O Lord, this Congregation” (442). The originally chosen tune had wide intervals, making it somewhat challenging for congregations. So it was changed to the Haydn tune “Austrian Hymn,” which was long associated with the Austrian National anthem “*Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser*.” (God preserve the Emperor Franz Joseph). It was later commandeered by Hitler and Company as the German national anthem *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*. We Americans meanwhile have long identified this with the text by John Newton “Glorious Things of You Are Spoken.”

Well and good, until the Sunday morning one pastor used the Schattschneider text to the total chagrin of a member of the congregation who confessed weeks later that she almost had to leave the service. She had grown up in Alsace during the years of World War II and the flashbacks that the tune caused were overwhelmingly non-spiritual. Does this indicate that the *MBW* committee should have foreseen such an occasion. No, but it certainly reinforces my understanding that hymnology is a fluid discipline and one which cannot be carefully regulated. The human element will always be present.

One final study example: the lovefeast grace “Lord Jesus, for our Call of Grace” (*Wir halten vor dir Liebesmahl*) is familiar to many of us and poses an interesting set of questions for further study.

This appeared at Herrnhut in 1734, and according to Müller’s *Hymnologisches Handbuch* originated for “a Sunday lovefeast”.⁵ It is a composite of two earlier stanzas and appeared in this form in *das Kleines Brüdergesangbuch* of 1763, and then appeared in English in the 1789 British Moravian Hymn Book with no attribution. Müller indicated it is by Count Zinzendorf. This is not unusual so far, except for the note that this was for “a Sunday lovefeast.” Why such a note?

While I have not had opportunity to consult the Herrnhut diary itself, research in the Bethlehem Diary clearly indicates that lovefeasts were held on any day of the week for which an occasion presented itself. Saturdays were favorite days for congregational lovefeasts, while choir and individually significant ones occurred at the drop of a hat. And occasions were often mundane — such as the time the Single Brethren celebrated because there were to be no changes in assignments of labor within Bethlehem. Was this Sunday lovefeast in Herrnhut such a unique occasion that the Count was moved to write a particular blessing or is this simply another instance of the ever-industrious work of an unknown scribe in copying every word which came forth from the heart of the *Ordinarius*? If the latter, who was functioning as the amanuensis at that time? We know that one of the David Nitschmanns was known as Syndicus, but he was not in Herrnhut at the time this text first was sung.⁶ Who then was the scribe of the moment? That is something to play with the next time I have some free time at the Unity Archives.

In conclusion, I want to share two observations which I believe to be of importance for anyone who would provide this type of study for the

Moravian Church in the 21st and succeeding centuries. First, such work can no longer be insular or limited to the concerns of one or two provinces. The easier and more rapid exchange of information made possible by the changes in the European political structures and the electronic age, make it imperative for Moravian scholars to know and share works which a generation ago were unknown or misattributed.

One example must suffice. The stanza “Bethany, O peaceful habitation” appeared in the 1923 American Moravian hymnal (520) with the text credited to Christian Gregor. Already in 1916, the Müller *Handbuch*⁷ had provided newer scholarship indicating that the 18th century text was by an anonymous Moravian author, and had been expanded by Karl Bernhard Garve with another four stanzas making it a more significant hymn. Garve, incidentally, was one of Müller’s favorite Moravian hymnwriters, to the point that Müller named his eldest son Karl Bernhard. The works of Garve are still represented by 30 texts in the 1967 *Gesangbuch* and are another rich source for study and possible inclusion in other hymnals of the Unity.

Secondly, I am very aware that none of us can issue a complete hymnological resource book at any given time. Adams’ work was only partial when it appeared in the 1980’s, and I am the first to tell you that my work is, too. I know of another set of manuscript hymn notes compiled by J. Norman Libbey for an older British Moravian hymn book which should be studied and gleaned for its insights, as well as hymn studies done by Werner Burckhardt (1901-1989) which exist in manuscript in the Herrnhut archives.

While we have a copy of the Libbey notes in the Williams collection at the Archives in Bethlehem, I hope to study the Burckhardt notes in two weeks when I am scheduled to spend a few days in Herrnhut. One new insight may mean changes in my opinions and have possible ramifications for the Companion.

Finally, every hymn study, every hymn usage, every decision of hymnal committees adds to the variety and richness of our worship traditions and helps us connect or disconnect from our heritage as God is working His purpose out. And every decision and new edition provides more opportunities for generating educational materials to enlighten our worship.

(endnotes)

¹ Albert H. Frank, *Companion to the Moravian Book of Worship* (Bethlehem and Winston-Salem, Moravian Music Foundation, 2004).

² *The Liturgy and Hymns of the American Province of the Unitas Fratrum or the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem: Moravian Church, 1876), p. v.

³ Journal, 1878 Synod of the Northern Province, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, p.182-83.

⁴Peter M. Gubi, Ep. Fr. in conversation with the writer, 1966 at Brimstone Hill, St. Kitts.

⁵ Müller, *Handbuch*, 223,241.

⁶ See Dienerblätter in Moravian Archives, Herrnhut.

⁷ Müller, *Handbuch*, 188.

1997 MOSES LECTURES

Luke of Prague: Theologian of the Unity

C. Daniel Crews

LECTURE ONE

Historiography

In preparing for this address I resisted the temptation to dive immediately and solely into “Moravian” resources, but thought early on to see what modern scholars outside our own theological and historical tradition had to say. I was disappointed to find that general church histories, and even works specializing in the Reformation, usually made only passing mention of the *Unitas Fratrum*, and still less of Luke of Prague, if they said anything at all.

I was therefore delighted to read in the opening of A.G. Dickens and John Tonkin’s *The Reformation in Historical Thought* that the authors considered the lack of attention devoted to the Bohemian Brethren a signal failing of other works dealing with the period. Specifically, they said: “The whole period of 1517-1555 was canonized as a self-sufficient phase of history, which tended to make people overlook the Bohemian Reformation of the fifteenth century...”¹ I became confused when I could find little mention of the Hussites or Brethren in the body of the book itself. Imagine

my chagrin when near the end of the work, all the way to p. 331 in fact, in a section called “Sins of Omission,” I found the authors confessing that they too had not gotten around to finding out or saying much about the Bohemian Brethren or their predecessors. They wonder: “Have we erred, for example, in not according a more important place to the Protestant-like movements which preceded Luther, in particular the Hussite Revolution, which, although it did not directly help initiate Luther’s movement, provided him with confirmatory arguments just when he needed the support of “modern” history?”

Note that even here the Hussites and their spiritual descendants are seen principally as a prelude to the ‘real’ Reformation of Luther. This kind of thinking is a shame, for the Czech Reformation, and the *Unitas Fratrum* in particular, have much to contribute, not only for the historical record and as examples of heroic dedication, but also for what they have to say to the churches today in the fields of theology and pastoral care, not the least of which is to remind all churches that they are not THE Church.

The Rev. Dr. C. Daniel Crews is Archivist of the Southern Province of the Moravian Church and a noted authority on the history of the Unity of the Brethren.

Within the *Unitas Fratrum*, Luke of Prague is certainly one of the figures most worthy of study. Hus, the forerunner, and Comenius, the preserver of the legacy, are the names best known, however slightly, to the church at large. Others, such as Br. Rehor (Gregory), Augusta, Blahoslav, and Simeon Turnovsky, are worthy of careful consideration, but Luke is the linchpin connecting all of these. Of course, we know Luke basically as one who played a crucial role in saving the Unity from too much narrowness and cold and rigid strictures, to which its first generation was prone. One may also remember him as a reformer who did not always see eye to eye with Martin Luther, and also as a theologian and hymn writer. If one knows anything of the theology of the Unity in the first half of the sixteenth century, then one already knows a good bit of Luke, for he was the architect of that theology. His hymns likewise flow from that fountainhead, though these are almost completely unknown in the English speaking lands, as are his contributions to Christian education.

Unfortunately, while the Hussites and the *Unitas Fratrum* in general have been sorely neglected, almost nothing has appeared about Luke specifically in recent years in materials readily available here. A look at newly computerized indices of theological and historical periodicals reveals only two articles on him, both in *Communio Viatorum*, a publication of the University of Prague, and while one of these is in English, the other is in French.² Both of these likewise consider Luke not so much for what he himself said that is of value, but mostly in relation to the later “world reformation.”

In hard copy, of course, there is Jarold K. Zeman’s excellent bibliography for sources before 1977.³ This contains roughly a full page on materials relating to Luke directly, plus numerous cross references. Unfortunately, few of these are in English, and a great number are references to long discontinued Eastern European publications not easy to obtain, though I am told Princeton University has a good collection of them. A reference of special interest is to a series of biographical articles in French by Amédeo Molnár in *Communio Viatorum* from 1961 to 1963. Two other articles, mentioned by Jarold Zeman in his short bibliography in the Rican translation, are worthy of note. These are Marianka S. Fousek’s “The Perfectionism of the Early *Unitas Fratrum*,” which appeared in 1961, and Milos Strupl’s “The Confessional Theology of the *Unitas Fratrum*.”⁴ These articles, again, are more than thirty years old.

Earlier book-length studies of the Unity which mention Luke to a greater or lesser degree, barring the late 19th and early 20th century Czech ones, are mostly in German, and may sometime share certain Teutonic biases in evaluating things Czech. One of the most thorough of these is Joseph Müller’s *Geschichte der Böhmischesen Brüder* (1922). Erhard Peschke, slightly later, also produced some carefully crafted works which contain treatments of the Lukan period. In English, one should not forget the delightful but dated *History of the Unitas Fratrum* by Edmund de Schweinitz (1885/1901). Peter Brock in his *The Political and Social Doctrines of the Unity of Czech Brethren* devotes several chapters especially to the conflict of the minority and the majority party in the Unity led by Br. Luke. An accessible Czech viewpoint is available in my 1992 English translation of Rudolf Rican’s (1957) history of the Unity. All of

these speak of Luke, but only as part of the much larger story.⁵ Jarold Zeman's statement made in 1969 that "no comprehensive monograph on the life and thought of Lukás has been published in book form as yet" remains true.⁶

There is indeed a 20th century book by Amédeo Molnár devoted to Luke himself,⁷ but this has two drawbacks: 1) It is an early work of this scholar, and Dr. Molnár told me in 1977 that he would have refined the work significantly if he were writing it then; and 2) for English speaking readers, the work is in Czech, and the citations from Luke's works are in sixteenth century Czech! In spite of these reservations, Molnár's work remains a crucial and unexplored source for understanding Luke. I will make frequent use of its insights later in these remarks.

So, in these addresses, I will be trying to bring together several of these, and other, scattered sources of information about Luke regarding his life, his theological contribution, and his service as a teacher and hymn writer. I am, frankly, amazed that more scholars have not devoted really serious attention to Luke. Much that will be said here will not be new (after all, he died in 1528), but it is information that is hard to get at in one place and one language. We will certainly not simply be going over already well-plowed ground, for we will also investigate a selection of Luke's own works, specifically his catechism and some of his hymns, as well as additional material from the Lissa Folios (Slaby translation) which, as far as I know, has not been considered very much, if at all, in English before. Needless to say, more than a few personal comments and observations will be included along the way.

We are far from producing here the definitive study of Br. Luke of Prague in English for all time, but what we are doing here today brings that goal a good deal closer to fulfillment. So, first, at least for the benefit of those who have not had the luxury of reading various out of print works in several languages, let us take a brief but careful look at Br. Luke, beginning with his life.

The Life of Luke

Luke was born in Prague into a Utraquist family at almost exactly the time the Unitas Fratrum was founded. The Unity was begun in 1457 (or '58), and Müller places Luke's birth at around 1460.⁸ Rican makes it even closer, putting Luke's birth "perhaps" in 1458.⁹ Thus, though they did not know one another in their infancy, Luke and the Unitas Fratrum experienced adolescent growing pains at the same time, and Luke played a crucial part in guiding the Unity to maturity as he himself matured.

Luke grew up in Prague, but nowhere did he set down an account of his earlier years¹⁰ before he attended the University there and received his bachelor's degree on 2 October 1481. Brock wryly observes that Luke does not appear to have been "an outstandingly brilliant student,"¹¹ and Molnár found university records which show Luke graduating eighth in a class of eleven. He had attended the sermons of the Utraquist preacher Michal (Polák) at the Church of St. Jiljí (Aegidius). Both Müller and Rican speculate that Michal stirred the religious longings of Luke much as Rokycana had stirred Br. Gregory and his friends a generation before. Like them, Luke desired to find a group of people "who follow truth," and as

Molnár observes, “How may I save my soul?” was Luke’s question too. As Luke later reported in his *O obnoveni cirkve svate* (*On the renewal of the holy church*, 1510), he said to himself that “ultimately God always has his own somewhere, and, were it not for them, we would have to perish.”¹²

Luke’s longing was deepened by reading the works of Petr Chelcicky, given to him by his friend Vojtech (Adalbert). Vojtech was a secret friend of the Brethren, but was not yet a member himself. This reading helped Luke in his private personal pilgrimage, but he could not avoid the conviction that Christianity is not a faith of isolation, but that one needs other people to fully live the truth.¹³ Brock quotes him as saying: “Of what use is such truth to me [he cried out] since I am ignorant as to where it is to be found, whether among any people with whom I could share it.”¹⁴ Luke pestered Vojtech with questions about the existence of a people who put Christian ideals into practice, but it was not until Luke’s third attempt that Vojtech was convinced that he was asking in “simplicity” and earnestly desired salvation. Only then was he told of the Brethren and how to get in contact with them. Typically, Luke said: “I’m going to go and check it out!”¹⁵

As there appear to have been few Brethren in Prague at the time, Luke probably went to Litomysl to meet with them.¹⁶ Luke paid several visits to the Brethren, though he was ready to join by his second encounter with them. Luke and Vojtech joined the Unity soon after Luke’s graduation from the University of Prague in 1481, as did Luke’s brother Jan Cerny, who later became a famous physician. Luke also brought in his friend Vavrinec (Laurentius) Krasonicky. All of these made a positive contribution to the

development of the Unity, but none so great as Luke.

It is most significant to note that in the Unity Luke did not find an ideal story-book utopian community at peace with itself which provided comfortable answers to all his questions of faith and practice. Rather, he found a fellowship which took those questions seriously and provided a forum in which those issues could be explored with integrity. That integrity sometimes led to painful dissension and personal soul-searching as well. As Molnár reports, though, he remained convinced that by God’s grace, whoever seeks truth will find it.¹⁷

This, of course, was precisely the period when the seclusionary and narrow views of the early Brethren were being challenged by views which were not so completely terrified of any involvement in the outside world. Rican provides a detailed account of all this in Chapter 5 of his *History*, and the reader is referred to this source for the specifics.¹⁸ De Schweinitz is probably a little simplistic in his characterization of the conservatives as “illiterate leaders and members” and in his calling the more liberal group “the well educated and the learned.”¹⁹ For instance, he says: “Each faction seized the pen in order to urge its views.” If the conservative faction was really so completely illiterate, what good did it do for them to seize pens, and how did they produce and read all those polemical writings?²⁰ We assume that Bishop de Schweinitz was using “illiterate” in its formal sense of not being well-read in the classics, and not as being unable to read and write at all.

In any event, the church waited ten years, but then made good use of Luke, for he was one of four

Brethren chosen to travel to the East to see if they could find somewhere another body of Christians to provide fellowship and guidance following Bishop Matej's rejection of the 1490 compromise of the Synod of Brandys on the proper relation to worldly power. Indeed, the Unity had affirmed its suspicion of the wealthy and powerful, and as Brock notes, Luke and his allies also worried that rich members might corrupt the Unity.²¹ Still, the leadership of the Unity was not above allowing Baron Bohus Kostka, a member of the Unity, to provide the money for the trip and to write them letters of introduction to his colleagues in the nobility.²² One supposes that their reasoning might have been that limited use of worldly power and wealth, despite their satanic overtones, might after all have its uses in special cases.

Luke and his companions set out in March 1491, and in Constantinople split up to visit Greece, Turkey, Syria, the Holy Land, Egypt, and Russia.²³ Luke himself covered the Turkish lands in Europe and Asia. After a year they reassembled in Constantinople, and de Schweinitz as usual provides a colorful summary: "Their report was discouraging. They had not found an apostolic church, but false doctrines, corrupt morals, open licentiousness prevailing among Christians of every name."²⁴ This sounds extreme, but Luke in speaking of this trip (and a later one for a similar purpose) said that all he found was that God in grace had preserved him from dangers which to that day he could only think of with shudders.²⁵

Leadership of the Unity

Luke, together with Br. Prokop, Br. Taborsky, Br. Klenovsky, and others, began to work to find solutions for the problems which vexed and threatened to divide the Unity. Granted that salvation ultimately depended on the grace of God, how much did it also depend on human good will, good works, and separation from the fallen world?²⁶ Appropriately, Luke's was first of all a literary ministry. As he said: "When I saw that much that was bad had happened, and more threatened to happen, so that our going-under seemed near, I, though I was still young in years and understanding, confronted this and wrote my first work in two parts."²⁷ This was *Barka* [*The Ship*, 1493], and in it Luke depicts the Unity as a boat.²⁸ In allegorical fashion he sets forth the essential and ministrative things which are necessary for it to weather the stormy seas of life. The specific issues of the time were the proper relation to worldly power and the taking of oaths, but as Rican observes:

It is characteristic of the theological thinking of Lukas that he did not limit himself to the resolution of these individual questions but went beyond them to their underlying principles. It is not a particular manner of life marked by the negation of different regulations of this world, but rather a fundamental new beginning which makes a Christian a Christian. This involves a full dependence on Christ. Only the sacrifice of the Son of God is the foundation of the church. "Without his death and the merit of his grace and sharing in his righteousness, no suffering, nor self-denial, nor merit makes for the gaining of salvation" (*Barka* [*The Ship*]. 1493).²⁹

It is instructive that in this and his two following works the academic Luke wrote right over the heads of much of his audience. He likewise had some trouble explaining his ideas even to the Inner Council (Uzka rada). He did stress the primary importance of God's grace, but his insistence on one's having a full knowledge of Scriptural truths prompted Br. Prokop to remind him that knowing truths was not the problem—putting them into practice was—and that many who knew less actually did more.³⁰ Luke taught the Unity much, but he himself had hard lessons to learn from other Brethren. Here, as always, the collegial nature of the Unity's theological process at its best is evident. As Molnár says: “for [*i.e.* because of] the conviction of the communal nature of the Christian profession he sought the agreement of the Unity for the results of his theological thinking.”³¹

In all of this, Luke and his immediate colleagues, Prokop and Krasonicky, were trying to restore harmony in the Unity, and they generally tried to give a biblical basis for their conclusions. As Brock notes, however, Luke's efforts for harmony did not necessarily mean that he was non-partisan.³² Ultimately their point of view prevailed, and at a Synod at Rychnov in 1494 the less restrictive views became the official position of the church. Luke had a great hand in this, though as luck would have it, thinking the business of the day was over, he went out for an evening walk and returned to find that discussions held after the regular session still threatened the cohesion of the Unity. Luke lost sleep over that, but ultimately the Unity survived this challenge.³³ At this Synod, Luke was elected to the Inner Council, and while Br. Prokop was officially the administrative

head, and Bishop Matej remained as figure-head President of the Inner Council, Müller and others agree that Luke quickly became the “most significant” (nejvýznamnějším = bedeutendste) member of the council.³⁴ Indeed, Müller asserts, in the official statements of the Unity for the next third of a century, it is hard to find ones whose style and modes of expression do not betray the authorship of Luke. Strupl also agrees that in these years Luke's and the Brethren's theology as a whole are virtually identical.³⁵

From this point on, Br. Luke had his headquarters at Mladá Boleslav, where the noble Krajir family gave the Brethren land and protection. The Unity's compound there, with its church, school, parsonage, etc. was given the biblical name “Carmel.” Indeed, with Luke constantly operating from Mlada Boleslav, except for brief exile during persecutions, the influence of this center became so great that in common parlance the members of the Unity (Jednota bratrská) were often referred to as “The Brethren of Boleslav [Boleslavští Bratří],” in addition to being called “Pikards” and other inaccurate but evocative epithets.³⁶

Having dispensed with several of the external restrictions which formerly had characterized the Unity, that old chestnut of a question appeared around 1494: “So what then is our real identity?” Was the separation from Rome really justified, and even moreso, was there need to maintain a separate existence apart from the Utraquists, who shared in the Hussite reform heritage? Luke had maintained the propriety of the Unity's independent course, and as Molnár says, “he persistently stresses here the deliberation and lack of arbitrariness of the Brethren's deed [in

separating from the Utraquists and Romans] which proceeded from absolute inevitability and from need of salvation.”³⁷

Still, once again confirmation was sought in visiting other Christian communities in 1498. Having explored the Eastern Churches, this time Luke made a trip to see the seat of Western Christendom in Rome.³⁸ As might be expected, Luke was not impressed. He reported that as he wandered around Rome and visited the papal palace, St. Peter’s, and the other churches of the city he “found nothing but the stools and tables of the money changers, and sellers of doves, sheep, and so forth, sellers of fodder, prebends, pardons, and, in short, everything.”³⁹

He was likewise present at the burning of Girolamo Savonarola in Florence, and this also did nothing to weaken his appreciation for the Unity’s stance that faith cannot be compelled by either spiritual or secular authorities.

Neither was he impressed by his contacts with the Waldensians in Italy. The Unity had had communication with the Waldensians early in its history, especially at the establishment of its own ordained ministry, and the conservative party had continued to cite them as examples of “proper apostolic poverty.” It might be expected that they would still have guidance to provide. Unfortunately, Luke concluded, the modern Waldensians were too much caught up in worldly pursuits, and therefore “it is not for others to go to them, but rather it would be better for them to come to others.”⁴⁰ Molnár notes, however, that disappointment in finding a group of ideal Christians in East or West did not destroy his faith in the universal Church.⁴¹

One surprising fruit of Luke’s Italian trip was the expression on his part of great respect for the Virgin Mary. Naturally, he denounced the excesses of Roman Mariology which he observed, but in no sense did this imply disrespect for the Mother of Jesus.⁴² His work on her, written soon after his return in 1498, is lost, but in a 1505 writing on the incarnation, he speaks very highly of Mary.⁴³

Controversies

More importantly, in this same vein, after his Roman experience he also saw that some aspects of Roman liturgy had the potential to enrich the austere worship of the Brethren. Following his return, he prepared new liturgical forms (for ordination and the sacraments in particular), encouraged greater emphasis on the church year seasons and festivals, and encouraged the use of the traditional pericopes (assigned Scripture readings). He stated that the Unity should depart only from what was bad in the Roman Church, but should hold on to what was good.⁴⁴ This is explicitly stated in a letter by Luke to Master Havel at Auste, of whom Luke had heard he did not like reading from the pericopes and keeping the church year: “For you know that our separation is from the bad, and not from that which may be used for good purpose honestly.”⁴⁵ He goes on to say that if something does not lead to misunderstanding or evil, then the church should make use of it. One wonders, though, if Luke were perhaps rubbing it in a little when he dated this letter “the Saturday after the Virgin Lucy[’s Day], 1502.”⁴⁶ Talk about keeping days of the church year!

It goes without saying that some others in the Unity were not happy with such innovations

either. In a letter to Sautor at Brandys, Luke explains that he is not introducing fancy vestments nor gold chalices and embroidered altar cloths everywhere, but had only sent such a cup and cloth from an old abandoned [Catholic or Utraquist?] church to replace the vessels lost by a congregation to fire.⁴⁷

Luke was soon in an even more influential position to promote liturgical reform. He had already been serving on the Inner Council, but following the death of Bishop Matej in 1500, Luke and Ambroz of Skutec were chosen as bishops, and were consecrated by the two remaining members of the episcopate, Tuma and Elias.⁴⁸ Tuma was president of the council,⁴⁹ but as noted above, Luke's was the prominent voice.

It was also in 1501 or 1502 that Luke produced his *Detinské otázky* [*Children's questions*], a catechism to guide the instruction of young people in the faith, of which more will be said later. A hymnal also appeared in 1501, and tradition said that it was produced by Luke. Some of his hymns are in it, but it does not now appear that this was an official church publication overseen by Luke. The hymnal of 1505 has a better claim to the title of "first hymnal of the Unity," and Luke was definitely involved in this.⁵⁰

In the meantime, though, Luke and the Unity had other problems to occupy their attention, for in 1500 a series of literary attacks was directed at the Brethren by Dr. Augustin Käsebrod, who was speaking for Catholic clerics, many of whom resented the Brethren's success and the simple example of their clergy.⁵¹ An inquisitor, Henry Institoris, was also sent by the pope at this time to try to convert the Brethren back into the Roman Church. He invited them to a colloquy

at Olomouc, and Bishop Tuma and Vavrinec Krasnický went to represent the Unity. It comes as no surprise that, as de Schweinitz says, "...the discussions led to no result."⁵²

There followed a period of several years when the Unity was under more or less severe persecution. In 1503, for example, the king sent an edict to the Utraquist Consistory in Prague forbidding services of the Unity in all royal cities and domains. Unity clergy were to be arrested, and its members were commanded to join either the Catholic or Utraquist churches. Many of the Utraquist clergy joined in denouncing the Unity, which was after all their competitor.⁵³ Noble protectors of the Brethren were able to keep the persecution from becoming general, and could give them some protection on their own domains, but six lay members of the Unity were martyred at Bor near Tachov.⁵⁴ During this time the Brethren's Inner Council, with Luke taking a leading role, urged the members to remain faithful, and produced writings in their defense.

Leaders of the Unity were summoned to a theological examination in Prague, set for New Year's Day 1504. Luke and Vavrinec represented the Unity, along with the layman Filip the soapmaker from Litomysl. There was real danger that they would face death, either at the hands of a hostile Prague mob or a new royal decree. The city council did not want to be responsible for such an event, said that the Brethren had satisfied the terms of the examination by merely showing up, and sent them packing for safer locales.

During this crisis, when the outcome was still unknown, Br. Luke wrote a long letter to the Brethren in Mlada Boleslav containing what he thought might very well be his last will

and testament. He speaks with gratitude of the fact that he had been called into the Unity and its service, and covers pages and pages with admonitions to remain faithful. He also says: “Be it known to you that I depended in everything on God and the Brethren, and I will do so to the end.” With striking humility, he reminds them that the existence of the Unity does not depend on any one person (himself included) and: “Therefore let no one take offence at the Unity for my writing, for I wrote nothing without her consent, but I gave her authority to detract or destroy from my writing whatever the Unity saw necessary, having full confidence in the power of God in her...”⁵⁵

Fortunately, Luke and the Unity were spared that time, but pressure against them continued, culminating in the Mandate of St. James in 1508. Since this was approved by the National Assembly (Snem), in theory the prohibition of the Unity this time applied even to the estates of noblemen friendly to it, but as usual, enforcement generally depended on the individuals involved. In this way, the Unity was able to continue to exist, though often in secret. For safety, the seat of the Inner Council was transferred to Moravia (where the Bohemian Mandate did not apply), though Luke himself remained in the neighborhood of Mlada Boleslav for most of the time. The persecution was seen by the Unity’s leaders as punishment for the Unity’s sins, and official pastoral letters called for penance and renewed dedication.⁵⁶

Luke again came into personal danger in 1515 while making a secret pastoral visit to Janovice in western Bohemia. The unscrupulous local nobleman, Petr Suda of Renec, learned of Luke’s presence and had him captured and

thrown into a dungeon. Suda acted not out of religious convictions, but because he thought the Brethren would pay a large ransom for Luke’s release. Failing that, he figured the king would pay a reward for turning him over. As it turned out, the people of Janovice raised a sum to secure Luke’s release, though there was still fear that his noble overlord, Kunrát of Krajek, might be compelled by royal command to produce him in Prague.⁵⁷

Fortunately, at least for the Brethren if not for himself, King Vladislav died in 1516. His son and successor, Ludvík, was pre-occupied with his Hungarian domain, and in the resulting weakening of royal authority in Bohemia the lords could reassert their former independence and ignore the Mandate of St. James.⁵⁸ The Utraquists and Catholics also had another falling out at this time, ending their co-operation in persecuting the Brethren, so circumstances were favorable for the Unity to emerge from hiding and resume its normal life.⁵⁹

Bishop Tuma died in February 1518.⁶⁰ Only now did Luke assume the presidency of the Inner Council and become the leading member of the Unity in title as well as in fact. It was well that the Unity had some relief from persecution and that Luke was solidly at its head, for the world reformation was about to break upon them, and how to respond to it would be a critical issue.

The Protestant Reformation

The Brethren had heard of the reforming ideas of Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Luke was familiar with some of his writings. In a letter to one of the Unity’s detractors in Bohemia, Erasmus

had spoken of the Brethren in rather positive, if guarded and non-specific, terms, and this correspondence was published. This induced the Inner Council to send representatives to Erasmus in 1520 with a request that he examine their Confession of Faith and provide an endorsement of it for publication.⁶¹ As de Schweinitz observes: “In due time they received his cautious answer. He had found, he said, no errors in the Confession, but a public testimonial would be dangerous to himself and useless to the Brethren.”⁶² It was obvious that Erasmus’ reforming zeal did not extend to giving endorsements which might lead to charges of heresy against himself. The Brethren were understandably disillusioned by his temerity, and did not initiate further contact with him, though he later did pass on some of their writings to Bucer and others.⁶³

As Müller observes, in spite of their disappointment with Erasmus, the Brethren had hopes for better things from Martin Luther when they heard of his reforms begun in Germany.⁶⁴ On the one hand, having looked in vain for a compatible Christian fellowship in both East and West, the Brethren were glad to see that someone else was courageously proclaiming truths which they had long championed. Perhaps they were not alone after all!

On the other hand, the Unity had been in existence for more than 60 years, and had seen other “reforms” come and go. Besides, although Luke and the ‘liberal’ party in the Unity had argued for grace and a lessening of the reliance on external good works and abstaining from the things of the world, nevertheless by no stretch of the imagination could one call them morally lax

or indifferent. It was understandable that loud proclaiming of “salvation by faith alone apart from works of the law” would seem dangerous to them as possibly promoting the idea that faith did not have to produce works as its fruits. This was confirmed when some Bohemian students returned from Wittenberg spouting slogans and asserting that the Brethren’s emphasis on discipline was “contrary to the Gospel.” It is hardly surprising then that as de Schweinitz delightfully puts it: “Bishop Luke watched these developments with an eagle eye.”⁶⁵

In part, so far as Luke was concerned, Luther was the ‘new kid on the block,’ and having just come through years of persecution he was in no mood for anyone to suggest that the Unity was getting it wrong, and that they should adopt outside ideas. True, even before 1500 the *Dekrety* (Official Decrees) of the Unity had said that if a group with “better teaching and church order” should someday arise, the Brethren might join them. That was theory, however, and as Rican observes, in first hearing of Luther, “The Elders of the Unity certainly did not consider that such a case had now occurred.”⁶⁶

In a series of exchanges, with Jan Roh and Michael Weisse as messengers, Luke and Luther traded ideas in the early 1520s. Luther had some difference of opinion with them on rebaptism and the nature of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. Their emphasis on works, as well as their continuing the practice of celibacy for the clergy, caused him concern. Still, as Rican observes: “His former mistrust of the heretical Brethren disappeared under the influence of a closer acquaintance with them.”⁶⁷

Luther wrote to the Brethren, calling them “my dear sirs and friends,” and Luke responded to his reservations in detail. Luther took this with surprising good grace, and Luke was firm but not antagonistic. Rican says of Luke here: “His response and critique was carried on with the calm self-assurance of the old teacher who was able to deliver superior teachings and church orders, which had been tested in adversity, to a young comrade who had only recently begun to make his way out of the Roman Babylon to a better knowledge of the truth.”⁶⁸ I repeat that Luther took this with *surprising* good grace. After 1524 contact with Luther was discontinued for the rest of Luke’s life. It appears that in addition to differences of theological interpretation, the Brethren were concerned with what de Schweinitz termed “the free way of living at Wittenberg.”⁶⁹

Luke’s attention was not absorbed solely with Luther. When he encountered the ideas of Zwingli c. 1525 he found them less congenial than those of Luther, particularly when some Zwinglians offered to reform the Unity in the ‘proper’ direction.⁷⁰ Bartos credits Luke’s strong response with avoiding a Lutheran/Zwinglian split in Bohemia.⁷¹

Unfortunately, even the last years of Luke’s life were not calm and peaceful. Controversies continued with the Amosites, a splinter group from the Unity which still refused the new direction championed by Luke more than a quarter century before.⁷² Luke continued to defend the stance of the Unity in polemical works. There were also disagreements with the Anabaptists, some of whom the Unity had taken into membership when they fled persecution.⁷³ De Schweinitz suggests an amusing positive result

of these differences with the Anabaptists (though it really does sound too good to be true): after dealing with them, and their demands for the rebaptism of practically everyone, Luke decided that Luther’s rejection of rebaptism was not misplaced and “in a letter to a friend he said, that he no longer considered it essential and that it would be well to abolish this practice in course of time.”⁷⁴

Luke died on 11 December 1528 from a condition called “stone” from which he had suffered for many years. He left behind a will addressed to the clergy of the Unity. In this document he commends his soul to God, asks his brethren to forgive his faults, suggests in what way the government of the Church shall be carried on, leaves his writings in its hands, gives some account of its property, recommends the poor to its special care, and solemnly declares that he dies with unchanging loyalty to the Unity of the Brethren.⁷⁵

It is fitting that Luke’s last public official act before his death was the ordination of six deacons as priests. In the past, ordinations in the Unity had had to be performed secretly, but these last ordinations by Luke were done in a public service. Rican speculates that this may have been both “a significant demonstration of the confidence of the Brethren’s senior in the unhampered development of its work, or rather an intentional display of intrepidity for facing new trials.”⁷⁶ In any case, Luke, who had done so much to preserve and advance the church in new ways in his generation, in his last official function, both literally and symbolically, provided for a new generation to lead his beloved Unity into the future. He was buried at Carmel in Mladá Boleslav, where he had served so many years.

Luke as Theologian

Amédeo Molnár was very judicious in subtitled his 1948 book on Br. Luke *Bohoslovec Jednoty* (“the Theologian of the Unity”). The *Unitas Fratrum*, like the later Moravian Church, did not excel in producing systematic theologians, but Luke by training and disposition filled that role at a very critical juncture in its history. Indeed, he fulfilled that role in more than one juncture, not only in the disagreements with the “Old Brethren,” but also in tensions with the Utraquists and Roman Catholics, as well as in the time of establishment of communication with Luther and other reformers. Throughout his life his theological activity, while it was not entirely non-partisan, sought to promote harmony in the Unity from within, as well as to defend it from its detractors from without.

True, Molnár’s admiration may at times wax a little effusive, as when he says that the theological tenets of the *Unitas Fratrum* unfold in Luke “in flowers of uncommon charm.”⁷⁷ Molnár himself goes on to say that “Luke is the foremost systematizing thinker of the Czech reformation.”⁷⁸ Josef Theo. Müller is likewise appreciative of Luke for providing the complete structure of the Brethren’s theology in his *Apologia sacrae scripturae* (*Apology of Sacred Scripture*) printed in 1511. He notes that this document is the source from which Erasmus and Luther learned the Brethren’s theology. At the same time, Müller notes that pure dogmatics held no interest for Luke, and that his theological productions arose not out of an inward desire to create theological systems, but rather from the need to defend and explain the beliefs of his beloved Unity.⁷⁹

For whatever reason, Luke was a prolific writer. Molnár puts the number of his works at around 150,⁸⁰ and Müller says that, counting his letters, there were 170 works of Luke, which include polemics, introductions to Scripture, pieces on practical education, works on specific doctrines, and liturgical works and explanations.⁸¹ Others may compute the number of his works differently, though we recall that from the mid 1490’s to his death in 1528, basically a third of a century, practically any document of the Unity bears marks of his authorship.

Luke was an expert at blending the various strands which together composed the Unity’s theological heritage. He built on the writings of Gregory and the earlier Brethren, and Müller notes that he basically wrote what the “simpler” Brethren had said, though he did not formulate it as they did.⁸² He likewise gave further development to positions of the earlier Hussites, particularly the Taborites (minus their militaristic inclinations), and also made extensive use of his training in the scholastic tradition of the medieval church.⁸³ Bartos says that he was “the greatest systematizer of the Unity, but also its most scholastic spirit.”⁸⁴ Within the Unity itself, he was valued later in the 16th century (about 30 years after his death) by Jan Blahoslav not only for his attention to details, but also for his drive to serve truth, and all of truth.⁸⁵

Luke’s writings did not attain in the Unity the authoritative place that Luther’s did among his followers. As the Brethren in the time of Luke had validated new directions and declared that they were no longer bound by the writings of Br. Gregory (1495),⁸⁶ so in April 1531, just three

years after Luke's death, a Synod decreed that the priests, as fellow servants of the one Lord, should feel free to use contemporary conditions as an aid in seeking out the precious truth of people's salvation and not be hindered in the quest for truth by their predecessors. No one was to be bound by the older writings — it was understood without naming any specifics that this meant the writings of Lukás — and while these did not have to be blamed and rejected, neither were they to be extolled to the harm of truth. Once again the Law of God was elevated as the norm of teaching and duty for members of the Unity. The setting aside of *Zprávy knezké* {Luke's service handbook for clergy} was silently included in the approval of a newly formulated agenda [ritual].⁸⁷

This same Synod dismantled other Lukan institutions also by de-emphasizing the keeping of all but the major festivals of the church year and issuing a new catechism to replace the one written by Luke. This new direction was given more confirmation in the next year by the election of Jan Augusta and other 'young radicals' to positions of leadership in the Unity.⁸⁸ All of this, of course, cleared the way for Lutheran ideas to predominate for a number of years.

It is perhaps ironic that such an event had been prepared for in the writings of Luke himself. In *O moci sveta* (*On the Power of the World*) he had said that God had not placed the perfection of all knowledge in the church in any given time of its history,⁸⁹ and one may deduce from this that development of understanding and expression was not only permissible, but expected. In the

same place, Luke had stated explicitly that he "sought the agreement of the Unity for the results of his theological thinking," and in his 1504 letter when martyrdom seemed possible, he had said "I gave her [the Unity] authority to detract or destroy from my writing whatever the Unity saw necessary."⁹⁰

This is not to assert that Luke would necessarily have been happy at the actions of these Synods, but within his own writings he had made revisions and changed his mind over the years. One specific example is his terribly complex outline of the modes of being of Christ. Thus, in a document of 1507 he speaks of Christ's being as 1) Personal (in heaven), 2) Spiritual (in the believer), 3) Powerful (in the church), and 4) Sacramental (in the sacraments).⁹¹ By 1520 in *O Pokolone* (*On Bowing*) he had modified this essentially Taborite outline to reflect more clearly the Brethren's distinction of essential and ministrative things. In his answer to Luther in 1523, in addition, he has:

- A. The highest being of Christ, heavenly and essential,
- B. The spiritual being [of Christ] on earth
 1. the higher being in the church and souls,
 2. the lower (powerful) being
 - a. in the kingdom of the world,
 - b. in spiritual servants.
 3. [Christ's being] in the ministrative things:
 - a. in the word of the reading [Scripture],
 - b. in the sacraments: baptism, the laying on of hands, the Lord's Supper.⁹²

Moreover, this outline appears in at least eight variations in his various works.⁹³ Most importantly, as Molnár observes, such mathematical and geometrical schemes of organization were dear to Luke, but he did not see any such scheme as a rigid fixed formula: “It was rather a tool, whose imperfection attempted to elucidate what he well-understood in his heart: namely, that Christ is present in the church and in believers...”⁹⁴

It is also satisfying to note that just 15 years later, in the very year that Luther himself died (1546), the Inner Council and the Unity were no longer so enthusiastic about their flirtation with Lutheranism, and pointedly *returned* to the writings of Luke. The Unity confessed that it had been led by “eloquence of words” and “fair sweetness of speaking” to look down on the Unity’s theological heritage and expressions and to turn to those of others. Now they were agreed to “return to those things which we had abandoned and rectify our errors and where necessary we have corrected them and done penance.” In this regard, Luke’s clergy handbook (*Zprávy knezké*) in particular was dusted off and viewed more favorably.⁹⁵

This does not mean that the Unity slavishly bound itself to Luke, or that other influences did not affect its theological development. He was not so “old fashioned” as they had first thought, however, and around 1560 Jan Blahoslav mentioned that a series of sermons on the pericopes (*Postilla*) prepared by Br. Luke was still in use. Typically, one of these sermons was printed in 1561 with the notation that it had been slightly improved (ein wenig verbessert) in accordance with the new confession of faith.⁹⁶ We also remember that while the formal confessions

of faith, which were mostly to explain the Unity’s faith to outsiders, were generally organized in accord with forms familiar to those outsiders, the Brethren’s hymnals, prepared for themselves, continued to be organized according to the “essential and ministrative things, etc.” familiar from their development in the theology of Luke.

No one has suggested that Luke was without his faults. Indeed, the “eloquence of words” and “fair sweetness of speaking” which had helped lead the Unity in a Lutheran direction were no doubt rendered more attractive by the fact that Luke’s own literary style was far from eloquent and charming. Even his champions admit that. Blahoslav said that he imported Latinisms and Germanisms and so his language was often “very unclear and disagreeable”⁹⁷ Müller observes that he is more difficult to read than Hus,⁹⁸ and Brock says that his style is “remarkable mainly for its obscurity.”⁹⁹ Luther himself complained of Luke’s “dark words” (*tunckel wort*),¹⁰⁰ and Smolík notes that Luther’s and Luke’s Latin differed, so that the German reformer said Luke’s meaning “is not as comprehensible and clear as I would like it to be.”¹⁰¹ In the same place Smolík observes that while Luther and Luke had difficulty in understanding one another in Latin, Czech would have been much worse. Of course, not many among the Brethren could do as well as Luke with Latin, prompting Luther to remark that the Lutherans studied languages so that they would not be like the Brethren, who imprisoned themselves in their own language so that they could not talk to others.¹⁰²

Neither is Luke’s obscurity always purely stylistic. Molnár says that he often starts off in an

attractive manner, but has an “inborn awkwardness” (“Vrozen[á] Lukasovu tezkopádnost”) which ends in convoluted thought as well as bad style.¹⁰³ We have noted above that he did not see scholastic forms and systems as absolutes, but in numerous places, inspired at times by the pattern of the Trinity, he seems to force his subject matter into slightly too neat series of threes.¹⁰⁴ One thing about Luke, he excelled, either for good or bad, in whatever he undertook.¹⁰⁵

On occasion, though, Luke could indeed come up with a compelling twist of ideas. One of the best of these reminds us that “the virtue of hope consists precisely in despair over human possibilities.” As Luke continues in *O nadeje (On hope)*: “Not on our thinking does God base hope, but our thinking is based in hope through his covenant.”¹⁰⁶

Indeed, no one spoke for the Unity with more conviction and force. And it was no mean feat to earn the respect (if not always the understanding) of Luther and to argue the great leader of the German reformation to a standstill on occasion. In answering Luther’s admonitions to the Brethren to give up the “papist” system of seven sacraments and return to the “biblical” pattern of baptism and Lord’s Supper, Luke observes that the term sacrament may have been used for these two rites in the early church, and then later applied to others, but that if one wishes to be absolutely biblical, the only rite explicitly *named* a sacrament in the Bible is marriage! Indeed, in the Vulgate, which was good enough for Luke, Ephesians 5: 32 says of marriage “Sacramentum hoc magnum est.”¹⁰⁷ In the Vulgate, neither baptism nor holy communion is termed a “sacramentum.” I am not aware of Luther’s reply, if any, to this. Moreover, Bartos is probably correct in saying that among

the Brethren Luke was the only one who *could* trade theological niceties concerning the Lord’s Supper, etc. with Luther,¹⁰⁸ and, we may add, with other reformers and opponents of the day.

As would be expected, Luke has been viewed differently by different scholars (the few that have dealt with him). For instance, as Molnár summarizes,¹⁰⁹ Gindely in his 1857 *Geschichte der Böhmischen Brüder* (not to be confused with Müller’s work of the same name) hailed him as a “Luther before Luther.” Jaroslav Bidlo, however, in his *Jednota bratrská v prvním vyhnanství (The Unity of Brethren in the first exile, 1900)* says that Luke was “too Catholic” in places. Erhard Peschke thought Luke had some good ideas, but that to make best use of them we need to “understand Luke better than Luke understood himself.” Finally, Ferdinand Hrejsa in his *Nabozensky svéraz Jednoty bratrské ... (Religious individuality of the Unity of Brethren, 1939)* says that “‘in the time of Luke [the religious life of the Unity] unfolded most successfully’ in a type of independent reformation.”¹¹⁰ In spite of all these various evaluations of Luke, most would agree with F. M. Bartos that in his theological work, Luke was the “second founder of the Unity,”¹¹¹ and that is not a bad legacy for anyone.

Truly Br. Luke’s life and work give ample validation to the statement made concerning him by Jan Blahoslav in the Unity’s *Kniha umrti (Memorial book)*: “There has never been such a man in the Unity. May the Lord God give to us and to his flock many such faithful and diligent, learned and unyielding men.”¹¹² Despite this prayer, and despite the worth, courage, and dedication of those who came after Br. Luke, the Unity was not to see his like again.

LECTURE TWO

Essential, Ministrative, and Incidental Things

One cannot, of course, get very far in any examination of Br. Luke's theology without knowing about his distinction of the essential, ministrative, and incidental things. Not only did these provide the structure and presuppositions for his theology, but he went so far as to assert that "all errors flow from misunderstanding of the difference between essential and ministrative things or from erroneous definition of their content or reciprocal action."¹¹³ We need not, however, go into a lengthy exposition of those principles here, since Amédeo Molnár has provided a comprehensive and generally understandable account of the Brethren's theology as the closing chapter of Rican's *The History of the Unity of Brethren*. This remains the best treatment of the subject of which I am aware.

For our purposes here, suffice it to say that as expressed by Luke, the essentials are twofold: divine and human. Each of these has three parts or aspects. First, on the part of God, they are 1) the grace of God [the Father] who wills our salvation, 2) the saving work of God the Son in Christ, and 3) the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Second, on the part of humanity, they were 1) faith, 2) love, and 3) hope. Note that these essentials were never a list of specific doctrines, whether five, seven, eight, or a thousand, to which the Christian was expected to swear allegiance. Rather, they were objective attitudes and actions on the part of God to which humans by grace respond in a living relationship. Since the "human essentials" are a response, it follows that the "divine essentials" always come first and thus by

grace are the operative cause of the others.

The ministrative things are those which help humans to the essentials. They include Scripture, the Church and its servants, and the sacraments. This does not mean that Luke and the Brethren considered these things as unimportant. Indeed, they were the usual divinely appointed means decreed by God for persons to come to salvation. They are not, however, ends in themselves. They are tools — God's tools to be sure — but they must not be exalted as if they were the essentials.

Incidental things are specifics of church order and services, the type of bread used at communion, etc. If confusing the ministrative things with the essentials was a grave mistake, confusing incidentals with essentials was a tragedy of the highest order, as portions of the Christian Church over the centuries have proved time and time again.

So much for the basics. Now for some specifics. Of course, in the 150 or more works of Luke that are known to us, there is no lack of theological material for further consideration and no scarcity of topics which invite a closer look. For instance, as described by Molnár, in his commentary on the book of Revelation Luke in discussing chapter five says emphatically that the church is "mistaken if it wishes to travel the way of glory on this earth."¹¹⁴ Instead, says Luke, the pattern or paradigm for the church on earth can be nothing other than the "lamb once slain" (beránek zabity). True, Christ does live in glory to intercede for us, but Christ is present in the church as the lamb whose death was the cause of our salvation. It is not his glory, but his "shameful death" which has brought us forgiveness. "God, however, by the foolishness of the cross established the way for Christians and

the church to follow.”¹¹⁵

Not only did this have much to say to the imperial church of the later middle ages, but it is also of value in reminding the church of the last decade of the twentieth century, enamored as it is of triumphalism, of its true nature and calling. In addition, Luke’s graphic depiction of Christ as the lamb who conquered precisely through death on the cross, and the admonition to follow him, can hardly help but call to mind the “Moravian seal” with its lamb carrying the banner of the cross, surrounded by the words: “Our Lamb has conquered; let us follow Him.” The *agnus dei* is, of course, an ancient Christian symbol, but all these details raise the question “Could this passage of Luke be the origin of the Unity’s use of this symbol and motto together?” Or is Luke here drawing on a symbol and usage already familiar to the Unity? Or is all this pure co-incidence? The possibilities are intriguing enough to hope that further study will provide more definite answers.

For this immediate study, however, other topics also provide food for thought for Christians today. Among the many possibilities, Luke’s concepts of Scripture and the church in particular are probably the most valuable for study and further consideration. Fortunately, Amédeo Molnár’s 1948 book (in Czech) on Br. Luke provides instructive summaries of these aspects of Luke’s theology in greater detail than has been available elsewhere. Other scholars’ work will be used to supplement Molnár’s accounts, but the results of his research will provide the outline and most of the substance for our consideration of Luke’s theology on Scripture and the church.

In addition, though Luke often wrote for theologians, his primary concern was to communicate the Gospel to the faithful in the Unity, and therefore a study of his catechism should provide insight into the manner in which he communicated his theological ideas to persons just learning the truths of the faith. Along this same line, except for his pastoral letters, Luke spoke most directly to the Unity’s lay members through his many hymns. As noted above, these are almost entirely unknown to English speakers today, but a look at several of them will help illustrate how Luke the theologian spoke to and identified with the flock committed to his care. Through listening to Luke himself, without disparaging the studies and observations of scholars, we may gain a closer and more personal acquaintance with and appreciation for Luke of Prague.

Luke on Scripture

Luke’s view of Scripture was, of course, determined by his distinction of the essential and ministrative things.¹¹⁶ Scripture is a ministrative thing. At first glance, it may seem amazing to some that the “formal principle” of the Reformation [*sola scriptura*] appears to occupy a secondary place in the theology of Luke. As we have seen, however, maintaining a proper distinction between the essential and ministrative things does not imply belittling of the ministratives.

Indeed, among the ministrative things Scripture has a special and unique place. The reading of the word comes before the administration of the sacraments, and in fact is the pre-requisite for them. Molnár notes a little later that Scripture (and its proclamation) is the only

ministrative thing which is absolutely necessary. The others can be, in a sense, provisional, since God can on occasion or for good cause dispense with them. [An obvious example for the Unity of Luke's day would be in the case of a believer who could not attend Holy Communion because of persecution]. Without the Scripture, though, one does not have God's objective declaration of salvation. As Luke says in *O gruntu viery (On the ground of faith)*: "Without the preaching of the holy reading no one recognizes the establishment of salvation nor comes into it from faith. [Therefore] we preach Scripture before all the sacraments, and with the sacraments, and after the sacraments so that first of all we may instruct people in the essence of faith and penance by the reading [i.e. Scripture]."117

Luke does, however, remind us that "the biblical word is not the immediate Word of God."118 Jesus alone is the Word. And the word of truth lies in his sacrificial ministry for our salvation. "The human biblical word then is indeed only for testimony to the revelation of the Word of God, which in Christ — and only in Him — became flesh."119 The biblical word is a true word, but it is only the echo and sign of what it proclaims. Christ is present in it, but he is present as proclamation. So much for those who would exalt Scripture almost to the point of idolatry. Here again, Luke worried about Luther's exaltation of Scripture, fearing that it might indeed lead some to just this sort of idolatry.

Luke also cautions that "it is necessary [on the one hand] carefully to distinguish 'between the external writing of the law, with ink on paper or parchment, and the external reading of it, and

[on the other hand] the internal truths contained in it.'"120 The book can be destroyed by fire; the truth witnessed to within it is eternal.

To be effective, however, a proclamation must be heard. As Luke says in *Bárka* (85a), the biblical word becomes actuality in the preaching of the church — which preaching, of course, is to be of nothing other than the biblical witness. Luke agreed with Luther on the importance of the preached word, but worried that Luther's stress on this could be misunderstood as if it had a magical effect. Typically, in accord with the Unity's longstanding stress on response and discipline, Luke avowed that mere reading of the Scripture was useless. Hearing it was what mattered, and by "hearing" he meant to hear and to obey. For this, of course, the leading of the Holy Spirit was necessary, but the goal remained to make the proclaimed truth of Scripture an actuality in the obedient life of believers.

As might be expected, Luke had no use either for those who claimed to follow Scripture (at least as they personally understood it) without regard for the church, nor for those (like Rome) whom he saw as trying to put the church above Scripture. His problem with the latter is obvious, and as Peschke observes,¹²¹ those who want Scripture only and reject the other ministrative things are actually spurning the means provided by God himself for their help. Once again, Luke asserts that the Brethren take the middle ground and "follow both together."¹²²

As for the canon and translation of Scripture, Luke was content with the Vulgate which had served the church for centuries. He was not impressed by the burgeoning interest of

humanism to go back to Hebrew and Greek sources. As Molnár says: "...his predominating interest in the spiritual essence of the Christian witness did not show a full appreciation for the theological significance of a return *ad fontes*."¹²³ This is a rather circumloquacious way of saying what Molnár goes on to say more plainly: Luke expresses "a rancorous distaste for education in the biblical tongues."¹²⁴ Luke frankly thought that Czech and a little German and Latin were plenty for anyone to know. This does not mean that he was unconcerned about accuracy of biblical translations into the vernacular. Indeed, he expresses great concern for this in the Unity's 1525 translation of the New Testament. It is from the accepted Latin version, however, that he is working. In addition, he voiced great mistrust "of newcomers" (*nováku*) who had recently learned a little Greek and Hebrew and then belittled the Vulgate which had served so well for so long.

Neither did Luke like involved hermeneutics in interpreting Scripture. He preferred to keep as closely as possible to the faith as expressed in the Apostles Creed and the interpretation of the early church, "'according to the real work' and needs of the moment."¹²⁵ Indeed, for those who are concerned with a 'fundamentalist' biblical literalism, Molnár's summary of Luke's practice is instructive: "He always paid attention to the time, the person, the places, and the motives of the biblical narratives and history."¹²⁶

Thus, in his view of Scripture, Luke provided the Unity with a balanced approach which placed great value upon the biblical witness, but never forgot what it was that Scripture witnesses to: to God's essential saving work and humanity's

obedient and faithful response. Without going too far in either direction, he held to the timeless truth of Scripture, always remembering that it spoke from a definite time and place to persons living in another definite time and place. As such, his positions on Scripture (perhaps leaving out his opinions on the study of biblical languages) are ones the church today can hear with profit.

One may hear an echo of Luke's view of Scripture in the revision made by the 1995 Unity Synod of the Moravian Church to the statement on "God's Word and Doctrine" in its official statement of faith, *The Ground of the Unity*. The statement as adopted in 1957 could be interpreted as giving Scripture a lofty position indeed: "The Holy Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament are and abide the only source and rule of faith, doctrine, and life of the *Unitas Fratrum*." This had the possibility of being interpreted in a way that gave Scripture excessive weight in all matters whatsoever, of making it an "essential" in fact. Though Luke's name was not the driving force in the discussions that led to a change, the resulting paragraph, which focuses more on what it is that Scripture witnesses to, is completely in line with his principles: "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."¹²⁷

Luke on the Church

Few have had more regard for or given more attention to the church than Luke of Prague. For all this, he never forgot that the church on earth

is one of the ministrative things, and already in *Bárka* (67,a) he said that in the Creed the Holy Spirit had inspired its authors to place the church following the essential things.¹²⁸

It is true that in the essential/ministrative scheme of his theology. Luke does at times speak of an essential church. By this, in the sense of Wyclif and Hus, he is referring to the “assembly of all the elect.” This church is past, present, and future. Earthly sight cannot discern this church, but this does not mean it is invisible; it is seen by faith and hope in its various members. Luke is careful to say that when the creed speaks of “believing in the church,” this is in a different sense from believing in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Molnár says, “the essential church is nothing other than the collection (soubor) of those who have real participation in the essential matters of the Christian faith.”¹²⁹ It is because of its linkage to the essentials that the church in this sense can be called “essential.” This is the ideal church in which only the saved are gathered. This is the church as the Bride of Christ.

This does not mean that the ideal church does not have time and place. It exists in time and place, but it goes beyond any one time and place. At the same time, no one denomination or group or part of the church can claim to be the essential church.

We may note here that Luke’s scholastic background caused him to postulate also the existence of an “essential church of the damned” to counter-balance the essential church of the elect. That need not detain us further here.

The ministrative church exists to lead a person into the essential church. It is placed on

earth to serve. As Molnár observes: “It is not, then, an end in itself, does not have truth itself in itself, does not even have effect in its own devices. It is a concrete church in whose womb the Christian lives his creaturely communal life.”¹³⁰

Like the essential church, the ministrative church is past, present, and future, but unlike the essential church, it is always of mixed character. In *O puvodu cirkvé* (*On the origin of the church*) Luke follows Petr Chelcicky (and others) in comparing it to a net cast into the sea which gathers both good and bad fish. Yet, in it God’s grace, Christ’s merit, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given witness in the sacraments (and in the proclamation of Scriptural truth).

Molnár also stresses the importance of the communal nature (koinonia) of the church in Luke’s thought. Indeed, in Luke’s conception, the universality of the church is as important as the salvation of the individual. “The life of faith cannot be lived in solitude. The communion of saints shakes a person loose from personal isolationism.”¹³¹ (The need for other Christians which had led Luke to seek out the Unity in the first place was for him not just a personal preference, but a matter of theological principle.) Luke himself stresses that it was the Unity which had helped him to salvation more than personal reading of the Scripture could have done. Scripture is crucial, but only in Christian fellowship can one effectively enter into Scripture.¹³² Molnár continues: “Luke, then, reduces the communal nature of the Christian profession to joint common listening to the tidings of Scripture, joined with common binding of selves to obedience.”¹³³

Being a ministrative, the church cannot have the essentials in its power to give or withhold them at will, but it is within this fellowship that God has chosen to dispense the means of grace. In theory, Luke says, if one had perfect faith, one might dispense with the visible church, but reality being what it is, even in such a case the church would be “useful.” In reality, the church is necessary. (O nadeje, 1502).

The ministrative church is manifested in visible assemblies (ve viditelných shromážděních) of Christian people throughout the world.¹³⁴ The church is one, but it is composed of many “unities” (jednoty) — what we might call denominations today. Thus the Brethren, the Utraquists, the Romans, etc. are all part of the one true church of Christ, so long as they have their foundation in the truths proclaimed in the Apostles Creed and the essential and ministrative truths of the faith. Even the Brethren are not in themselves alone the one holy universal church outside which no one can be saved. Molnár observes that no theologian could find a better explanation of Christian ecumenicity.¹³⁵

In regard to the Roman church, Luke is not impressed by its claims to be the only church established for salvation. The Roman church is one of the “unities” (a status which some later reformers were not willing to allow it), but it should not, indeed cannot, appropriate to itself the exclusive right to catholicity. As Luke himself says in the *Ceská Apologia* (302): “The Roman church is not universal, so that outside it God would not have any membership or salvation.”¹³⁶

This naturally leads to a consideration of corruption within the church. As was true of

the essential church, the ministrative church has its antithetical church of the devil which tries to undermine and lead astray the true church (in all its “unities”). This is not confined to just one or several times and places, and therefore the reform of the church is a concern which must apply to all Christians. As Luke says in *O obnovení církve*: “The renewing of the church not only *ought* to be, but *must* be.”¹³⁷ The reformation of the church is, of course, God’s work, but it is also the work of Christians. And this work consists first in getting rid of what the church itself, not God, has tried to make essential. On the other hand, as we have seen above, the church can hold on to usages which have proven helpful in the past, even though they are not essential. They become harmful only when one confuses them with the essentials.

In accord with his view of the universal church, Luke can look back with favor on the earlier Waldensians, and even to many in the Roman church, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, who had worked for reform. Given the tendency of later scholars to see the Unity only as a precursor of Luther, it is ironic that Luke sees earlier reformers as precursors of the Czech reform movement, and particularly of the Unity, in which God has been pleased to reveal the basis of a true church. Indeed, Luke justifies the existence of the Unity on the ground that it is an “authentic and legitimate” renewal of the Christian church.¹³⁸ Closer to home, he sees one purpose of the Unity to be that of recalling the Utraquist church from its half-way measures to its original reforming heritage. Again, this does not mean that the Unity is perfect. Rather, as Molnár observes: “According to Brother Luke the church is always to be reformed (semper reformanda). It is always necessary anew to examine whether it is

in accord with the measuring stick of the essential and ministrative Christian truths, found in holy Scripture and the apostolic confession of faith.”¹³⁹ As such, the reform of the church is a process which will continue to the end of time.

We should also note here that while Luke and the Unity were very concerned about the moral life of Christians, ultimately for him the renewal of the church was not primarily a reform of morals. Molnár emphatically states that people are wrong to think that the Unity was very interested in moral reform, but not much concerned with dogmatic considerations of the biblical message. Indeed, he states, morals and dedication of life are only a consequence [albeit a necessary one] of “determined theological conviction.” As he says: “The attention devoted to all of life, for which the Brethren and Luke with them are well known, is only a consequence of a determined theological conviction, which is not undogmatic because it is also ‘practical.’”¹⁴⁰

Luke did not give a definition of theology in his voluminous writings, but it is clear that he saw its purpose to be the renewal of the church by pointing to the essential and ministrative things in their proper relationship to each other. Just as Scripture proclaims God’s revelation, but is not in itself the full content of that revelation, so theology is to attempt to elucidate further the ramifications of that proclamation. The task of the theologian thus falls into the ministrative sphere, and the theologians must remember that “theology, which is a human attempt at interpreting revelation, cannot contain [that revelation] in all its fulness.”¹⁴¹ Just as the church can never claim to have reached perfect reformation, so theology can never proclaim

that it has reached its goal. It was in this sense, as Molnár correctly observes, that Luke submitted his theological work to the Unity, “not as to a Catholic imprimatur, but rather this was an expression of the fact that the theologian is of the church and for the church.”¹⁴² This too is a lesson from which some modern theologians might profit.

One interesting aside may also be noted here, particularly in our twentieth century “secular” society. For Luke there is no distinction between secular and religious history. Since everyone on earth is ultimately answerable to God (and will finally belong to the church of God or to that of the devil), all history is ultimately church history.¹⁴³

Luke and the Catechism

It was certainly to be expected that a group like the Unity, which laid such stress upon disciplined living and obedience to God, would provide amply for the instruction of their younger generations in important matters of the faith.¹⁴⁴ Such was indeed the case, and it appears that in the first decades of the Unity older Hussite catechisms for children were used either directly or with slight modifications.¹⁴⁵ The Hussite catechism of Roudnice is one example of these. For forty years or so these Hussite catechisms probably circulated in handwritten form. Typically, it was Brother Luke who refined these various precursors and brought the resulting catechism out in the high technology of the day, that is, in print. So far as we can tell, this was in 1501 or 1502.¹⁴⁶

Earlier scholars noted the similarities of Luke’s catechism to the *Enterrogaciones ménors*

of the Italian Waldensians and assumed that Luke based his work on this source. It has since been reasonably established that, on the contrary, the Waldensians depended on Luke's catechism and others of his works, as well as their own specific sources.¹⁴⁷ Given Luke's view of the Waldensians after his Italian trip, it is surely unlikely that he slavishly depended on their theological formulations, not to mention his own adherence to materials directly from the Hussite catechism of Roudnice.

Unfortunately, Luke's catechism in its original version is no longer extant. Fortunately, it is preserved in slightly modified form as the first part of his *Otazky trojí* (*Three sorts of questions*) of 1523. This work contains the catechism for children (*Detinské otazky*) as well as his catechism for older youths and his catechism for candidates for the priesthood.¹⁴⁸ The full text of the children's catechism provided by Molnár is taken from this edition.¹⁴⁹

Two further notes on the intended audience of Br. Luke's catechism: As its title suggests, it is indeed meant to aid in the doctrinal instruction of children. Müller observes, however, that it was also at times used for the instruction of older persons who were preparing for membership in the Unity. In this sense, he says, the word "children" in the title did not refer to physical immaturity, but in the sense of I John 2: 12 etc., it also referred to those who were children in a spiritual sense.¹⁵⁰

In addition, a cursory look at the questions and answers themselves reveals that many of them are short and simple, as would be expected in a work for young children. Other answers, however, such as those on honoring the saints (nos. 53

and 58 e.g.) and on the Holy Communion (nos. 60ff.), go on for so long and are so involved that one is led to wonder if they were directed rather at the parents and instructors of the children, who were then to communicate this material to the children in whatever ways and in as much detail as were appropriate for them. This supposition is confirmed by Rícan in his remarks on the catechism.¹⁵¹

We should also note that also c. 1521 Luke's catechism was translated into German and also printed in 1523 for the benefit of those members of the Unity who used that language. In this form it also circulated in Germany and would have been the version seen by Martin Luther.¹⁵²

I wish I could say that I am the first person to devote any considerable attention in English to Brother Luke's catechism. In fact, however, Edmund de Schweinitz provided some remarks and a translation of it in the *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* in 1869.¹⁵³ By now that in itself qualifies as an historical event, so the catechism merits another look. In addition, de Schweinitz was working not from the Czech, but from the old German translation. This, then, will be a first English look at Br. Luke's original.

We may also note that in the version printed in the *Transactions*, the numbering of the questions gets off following no. 20 because of a misprint, and this makes a comparison of the two versions a little confusing. By and large, the two versions agree, and given the sometimes major disagreements of the Brethren's Czech and German confessions of faith, this is so to a surprising degree. At times the German may split a question and its fuller explanation, and in the article on bowing before the sacrament the

expressions used differ in more than phrasing, though the substance is in agreement. One might indeed do a master's thesis on the extent and significance of the variations that exist between the two versions — but not today.

Let us now have a closer look at Br. Luke's Czech catechism for children with a general overview and a consideration of some details. The catechism as Br. Luke has constructed it consists of 75 questions and answers. As might be expected, it begins with simple and basic things, such as:

1. Who are you? A creature of God, reasoning and mortal.
2. Why did the Lord God make you? That I might know him, worship him, and love him and have his grace to be saved.

As noted above, the answers to other questions, such as the honor due the saints, are more complex and can go on for a page or more:

58. With what honor then is it not proper to honor them? With the sovereign name, fitting for God himself and the Lamb. As it is not fitting to pray to them for grace and for help, to beg them for intercession, not to place hope in them for giving good or preserving from evil; to call the Virgin Mary one's only hope and mediator, intercessor, and most gracious of mothers, or to sigh to her or to rely on these things for merit. This external honor and bowing and service it is not fitting to do, as to consecrate them for veneration, to devote oneself to them in service and to offer oneself, and to make churches and altars and other things in their name, or to take oaths in their name, or to make promises, go on pilgrimages, make fasts, etc.

Luke includes such basic catechismal usuals as the Apostles Creed (question 10), the Ten Commandments (question 17), the Beatitudes (question 30), and the Lord's Prayer (question 45). Interestingly, Bishop de Schweinitz in his footnote to the question on the Beatitudes mentions that the second and third Beatitudes are reversed in Luke's catechism, but does not say why.¹⁵⁴ The answer is simple: Luke, as always, was using the Vulgate for his Scripture quotes, and these two Beatitudes are reversed in that source.

We have seen that the concept of grace played a great role in Br. Luke's theology, and that for all his stress on human obedient response, he insisted that this response was possible only because of God's prior gracious redeeming activity. We would therefore expect this idea to find a place in Luke's catechism, and such is indeed the case at the very onset. In question two as the concluding part of the answer to why God made us, the catechism states: "and have his grace to be saved." In effect, then, Luke is positing grace as the basis of all the details which will follow. Having laid that foundation, however, the body of the catechism itself does not restate this theme with the frequency and emphasis one might have expected. It is not until question 32 that grace is explicitly mentioned again. In response to this question about how many sorts of eternal life there are, the answer says: "Two. One here in grace and in sharing in the Lord Jesus, to whom the faithful come in the spirit through faith. And the second life eternal is in glory in the future..." In question 44 God is called "gracious Father," and in question 53 it is said of the saints that they are "elect of God from grace..." Grace is mentioned again in question 69, but here it is hope "in the

covenant of faith of the law of grace of the New Testament” that is being discussed. The next question (no. 70) cautions that those who rely on God’s grace “without entering it in participation in the Spirit and without penance and propriety of life” are resting on a false hope. Thus, while grace remains the basis, in the catechism itself Luke spends much more time and space on how one is to obey God’s commandments and avoid wrongdoing (e.g. questions 26-28) than he does on the grace which is the basis for this. Typical is question 74, which asks what one has to do to enter into the Unity of the faithful. The answer speaks of submission and obedience and receiving instruction, admonition, warning and punishment [in the church], “and in diligent obedience to the commandments of God and practice fitting for true servants.”

The other core concept of Luke’s theology is of course the distinction of the essential and ministrative things. These matters do appear with prominence in the catechism. Indeed, in answer to question 3, which asks “On what do you depend for your salvation,” the answer is “on the three basic virtues,” which the next question goes on to name as “faith, love, and hope.” Questions 6-14 further define faith and its aspects, and questions 15-17 develop the idea that one who has faith in God will obey God’s commandments. The next questions introduce the idea that one obeys out of love, first for God, and then for one’s neighbor. This then leads to a consideration of Christ, God’s greatest expression of love. It is no surprise that this soon turns into questions on how one obeys the commandments of Christ, which in turn go on to speak of the Holy Spirit giving gifts of faith, love, and hope, that one may indeed have true hope and assurance of eternal

life (questions 31-33 etc.) Thus the essentials from the human response aspect receive great attention in the catechism. The essentials from the divine perspective are of course covered in several questions which speak of God’s gracious will, the saving work of Christ, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. All of this is not explicitly brought together until question 67, however, which asks: “Where is hope and in whom is it true?” The answer is: “In God powerfully, in the merit of Christ, and in the Holy Spirit and his gifts....” The basic framework of Luke’s theology of the essentials is quite clear here, but again surprisingly, while he spends a good deal of space detailing the reverence not proper to give to the saints and sacrament (and other ministratives), the explicit warning about confusing the ministratives with the essentials is not given great voice.

At times in studying the catechism we may echo the sentiment of Luther about Luke: he is not always as clear in his expression as I would wish him to be. Still, the basic ideas of his theology are there, and it is no surprise, given the nature of the work and the Unity’s penchant for giving instruction for obedient living to its members, that it focuses more on practice than it does on theological theory. The theology is the basis for all the rest. The expression and emphasis may differ, but the essence is one.

Theology and Luke’s Hymns

We come now to what promises to be one of the more valuable and hopefully enjoyable parts of this study of Luke the theologian: his hymns. In so much of his writing Luke was addressing the congregation as spiritual administrator. In his hymns he takes his place among the members of

the community as they sing the truths of the faith together. As Molnár observes in “Luc de Prague édifiant la communauté,” Luke was writing here as a member of the church, and his hymns bear the mark of the collective community: “These are hymns of the communion of saints.”¹⁵⁵ This reveals a different aspect of Luke. As Molnár also says, “The very fact of having composed hymns shows how much, despite his pronounced intellectualism, Luke was also thinking with his heart.”¹⁵⁶

Luke in his hymns expresses astonishment at the grace and love of God which caused God to send the Son to be born on earth. The incarnation is one of his major themes, and this is joined directly with speaking of Christ’s suffering on the cross, for that was the purpose for which he became incarnate. Here again, it is in this respect that the church on earth is to follow its Lord. We find in Luke’s hymns a definite Christ-centeredness, and Molnár notes that even in singing of the creation, Luke never forgets to mention the incarnation of its creator, for this he says, is the “pivot of Luke’s piety.”¹⁵⁷

Luke wrote many hymns, and scholars generally say that eleven of the pieces in the 1501 hymnal are by him. We recall that the claim of this to be the first hymnal of the Unity is dubious, and Molnár notes that in structure the collection is quite different from later productions in which we have better assurance that Luke was involved as an editor. He also states that the hymns attributed to Luke in the 1501 hymnal also appear in a collection made by Václav Mirínský in 1492. The main significance of this observation is that it thus appears that Luke began to write his hymns soon after he joined the Unity in 1481. His hymns,

then, may have been some of his first theological works (though he himself said Bárka was), but how widely they were used before Luke rose to prominence in the Unity we do not know.

A large number of Luke’s hymns appeared in the hymnals of the old Unity. For instance, in the hymnal of 1618, a copy of which is in the collection of the Moravian Music Foundation, though authors are not given in the printed text, notes in the handwriting of the period attribute pieces to Luke throughout the first half of the collection (the handwritten notes stop after that). References to Luke (and others) which we have been able to check appear accurate, so this source seems fairly reliable.

Luke, not surprisingly, remains a popular author in modern Czech hymnals. The 1954 hymnal of the Jednota bratrská (renewed Moravian Church) lists eleven hymns by him. The 1978 hymnal of the Czech Evangelical Brethren’s Church contains fourteen of his works. Outside the Czech lands his hymns are not so well represented. For instance, in the 1967 hymnal of the Continental Province of the Moravian Church (Evangelische Brüdergemein) there are only two hymns attributed to Luke.

In the English speaking lands, the 1912 hymnal of the British Province of the Moravian Church had one hymn of Luke. This same hymn was also the only one by Luke in the 1923 American Moravian hymnal, and since this is also one of the two Luke hymns in the German Moravian hymnal, I suppose this makes it a candidate for the “most popular” of Luke’s hymns in translation. Unfortunately, it happens to be a burial hymn, which means it would not be a

frequently used one in main Sunday services. Both the German and English translations are based on Michael Weisse's 1531 German version. Both the American and British books used Catharine Winkworth's 1858 translation:

Now lay we calmly in the grave
This form, whereof no doubt we have
That it shall rise again that day
In glorious triumph o'er decay.

His trials and his griefs are past;
A blessed end is his at last;
He bore Christ's yoke, and did his will;
And though he died he liveth still.

And so to earth again we trust
What came from dust, and turns to dust,
And from the dust shall surely rise
When the last trumpet fills the skies.

Then let us leave him to his rest,
And homeward turn, for he is blest,
And we must well our souls prepare,
When death shall come, to meet him there.

His soul is living now in God,
Whose grace his pardon hath bestowed,
Who through his Son redeemed him here
From bondage unto sin and fear.

So help us, Christ, our Hope in loss;
Thou hast redeemed us by thy cross
From endless death and misery;
We praise, we bless, we worship thee.

In the 1975 hymnal of the British Province of the Moravian Church this hymn no longer appears, but there is a recast version of J.C.

Jacobi's 1732 translation of Michael Weisse's 1531 German version ("Christus, der uns selig macht") of Luke's hymn "Moudrost boha otce prawda," which in itself was his Czech adaptation of the 14th century Latin "Patris sapientia veritas divina." This is an eight stanza account of Christ's arrest, torture, trial and crucifixion. It speaks with feeling of Christ's willing suffering for us, and the last stanza is typical of the Brethren's constant concern: May we ever weigh the cause/ Of thy death and suffering./ And hearts set to keep thy laws/ Bring as a thank-offering.

The American Moravian hymnal of 1969 did not contain any of Luke's hymns. The 1995 *Moravian Book of Worship* has but one. Fortunately, this is Jaroslav Vajda's fine translation of "Kristus prikklad pokory," which appears in English as "Christ, the model of the meek." Note too that this is translated from the Czech, and not from a German intermediary as was the case in the other English language Moravian hymnals.

In this translation (*MBW* no. 336) it may be seen that Luke has provided a simple yet touching account of Christ's incarnation and suffering. Here Luke does not engage in convoluted theological systems, but builds his hymn through poignant scenes from the life of Christ. Effectively contrasted are the glory to which the eternal Son is entitled and the extreme poverty and rejection which he willingly endured for our salvation. Christ is indeed the model of meekness in every stage of his life, from his manger bed, flight into Egypt, and daily toil, to his humiliation and death on the cross. All this he did for the flock committed to him, and he continues to care for and guide this flock to eternity. In continuity with

the rest of Luke's theology, there is indeed "faith's reward" for the faithful at the end, but it comes not in striving for glory, but rather in following the narrow and humble way shown and lived by Christ himself.

Conclusions

It is ironic that Luke, city born and educated, was precisely the sort of person the "old Guard" in the last decades of the 15th century wanted to keep out of the Unity. Instead, he ended up leading it in new directions its founders could not imagine. It was Br. Luke whose efforts and influence played such a key role in allowing the Unity to become a "jednota," a denomination, within the holy catholic [not Roman only] church, rather than a self-rendering sect such as some other Hussite factions had become. At the same time, he asserted its own theological and disciplinary principles so that the Unity did not waste its strength in hepeless efforts to accommodate everyone, as the Czech Utraquist establishment too often did. This independence itself brought new dangers, for to the Romans the Unity was still anathema, to Luther it was still too focused on works, and to the Reformed it was still too open to usages of the past.

It is not going too far to say that although Br. Gregory laid the foundations of the Unity, Br. Luke was the architect who built the church upon them. All this being so, it is still necessary to remember that Br. Luke did not do this alone, but had the support and at times the guidance of the Brn. Prokop, Klenovsky, Krasonicky, and others. One can never forget that the theological process of the Unity was collegial in nature. Indeed, one

surprising strength of the Unity was that it had no Luther or Calvin which it canonized as the interpreter of Scriptural truth.

Luke and the Unity were convinced that theology, as a human attempt to explain the things of God, could never be complete or static. One hopes that the theological process is actively assisted by the Holy Spirit, but it remains a human, not a divine, production. In this speaks the voice of Luke. The Unity explicitly declared that it was not forever bound by the theological expressions of Gregory, nor by those of Luke (though they returned to him in part), and it was thus spared the necessity of trying to make later and clearer understandings conform to an incomplete measuring stick of the past.

Luke did not invent this concept, but he refined it and provided it room to work. We cannot stress too highly again that in the Unity Luke found not the safe haven of ready-made answers to all questions, but rather a community of grace in which those questions could be profitably framed and explored. This is fully in accord with Luke's reminding the church on earth that it is not a triumphal procession singing its choruses of praise in glory, but rather the company of those who humbly follow the Lamb once slain!

As we have seen, Luke had much of value to say to the church in the areas of Scripture and the church. In the main, however, it is the process, not so much the specific formulations, of Luke that we might follow today — not his medieval scholasticism, but his respect for traditional wisdom while resolutely confronting head-on the theological questions of the present age.

His was also a pastoral theology when it needed to be. For instance, Luther may have been right about the number of sacraments being two, not seven, but Luke in this instance may have been willing to forego the rigors of scholarship in a scholastic manner in order to give comfort to souls, particularly to those who had left the Roman church, but needed assurance that the familiar means of grace were indeed still operative. It may seem ironic too that Luke had led the rejection of works righteousness in the 1490s, but in discussions with Luther he raised the dangers of faith without works. His concern, as always, was that the flock committed to his care receive proper guidance and help in living the lives to which they were called in faith, love, and hope.

Indeed, for Luke, grace is always paramount in this. Doing good works depends on grace, and unlike Roman theology, he did not see virtue as a power of our human will. Refusing to do good works is, however, our choice, and the sort of faith that is associated with this refusal is trying to build salvation on false hope. Neither course was acceptable. Similarly, the sacraments are not magic charms for salvation, nor are they merely empty symbols. They are rather manifestations of grace which we, again by grace, may receive.

Luke traveled more perhaps than any other member of the Jednota bratrská before Comenius (Komensky). Through his reading he traveled intellectually farther still. Yet his far-ranging experience (physical, mental, and spiritual) always led him home to the Unity, bringing what good he could find from abroad and cherishing and enriching the good he knew at home. The faith which he and members of the Unity shared had been tested by years of persecution and internal

examination. Those who are amazed that he dared to disagree with Luther on theology and discipline should bear these facts in mind.

We lament that Br. Luke was not a better literary stylist, but the theological legacy he nourished and passed on was a solid one. It surfaces today, as in the 1995 revision to the Moravian Church *Ground of the Unity*, and in the prayers of intercession in the Advent 1 liturgy of the 1995 *Moravian Book of Worship* (the latter of which were consciously based on his concept of the essentials). As we have seen, his theological perspective is one that the church today could examine more fully with benefit. Luke deserves it, and the church today needs it.

(endnotes)

¹ A.G. Dickens and John Tonkin (with Kenneth Powell), *The Reformation in Historical Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985) p. 9.

² Josef Smolik, "Martin Luther and Luke of Prague," *Communio Viatorum* XXVII (1984); and F.M. Bartos, "L'Unité des Frères Tchèques et les Réformateurs," *Communio Viatorum* XXI (1978). The latter was written several years (in 1956 in fact) before its publication.

³ Jarold K. Zeman, *The Hussite Movement and Reformation in Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia (1350-1650): A Bibliographic Study Guide*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Michigan Slavic Publications, 1977).

⁴ Marianka S. Fousek, "The Perfectionism of the Early *Unitas Fratrum*," *Church History* 30 (1961): 396-413; Milos Strupl's "The Confessional Theology of the *Unitas Fratrum*." *Church History* 33 (1964): 279-293.

⁵ Joseph Theo. Müller, *Geschichte der böhmischen Brüder*, 3 vols. (Herrnhut: Missionsbuchhandlung, 1922-1931). Volume I of this appeared in a Czech translation by F.M. Bartos, *Dejiny Jednoty Bratrské* (Prague: Nákladem Jednoty Bratrské, 1923); Erhard Peschke, *Die Theologie der Böhmisches Brüder in ihrer Frühzeit, Vol. I: Das Abendmahl, Untersuchungen* (Stuttgart, 1935); Edmund de Schweinitz, *The History of the Church Known as the Unitas Fratrum or The Unity of the Brethren, Founded by the followers of John Hus, the Bohemian Reformer and Martyr*, 2nd edition (Bethlehem, Pa.: Moravian Publications Office, 1901); Rudolf Rican, *The History of the Unity of the Brethren: A Protestant Hussite Church in Bohemia and Moravia*, tr. Daniel C. Crews (Bethlehem, Pa.: Moravian Church, 1992). Peter Brock, *The Political and Social Doctrines of the Unity of Czech Brethren in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries* (The Hague [s-Gravenhag]: Mouton, 1957).

⁶ Zemen, *The Anabaptists and the Czech Brethren in Moravia 1526-1628: A Study of Origins and Contacts* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 200, n. 101.

⁷ Molnár, *Bratr Lukas, Bohoslovec Jednoty* (Prague: Kalich, 1948), hereafter cited as BL.

⁸ Müller, I:238; Brock, 105, says he was born “shortly before 1460.”

⁹ Rican, 49.

¹⁰ Molnár, “Etudes et conversion de Luc de Prague,” *Communio Viatorum* 3 (1960), 255.

¹¹ Brock, 106.

¹² Molnár, *Communio Viatorum* 3 (1960), 257; BL, 10; Müller, I, 238; Rican, 255; Rican, 50. The Czech (*Dejiny*, p. 59) reads: “Konecne Buh své má vzdy nekde, a by jich nebylo, musili

bychom zahynouti.”

¹³ Molnár BL, p. 11ff. See also Rican, p. 50.

¹⁴ Brock, 106.

¹⁵ Müller, I, 238. See also Brock, p. 107.

Molnár, *Communio Viatorum* 3 (1960), 259, speculates that Luke may have heard something of the Brethren before this, but in a negative sense.

¹⁶ Brock, 106.

¹⁷ Molnár BL, p. 13f.: “Kdoz hledá pokladu skrytého jako stanu archy na hore... nalezá. (from *O obnoveni*, 35b-36a.).

¹⁸ Brock, p. 111, notes that Luke’s *O obnoveni církve svaté* is the primary source for learning of these disputes. For extracts of this work see Jaroslav Goll, *Chelcicky a Jednota v XV století*, ed. Kamil Krofta (Prague: Nákladem Historického Klubu, 1916), pp. 198-205.

¹⁹ De Schweinitz, 173.

²⁰ See also Brock, 242.

²¹ Brock, 229.

²² Brock, 113, notes that even at this stage Kostka had not been forced to give up all his responsibilities and perquisites of nobility.

²³ Brock, 142.

²⁴ De Schweinitz, 176.

²⁵ Müller, I:249.

²⁶ Fousek, 400, 405 f.

²⁷ Müller, I:251.

²⁸ Actually, Luke’s very first work of which we know (from an account by his friend Vavrinec) was written for Jews he met in Constantinople. But this was a private writing, and Luke saw himself as totally in the service of the Unity, so he can refer to *Barka* as his first work. See Molnár BL, 107 f. For more on *Barka* see Molnár, *Communio Viatorum* 4 (1961), 194-99.

²⁹ Rican, 64.

³⁰ Müller, I:251 f., Molnár *BL*, p. 12.

³¹ Molnár *BL*, p. 18: “pro presvedceni o koinonické povaze krestanského poznani vyprosoval vysledkum sveho bohosloveckého mysleni souhlas Jednoty.”

³² Brock, 148.

³³ Brock, 146; Müller, I:256; Brock, 147 n. 42 ;and Molnár in his “Luc de Prague devant la crise de l’Unité des années 1490” in *Communio Viatorum* 4 (1961), 223 n. 11 explicitly disagree over the interpretation of the Czech verb “vyzdvihnúti,” i.e. whether the Rychnov synod “re-established” or “abolished” the Brandys synod’s statement. They agree that the threat of division was there in any case.

³⁴ Bartos, 177; Müller I:271.

³⁵ Strupl, 283.

³⁶Rican, 68.

³⁷Molnár *BL*, p. 14: “Zduraznuje tu vytrvale neprekotnost a nesevélnost bratrského pocinu k nemuz doslo z naprotého nezbyti, z nouze spasení” (from *O pricinách oddeleni*, 1496).

³⁸Brock, 178. says that part of the reason for Luke’s going to Rome was concern over the influence of “pagan humanist tendencies.” See also Molnár, *Communio Viatorum* 5 (1962), 28.

³⁹Rican, 70; *Dejiny*, p. 80: “nenasel nez stolice a stoly penezomencu a prodavace holubic, ovcí etc. a obrokov, prebend, odpustkuv a krátce vseho.” See also Müller, I:273 f.

⁴⁰ Rican, p. 70. *Dejiny*, p. 81: ““neni proc k nim jíti, ale spravdlivejší by bylo, aby oni k jiným chodili.”

⁴¹ Molnár *BL*, p. 12: “Zklamání z techto vyprav nenarusilo jeho víru v jednu církev obecnou.”

⁴² Molnár, “Luc de Prague, édifiant la communauté,” *Communio Viatorum* 5 (1962),

189.

⁴³ Müller, I:277 f.

⁴⁴ Müller, I:295, 298 f. Molnár *BL*, 16. See also de Schweinitz, 182.

⁴⁵ Lissa Folio 6, Book 12, p. 3, film 354, trans. Andrew Slaby. Moravian Archives, Bethlehem.

⁴⁶ The feast of St. Lucy the Virgin was December 13.

⁴⁷ Lissa Folio 5, Book 11, p. 196, film 351, trans. Andrew Slaby. Moravian Archives, Bethlehem.

⁴⁸ Rican, 75.

⁴⁹ Br. Prokop apparently receded in prominence at about this time. He died in 1507. Rican, 75.

⁵⁰ Rican, 103 f. See also Müller, I:296.

⁵¹ Rican, 91.

⁵² De Schweinitz, 183.

⁵³ De Schweinitz, 184 f.

⁵⁴ Rican, 92 f.

⁵⁵ Lissa Folio 6, Books 13, p. 196ff. and 14, p. 7-15, films 31-33. Slaby translation.

⁵⁶ Rican, p. 95 ff.

⁵⁷ De Schweinitz, 197 f.; Rican, 101. For more details and a slightly more positive view of Suda’s actions see Molnár, “Pasteur dans le tormento,” *Communio Viatorum* 6 (1963), 282f.

⁵⁸ Brock, 207.

⁵⁹ De Schweinitz, 198.

⁶⁰ De Schweinitz, 228, places his death in 1517, but both Müller I:390 and Rican , 102 agree that it was actually 1518.

⁶¹ Müller, I, 395. See his note 285 for explanation of his dating of this trip then.

⁶² De Schweinitz, 230.

⁶³ De Schweinitz, 229-231; Rican, 106 f.; Molnár, “The Brethren’s Theology,” in Rican, 417.

⁶⁴ Müller, I:396. There is some disagreement over the amount of knowledge concerning the

Bohemian reformation which was circulating in Germany before the Lutheran reformation. De Schweinitz (p. 231f.) says not much notice was taken of it, but F.M. Bartos, 36 says that the writings of the Unitas Fratrum were “buzzing” there.

⁶⁵ De Schweinitz, 233.

⁶⁶ Rican, 57, 111.

⁶⁷ Rican, 113.

⁶⁸ Rican, 114.

⁶⁹ De Schweinitz, 236. Rican, p. 116, agrees.

⁷⁰ De Schweinitz, p. 236, though see also Rican, 111f., 118. See also Molnár, “The Brethren’s Theology,” in Rican, 393.

⁷¹ Bartos, 39.

⁷² De Schweinitz, 238 f.

⁷³ Rican, 120.

⁷⁴ De Schweinitz, 239. For a detailed account, see Jarold Zeman, *The Anabaptists and the Czech Moravian Brethren in Moravia 1526-1628*, especially pp. 207-210.

⁷⁵ De Schweinitz, 239.

⁷⁶ Rican, 120.

⁷⁷ *BL*, 5: “v kvet nevsedního puvabu.” More soberly, though just as appreciatively, Molnár cites F.M. Dobiáš’ *Učení Jednoty bratrské o večeri Páne (The Teaching of the Unity of Brethren Concerning the Lord’s Supper)* as saying that Luke is the best theologian of the Czech reformation in general.

⁷⁸ *BL*, p. 6: “Lukás je nejvíce systemisujícím myslitelem české reformace.”

⁷⁹ Müller, I:458. 462.

⁸⁰ *BL*, 6.

⁸¹ Müller, I:456. See 535-577 for his topical and chronoglogical listing of Luke’s works.

⁸² Müller, I:457.

⁸³ Molnár *BL*, 5-7.

⁸⁴ Bartos, 32:.

⁸⁵ Molnár *BL*, 7.

⁸⁶ Rican, 67; de Schweinitz, 178.

⁸⁷ Rican, 123.

⁸⁸ Rican, 123.

⁸⁹ Molnár *BL*, 18.

⁹⁰ *BL*, 16.

⁹¹ Molnár *BL*, 50. See also Strupl, 285.

⁹² Molnár *BL*, 52.

⁹³ Molnár *BL*, 50-54.

⁹⁴ Molnár *BL*, 54: “Bylo spíše nástrojem, jehož nedokonalosti se pokoušel vysvětlit, co v srdci chapál tak dobře: ze totiz Kristus je přítomen v církvi a ve verícím...”

⁹⁵ Rican, 163 f.

⁹⁶ Müller, I:463.

⁹⁷ Molnár *BL*, 6: “velmi nesvětlá a nepříjemná.”

⁹⁸ Müller, I:457 f.

⁹⁹ Brock, 288.

¹⁰⁰ Molnár *BL*, 6.

¹⁰¹ Smolík, 247.

¹⁰² Smolík, 247. Brock, 237, notes that Luke was a great promoter of popular education, but did not favor Latin for all.

¹⁰³ *BL*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Molnár *BL*, 36, 39, 43. See also Strupl, 283.

¹⁰⁵ Molnár *BL*, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Molnár *BL*, 28: “...ctnost nadeje spocívá práve v zoufalství nad lidskými možnostmi. ‘Nebo ne na naši mysl Buoh ustavuje nadeji, ale naši mysl ustavuje v nadeji skrze úmluvu svou.’”

¹⁰⁷ Müller, I:466.

¹⁰⁸ Bartos, 37.

¹⁰⁹ *BL*, 8.

¹¹⁰ “‘v době Lukasove rozvinul se [nábožensky život Jednoty] nejzdarnejí v samostatný

reformacní typ.” Cited in Molnár *BL*, 8.

¹¹¹ Bartos, 31. See also Brock, 206.

¹¹² Rican, 121. *Dejiny*, 132: “Summou nikdá muze takového v Jednote nebylo. Dej nám a stádcí svému Pán Buh mnoho tak verných a pilných, ucených a nedadoucích se premoci muzu.”

¹¹³ Molnár, “The Brethren’s Theology,” in Rican, 406.

¹¹⁴ *BL*, p. 57: “Je proto pochybené, chce-li jít církev cestou slávy uz na této zemi.”

¹¹⁵ *BL*, p. 57: “Buh vsak práve bláznovstvím kríze určil krestanum a církvi cestu k následování.”

¹¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted, materials for Luke’s view of Scripture are from Molnár *BL*, pp. 81-85. See also Müller, I:462-464 for a complementary account.

¹¹⁷ *BL*, 82 f.: “Bez kázanie ctenie svatého zadny zriegeného spasenie nepozná ani jeho z viery duojde. [Proto] kazeme ctenie prede vsemi svátostmi i pri svátostech i po svátostech, abychom najprv lid v podstate viery a pokanie ctením vzdelávali.”

¹¹⁸ *BL*, 82: “Prítom vsak, není biblické slovo bezprostředním slovem Božím.”

¹¹⁹ *BL*, 82: “Biblické slovo lidské je tedy vlastne jenom svedectvím o zjevení slova Božího, které se v Kristu — a pouze v nem — stalo telem.”

¹²⁰ *BL*, 82: “Je treba peclive rozlisovati ‘mezi zevnitřím písmem zakona, cernidlem, papírem neb pergamenem a ctenami zevnotřními a mezi vnitřní pravdou v tom zavrenou.” (Luke said this in a work addressed to Vavrinec Krasonicky in 1519.)

¹²¹ Peschke, 143 ff.

¹²² *BL*, p. 84: “obojího následovali spolu...” (To Vavrinec, 1519).

¹²³ *BL*, p. 84: “...i jeho prevládající zájem

o duchovní podstatu krestanské zvesti nedocenoval theologicky vyznam návratu *ad fontes*.”

¹²⁴ *BL*, p. 84: “nevrazilou nechut k jazykovému vzdelání biblicistickému.”

¹²⁵ *BL*, p. 85: “podle skutečné práce a potreby chvíle.” (in *Odpoved na spis prazsky*, 1519).

¹²⁶ *BL*, p. 85: “Dbal vzdy casu, osoby, místa i příčiny biblického vyprávění a deje.” (*Zpravy knezké*, 9). See also Müller, I:462.

¹²⁷ *Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum*, 1995, p. 14.

¹²⁸ Unless otherwise noted, details of Luke’s ecclesiology are from Molnár’s excellent summary in *BL*, 72-80. Additional material from *BL* 11-18 will be footnoted separately. See also Müller, I:459-462 for a complementary account.

¹²⁹ *BL*, 73: “Podstatná církev není nic jiného nez soubor tech kdo mají skutecnou účastnost podstatných věcí krestanské víry.”

¹³⁰ *BL*, 74: “Není tedy sama sobe cílem, nemá pravdu sama v sobe, ano nemá ani pusobivost z vlastních prostredku. Je konkrétní církvi, v jejímz lune zije Krestan svuj bytostne obecenstevní zivot.”

¹³¹ *BL*, p. 75: “Zivot víry nemuze byti zit v osamelosti. Obecenství svatých vytrhuje cloveka ze sobecké izolovanosti.”

¹³² *BL*, p. 12.

¹³³ *BL*, p. 13: “Koinonickou povahu krestanského poznání zredukoval tedy Lukás na spolecne, obecenstevní naslouchání zvesti Písma, spojené se sourucivym zavázáním se k poslusnosti.”

¹³⁴ *BL*, p. 75.

¹³⁵ *BL*, p. 75.

¹³⁶ *BL*, 76. “Církev rímská není obecná, by Buh

krome ní nemel ouduo a spasencuo.”

¹³⁷ *BL*, 78. “Obnovení církve netoliko melo, ale z potreby byti muselo.”

¹³⁸ *BL*, 15. “autentickým a legitimním.”

¹³⁹ *BL*, 80. “Podle Bratra Lukáše je církev semper reformanda. Jest treba vzdy znovu zkoumati, vyhovuje-li merítku podstatnych i sluzebnych pravd krestanskych, dosvedcenych v Pisme svatém a v apostolském vyznání víry.”

¹⁴⁰ *BL*, 16 f. “Pozornost venovaná vsednímu zivotu, jíz se Bratří a Lukás s nimi vyznacovali, je teprve dusledkem urcitého theologického presvedcení, jez není adogmatické proto, ze je také ‘praktické.’”

¹⁴¹ *BL*, 17. “Bohosloví, jsouc lidskym pokusem o interpretaci zjevení, nemuze je obsáhnouti v plnosti.”

¹⁴² *BL*, 18. “Neslo tu o katolické imprimatur, nybrz spíše o vyjádření, ze bohosloví je z církve a pro církev....”

¹⁴³ See *BL*, 76 f.

¹⁴⁴ See Müller, I:297.

¹⁴⁵ *BL*, 115.

¹⁴⁶ Müller, I:297.

¹⁴⁷ *BL*, 118; Müller, I:297 f. For an earlier view, see Gerhard von Zezschwitz in his *Die Katechismen der Waldenser und Böhmisches Brüder* (Erlangen, 1863).

¹⁴⁸ Müller, I:481, 503 f. See also Molnár, “Luc de Prague édifiant la communauté,” *Communio Viatorum* 5 (1962), 193.

¹⁴⁹ *BL*, 120-133.

¹⁵⁰ Müller, I:481.

¹⁵¹ Rícan, 103.

¹⁵² Rícan, 104; *BL*, 118.

¹⁵³ Edmund de Schweinitz, “Catechism of the Bohemian Brethren,” *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 3 (1869): 90-106.

¹⁵⁴ De Schweinitz, “Catechism,” 99.

¹⁵⁵ Molnár, “Luc de Prague,” 192: Citations of Molnár's remarks on Luke's hymns are from this source.

¹⁵⁶ Molnár, 192. “Le fait même d'avoir composé des cantiques montre combien, malgré son intellectualisme prononcé, Luc pensait aussi par son coeur.”

¹⁵⁷ Molnár, 193. “C'est elle qui est le pivot de la piété de Luc.”

Letters to the Editor

Dr. Freeman begins his article in the Summer 2005 issue of *9 pt*, “The Ground is not the center of our lives nor is it an explanation of everything.” The Ground of the Unity is a statement of belief, Dr. Freeman affirms. It is not an essential of Moravian belief. Essentials are found in scripture. Dr. Freeman: “The community of the Church and its wisdom is a wonderful place where you can pursue your personal journey...” In the same issue, Dr. O’Connor notes the value of The Ground as an educational tool. The Reverend Rights is “thankful for the fact that I can point to something that tells me what the Moravian Church believes.” The Reverend Motel lists a host of specifically Moravian characteristics and challenges us to find ways to improve upon The Ground. Dr. Atwood encourages us to respond. The Reverend Wilde reminds us of the occasional pitfalls of free and open discussion.

I too admire “The Ground of the Unity” and agree with all of these gentlemen. We should relish the Moravian Church’s almost unique commitment to “the continual search for sound doctrine.” However, I wonder if we really mean it? For example, as a curious person by nature, I have looked into the academic search for the historical Jesus. There are troves of research and commentary from the last three hundred years. Modern means of study like archeology, history, linguistics, and even satellite imagery have opened new fields of knowledge. The discoveries at Nag Hammadi and Qumran have opened rich, new sources for “the continual search for sound doctrine.” In a way, these sources give us permission, so to speak, to consider ways of looking at the gospel(s) that do not always conform to standard Christian churches’ ideas. Is there room for serious (even radical) discussion like that in the promise of The Ground of the Unity? I wonder. Can the Moravian Church lead in this regard?

— John Scepanski, Christian Faith Moravian Church, DeForest, Wisconsin

Let me begin with a quote: “Nevertheless, there was not complete equality of the sexes among the Moravians.” Douglas Shantz, *The Hinge*, 12.1, Spring 2005, p. 13.

My suggestion to Dr. Shantz is that there *still is* not complete equality, especially within the pages of *The Hinge*. While I have appreciated the forum offered by *The Hinge*, and its ability to bring some within the Moravian community to a table of complex conversation, I continue to be disturbed that those responsible for recruiting contributors are unable (unwilling?) to bring more female voices to the table. To an article which discusses, among other things, the unusual support of women in leadership roles during the 18th century church you were able to find only one out of five responders who are female. Does this not seem insufficient?

Just as importantly, the paucity of female contribution to your pages is not a problem evident in merely this one issue, but continues back to the earliest days of the publication. I remember, in particular, one issue devoted to Moravian worship which included no female respondents at all. And while there have been several such issues, in which no women wrote for the journal, there has never been an issue, to my knowledge, in which only women wrote. The most recent issue of *The Hinge*, which discussed the *Ground of the Unity*, there were, again no women writing or responding. (Is the *Ground of the Unity*, perhaps irrelevant for Moravian women?) It seems that we have indeed not only failed to make progress from the halcyon days of the 18th century but have, in some places, fallen into a state of abysmal self-denial about who we are supposed to be.

Let me conclude with two challenges.

- 1) In the near future, schedule two (one won’t do it) issues in which only women write and respond.
- 2) Try harder to provide gender balance in all your issues. Please!!

— Andrew Meckstroth, Pastor, Castleton Hill Moravian Church, Staten Island, NY

Featured Sermon

A Good Place To Be Sick

Galatians 4: 12-20 and especially vs. 13;

Alton B. Pollard, III

Allow me to set the scene. You are in the hospital. You had a medical emergency on yesterday and spent the night in intensive care. You have been taken to your semi-private room. There is a stranger lying in the bed next to you. Their curtain is half-drawn and you don't know what they've got. The air smells of masked sickness — sterile, disinfected, hygienic, and medicinal. You're becoming increasingly aware of the aching pain in your own abdomen and the mass of tubes criss-crossing your body, inserted in your nose and arms and God knows where else. There is a bag filled with something clear hanging over your head. Flowers sit on the window ledge. A card is on the table. They are expressions of love and concern.

Things are becoming a little clearer, much to your regret. The room to your door is slightly ajar. You see in the hallway two people talking. It is the doctor and your minister. What are they talking about? They look rather serious. They're probably talking about me, my condition. You are sure that's what they are talking about. You are wrong. In fact, what they are discussing has nothing to do with you at all. They are talking about a community fundraiser to be held at the hospital.

What disturbs you, what really disturbs you is that you are experiencing what it is like to be other. What was familiar, customary, and friendly in life has collapsed and given way to new and discomfiting sensations: invisibility, powerlessness, loneliness, suffering, separation, anonymity, a demoralizing sense of isolation. Others now control your destiny; the experts will determine your fate.

You are disturbed by the doctor and minister. They are out in the hallway talking, away from you, not conferring with you, not consulting you, in no way acknowledging you. You are disturbed because you have embraced the witness of the church that you are a part of the divine equation, that somehow in the ultimate scheme of things your life matters. But you have no influence here. Not in the hospital, not on the ward with its attendants, nurses, social workers, residents, chaplains,

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administrators, and assorted other health care personnel. A vast and impersonal network of care surrounds you and nobody knows your name.

I remember growing up in the church. It was a large church, a prominent and respected church. My father was superintendent of the Sunday school and my mother was a teacher. On occasion, my father would take me with him on one of his visits to the homes of Sunday school members. We stopped at the home of some new members of the church, a family of twelve that had moved up north from Mississippi with little more than the clothes on their back. Another family, whose story was analogous to the first, lived under the same roof. The mother of the second family was recently widowed and had several young children of her own. The house was filled with chaos and pandemonium and my youthful eyes and ears eagerly took it all in. The father, the only adult male in the house, was away at work. From what I gathered, he was always at work, going from one job to the next, seven days a week, with little time to sleep at all. In a house filled with such clear and pressing need he was their primary means of financial support.

The two families came to church every Sunday. They were always poorly dressed, always rather unsightly, and always they stayed to themselves. Like clockwork the father would fall asleep by the time the sermon began. The members would quietly disapprove. After awhile the family left our church, they did not remain very long. They simply were not made to feel welcome. My father tried. A few others tried. But mostly the church did not care. I learned a valuable lesson about church from those two families and especially from the father. I learned from him that the church is called to be a place where the wicked cease from troubling and where the weary can be at rest. The church is called to minister to those who are chronically and terminally distressed. The church was this family's only refuge in a hostile and chaotic world. It was their Balm in Gilead, a healing place, a salve for their wounded souls. And we who are the church, suffering from our own sickness, let them down.

Now the doctor and minister are talking about you. And this is what they are saying: "The treatment went well but there will be a long period of healing. Her only family is a husband on disability who can't attend to her like he wants to. There will have to be other people helping. She will need to be encouraged some days to keep her from getting too discouraged. Help her to get her exercise. Someone is going to have to run errands. Someone is going to have to pick up prescriptions. Someone is going to have to bring her some food. Someone will need to sit with her, talk with her, watch television with her, and discuss the news with her. Someone will need to be there for her. Someone has to do all this." And the doctor turns to the minister and says, "Now look, doctors don't have congregations but pastors do. And healing takes an entire community, so reverend you are going to have to take the initiative now." They are talking about you and about what it takes for you to get well.

In the book of Galatians 4 we find a good and healthy conversation about the church. It is a strangely worded passage, and this is the way it goes (vs. 13): “You know it was because of an illness that I preached to you the first time...” What does that say? It says something that I never imagined saying in my life. I have said, “If I had not been sick I would have preached.” I have even said, “Although I was sick I preached.” But I have never said, “Because I was sick I preached.” This is an extraordinary word coming from the apostle Paul. Notice how positively he regards his own estate. “You know it was because of an illness that I preached to you the first time...” As disturbing as it may be and as quietly as it is kept, there is nothing that happens to us in life that does not present an opportunity for growth, transformation, and change. “It was because of my sickness that I was brought up to recover in the mountains of Galatians,” apparently that was the case. “And good things happened. You extended to me good will, hospitality, warmth, generosity, kindness, compassion, and love – and I knew this was a good community in which to be sick.”

In my journey over the years, across the miles, and in many places lived, I have always sought out that all too rare community of faith, the church that cuts across all of the barriers that fragment and fracture and divide, the congregation that was always willing to risk being fully present to suffering, infected, denied and rejected others. My sisters and brothers, I offer you these words. We live in a mobile, dynamic, and ever-changing world. Whoever you are, whatever you are doing, no matter where you live or your station in life, should you move from this place and relocate to another, always be sure to find a faith community where it is good to be sick, because at one time or another and perhaps even just now you will be.

Not all churches are good places to be sick. Some years ago I attended my uncle’s funeral in the Mississippi delta. My uncle had been a member of longstanding in one of the area’s local churches. He was a leader in the church and was often out visiting the sick. Then one day a car accident permanently disabled him. It was bad enough that he lost his job but worse when he lost his standing in the church. In the words of my aunt, the very congregation to whom he had given his all abandoned him in his hour of greatest need. Unable to endure life’s pain any longer, my uncle committed suicide. The pastor of the church refused to do the funeral because, according to his reading of the scriptures, suicide was an abomination before the Lord. Another minister agreed to conduct the service and promptly tried to preach my uncle into hell. Before the minister could finish his message of condemnation, my grandmother stood up. “You did not know my son. God did not give you those words.” Church, in all our ways, with one another, let us always be careful to care.

Paul said to the Galatians, “You have a good place for a person to be sick. And the remarkable thing about it is you did not associate my status with anything demonic. You did not receive me with defensiveness or revulsion or anything negative.” They could have. Two thousand years ago it was common to associate illness with badness of character just as it was common to associate good

health with godliness and goodness. Tragically, the same thing happens with money and success in our own age. The prosperity gospel has given rise to a new and impoverished interpretation of health and wealth. Material wealth is associated with virtue. Money is a consequence of devotion. Finances are a sign of divine favor. Riches are righteous. Just name it and claim it. Bad things do not happen to good people. This is a cross-less Christianity.

Do we really make such easy correlations between sick-bad, healthy-good, poor-bad, rich-good? No, we don't do that. But what's remarkable is that *in the first century* there was a community of people that said difference is not associated with any demon. And so Paul did not offend them, they did not stigmatize or avoid him, they did not sit by and say let's watch him die. He is bound to be a bad person to be this sick. This is most remarkable because here is an apostle who is preaching the suffering and dying Jesus and he himself is sick! Now a sick apostle preaching a crucified Jesus doesn't exactly instill confidence in most of us. Galatia is a remarkable community. "Your sickness put us to the test Paul, but we were not offended. We thought no less of you for whom you were and are." And Paul said, "I know. You treated me as a child of God. As one of God's own. As Christ himself. It is a wonderful place to be sick."

Paul said, "You wanted so much for me to be well." Notice he did not get well. In the scriptures, he never got well. He carried around in his body the dying of Jesus. He was never well. But the church at Galatians wanted so much for him to get well. He said, "You would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. But it would not help." This is an aching, compassionate, caring, giving community. And now he says, sadly the tables have turned, and you are the one who is sick. Not physically sick so much, but a church that is torn up, conflicted, adversarial, even violent, disrespecting each other, dividing into small groups, turning God's children away. It is no longer a healthy place to be sick. And therefore, he said, I am again in pain but it is a different pain. It is like the pain of a woman writhing and turning and sweating and groaning in the throes of childbirth and she cannot give birth. She cannot have the baby. My little children...

If there is really anything any of us look for in life it is a place to live, a place to raise our family, a place to be in community, a place where we are accepted, a good place where we can be sick, and at long last a place where we can die. All of us are in some manner sick and shattered or dead and dying and what God requires from us is nothing less than to learn to be unfailingly present with and to and for one another in the midst of the sickness and pain that is our church, our world, our selves. We need a sacred space, you and I, a safe place called community, a place we can call home — whether the church, mosque, synagogue or temple. Young and old, rich and poor, black and white, gay and straight, male and female, abled and disabled, believer and non-believer, Republican and Democrat, HIV/AIDS and cancer-laden, we stand deeply in need of relationship, we need each other, we need this you and I, we cannot live without it. The church is a good place to be sick, for we are called by a God who is faithful. In spite of ourselves we are called, to minister one to another, in and out

of pain, during sickness and in health, through love and loss, from this life to the next. From this day forward, with arms outstretched, and hearts open wide, whosoever will, let them come. None of us can make it on our own. Our own Maya Angelou told us that...

Lying, thinking
Last night
How to find my soul a home
Where water is not thirsty
And bread loaf is not stone
I came up with one thing
And I don't believe I'm wrong
That nobody,
But nobody
Can make it all alone.

Now if you listen closely
I'll tell you what I know
Storm clouds are gathering
The wind is gonna blow
The human race is suffering
And I can hear the moan,
'Cause nobody,
I mean nobody
Can make it all alone.¹

Amen.

(endnotes)

¹ Maya Angelou, *The Complete Collected Poems* (New York: Random House, 1994), pp. 74-5.

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Keeping Faith's Promises to our Daughters: Conversations about Justice for Women

March 10-11, 2006
Fairview Moravian Church, Winston-Salem, NC

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