

THE HINGE

*A Journal of Christian Thought
for the Moravian Church*

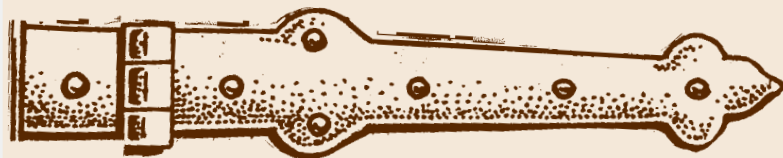
**“That’ll Preach!”
The Plight and Promise of Theology Now**
Stephen Simmons

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Notes from the Editor

Theology. It is such a daunting word that many people stop reading as soon as they see it. I can’t say that I blame them. I often stop reading as soon as I see the word macroeconomics or neurology or fiduciary. Every institution has its own way of speaking and writing. The church is no different. We speak a language that helps us communicate within the church, but which confuses outsiders. We call this language theology but often it is just “church-speak.” Increasingly, church-speak does not even communicate inside the church. Books with *Theology* in the title do not sell. The word puts people off even though they want to discuss theology. But the vigorous sales of books by people like Richard Dawkins, Diana Eck, Karen Armstrong, Elaine Pagels, and Bart Ehrman demonstrate a hunger to examine Christian history and doctrine. Even though some of these authors are opposed to Christianity, they are addressing theological issues.

Theology. Is it really just a game of rearranging the jargon of church-speak, or does it actually communicate something of importance to those in the church and outside of the church? Is theology just an esoteric mind trip for the high priests who have become masters of divinity or doctors of philosophy? *Theology.* What is it good for?

Steve Simmons addresses this vital question and argues that theology can be and should be a useful part of congregational life. But first, pastors and their flock need to rethink what theology is. Theology is Greek for “God-Talk,” which is different from church-speak. God-talk should not be the alienating jargon of the priestly illuminati; it should be a conversation of the people of God with and about God. Theology is serious reflection on the questions that confront all humans; questions about life, meaning, and vocation. *Christian* theology should be an on-going discussion within the community of faith about God, the church, and God’s intention for the church. The contemporary church can engage in meaningful and faithful theological reflection and discussion by refocusing on the questions of importance in people’s lives.

Our respondents include a lay person who is a professor accustomed to a different type of academic jargon; a pastor in England, where the context for Christian thought and life are quite different; an American pastor who has promoted theological reading in his congregation; and a specialist in Christian education of children.

This issue includes a very special feature. At the annual “Mission Band Lovefeast” at Home Church in January 2007 four young people spoke about their summer mission trips. Two of them worked with AIDS orphans in Africa. *The Hinge* is privileged to share their reflections in this issue. We also have reviews of three books that deal with the intersection of theology and the world. Remember, *The Hinge* is now online at www.moravianseminary.edu.

“That’ll Preach!”

The Plight and Promise of Theology Now

Dr. Stephen Simmons

There is room in a rich person’s enclosure for all kinds of animals. — African proverb

There is a great mystery at the heart of the world just waiting to be expressed. — Fred Rogers

Some months ago, Conan O’Brien’s late night talk show featured Chicago-based rock band Wilco, who, of all the songs they might have sung in that prestigious venue, chose one called “Theologians,” which begins, “Theologians... they don’t know nothing about my soul.”¹ That’s pretty interesting in itself (notwithstanding the slur against members of my particular guild). What’s even more interesting is that the song goes on:

I’m going away
Where you will look for me
Where I’m going you cannot come
No one’s ever gonna take my life from me
I lay it down.

“Where I’m going you cannot come?” “I lay it down?” Uh-oh. Although the fact may be lost on a general audience that doesn’t know the Bible, and John’s gospel in particular, it is clear just who is doing the speaking here.

Inlitterati lumen fidei
God is with us everyday
That illiterate light
Is with us every night

Not your average rock song.
They thin my heart with little things
And my life with change
Oh in so many ways
I find more missing every day.

This was Wilco’s chance to make a big splash on late night TV, and they chose to do a song called... “Theologians”? Not only that, but they encoded it with biblical references, almost literally in the name, and certainly in the voice, of Jesus.

Who is the audience here? An intriguing question in itself, and all the more intriguing because the answer might be “folks like us”! I have heard these kinds of complaints about theologians and their works echoed in the church, among both Christians whose pastors are seminary trained and Christians whose pastors are raised up from within congregations and learn the craft of ministry from seasoned practitioners in the field.

To illustrate, just try scheduling an adult education course in your church entitled, “The Theology of...” or “Theology and...” and see

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what happens. The question I want to address in this essay is, to put it broadly, this: Why is theology so often perceived as an impediment, if not an actual threat, to the life of the church, and what can be done about it?

This is a frankly exploratory piece. It grows out of my experience with several faith communities who haven’t always been in deep conversation with each other but whom I esteem highly and regard with deep affection, although I can’t claim extensive experience with all of them, and am eager for (gentle) correction from those who can. I am a white male Presbyterian pastor with a PhD in Christian Theology from the University of Chicago who is privileged to work at Moravian Theological Seminary and, over the past three years, with a number of African-American pastors in northeastern Pennsylvania. I hope here to map out some of the territory we have been exploring together in recent days.

Theology, in the form of controversy over doctrine, surely is the arena where Christianity has historically been a contact sport and, too often, a blood sport. It has been the playground for elitism and obscurantism (and those are the nice words), and has occasioned countless bitter divisions in the church from the first centuries of its existence to the present. In the training of pastors, theology has often been thought of as a kind of hazing ritual inflicted upon seminarians who might otherwise have studied something worthwhile. I have lost track of the number of pastors I have heard bemoan the fact that they were required to read Karl Barth when they could have been learning something useful like how to balance the congregation’s budget for the coming year or how to settle church fights.

And yet, “theology matters,” as the current saying has it. We are commanded, in fact, to love God with all our mind, as well as heart, soul, and strength. Coupled with his insistence that the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom is Paul’s injunction to worship God with our minds as well as our spirits, and his exhortation in Romans 12 to make our bodies a living sacrifice to God as our “reasonable” worship (NRSV) or “your proper worship as rational beings” (TNIV).

Aside from such lofty considerations, there are more practical ones. Like most of us, when the church catches its nourishment on the run, it tends to load up on junk food (from the health and wealth gospel in its various guises to the creepy Hollywood apocalypticism that trades in the Prince of Peace for the more marketable Jesus as action figure), much to the detriment of the body. Serious theological reflection, like good digestion, takes time and energy.

We can only run our race badly if we don’t pay attention to proper nutrition. Surely the Logos, the very Word by whom, in whom, and for whom all things were made, deserves nothing less than our best and most careful thinking. Further, in the absence of some kind of epitomization of the essentials of Christian faith, we risk unconsciously adopting an informal canon within the canon that reflects only our own preferences and biases and makes God an accessory to our own “devices and desires,” in the words of the old Book of Common Prayer.

It seems to me that the widespread aversion to theology in the church stems from a number of related impulses:

- The fear of the faith's being hijacked by an intellectual elite, and the substitution of dry abstractions for living encounter (this, of course, goes all the way back to the arguments about whether non-scriptural words like *homoousion* could legitimately be used to explicate biblical concepts). There is also a fear, I think, of subjecting the Gospel to an alien and predetermined political or ideological agenda, and this fear exists on both the left and the right. For example, in the Black church, as Dale Andrews points out, there is considerable resistance toward the militant and exclusionary nature of much Black theology in contrast to the inclusionary and pastoral character of Black folk religion.²

- The fear of theology has to do, not only with the endless “wrangling over words” against which Timothy 2:14 cautions us, but with the concern that the more we tidy up our thinking about God, the more our theology will become only a distant echo of our first love (think of the lover who begins to ask himself, concerning everything his beloved says, “I wonder what she meant by that.”). Analysis having effectively stifled the Good News, there will be nothing left to preach that isn't subject to the death by a thousand equivocations that Princeton sociologist of religion Richard Fenn calls “seminar talk.”

- The current craving for experience over explanation, as evidenced, for example, by the near-incantatory nature of much contemporary praise music; I often hear the complaint from

more traditional folk that praise music contains “bad theology” — in some ways, I think the complaint is beside the point. Lots of folks don't particularly care what the music says, as long as it invokes the name of Jesus and you can dance to it — or, put less facetiously, they are hungry for a direct encounter with the Lord, and often find it lacking in traditional worship.

- The sense that the “second order” language of theology cannot be constitutive and sustaining of community in the way that first-order language is (hence the feeling that more recent translations are less “scriptural” than the KJV — the point is not only the language, but what is “said” by the tremendously powerful role the Authorized Version has played in the formation of the church in the English-speaking world, notably in the Black community, where its cadences have validated the role of the preacher; as Henry Mitchell puts it, “the Bible filled the void once occupied by an awesomely authoritative oral tradition.”³

On the other hand, it can be argued that failure to reflect carefully upon Christian tradition results in unformed and immature faith, at best, and, at worst, in covert and disingenuous “theologies” that actually undermine the message of the Gospel. In this connection, we might note the church's frequent captivity to the surrounding culture; for example, highly sophisticated “biblical” arguments have historically been marshaled in support of slavery, the suppression of women in the church, and other practices now seen to be profoundly sub-Christian.⁴ The point is not, after all, whether one “does theology,” but how and to what ends one does it.

Having said all this, I wonder if much of our trouble comes from a misconstrual of what the proper business of theology really is. Perhaps the task of theology is not so much to build an unassailable wall against the intellectual “stumpers” posed by skeptics or the existential questions raised by the hazards of life, as it is to express and articulate a prior experience of faith, to recover a sense of the wholeness that was there all the time.

A number of years ago, *The Whole Earth Catalog* had on its back cover a picture of the world with the caption, “We can’t put it together. It is together.” The challenge is to maintain a healthy cross-fertilization between the first-order language of primary experience and the second-order language of theological discourse, and so to do our theologizing, as it were, from the inside out as well as the outside in. Perhaps we can take this as our point of departure in mapping our theological terrain, and, in this, I would suggest that we take some cues from the eighteenth-century German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher.

When I first began this article, I thought would be intriguing to discuss a theologian who was “shared” by Moravian and Reformed (in my case Presbyterian) Christians, and in developing it my original intuition has been confirmed. The reasons for this choice may not be immediately self-evident. Schleiermacher? On the one hand, this “Father of modern theology” is often depicted as the one, above all, who gave away the store of Christian faith to the secular Enlightenment, one who believed, as Karl Barth said, that we could get to God by “speaking of man in a loud voice.”⁵ Worse yet, he is the author of *The Christian*

Faith, a formidably intellectual book that stands alongside Calvin’s *Institutes*, Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, and Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* as one of the fullest and most systematically developed expressions of Protestant theology. If theology is the crime under investigation, Schleiermacher is surely a prime suspect.

And yet Schleiermacher himself took theology to be nothing less than the explication of the continuous and intimate awareness of God that was perfected in Jesus Christ and is presently manifested in the proclamation and life of the church. In the proper conduct of theology, the church embraces Paul’s amazing claim that “We have the mind of Christ” (I Cor. 2:16). Schleiermacher himself had nothing but scorn for the kind of theology that consisted in the clever interlocking of abstract propositions divorced from the vital relationship with God exemplified in Jesus, and that he saw as all too prevalent among the Protestant scholastics of his own time: “And what else do you take this deduction and weaving together of ideas to be, which neither live nor correspond to any living thing?... Hence the dominion of the mere notion; hence the mechanical erections of your systems instead of an organic structure; hence the vain juggling with analytical formulas, in which, whether categorical or hypothetical, life will not be fettered.”⁶ “Wrangling over words,” indeed!

We should note from the start that Schleiermacher does not pose, as the alternative to this arid speculation, the kind of individual introspection that these days is vaguely described as “spiritual”; the “God consciousness” he has in mind is always mediated through life

in the community of faith and in the world. He is clear that God comes to us through the events and phenomena of everyday life. His view is not “supernaturalist,” and he, like most Protestant theologians, was leery of using the term “mystical” to describe religious experience, because of what he considered its individualistic and otherworldly connotations. It is the church as body of Christ that has the mind of Christ.

The point here is not merely to psychologize the experience of Christ (contrary to Barth’s criticism), but, so to speak, to “operationalize” it so that it demonstrates a patterning of life. Borrowing a term from Richard R. Niebuhr, we might say that Schleiermacher’s theology is not “Christocentric” so much as “Christomorphic”—it is a modeling of Christ.⁷ In this, Schleiermacher reflects his formative experience with the Moravian communities at Herrnhut, Niesky, and Barby, where, as James David Nelson puts it: “To be in the fullest sense possible a representation of the Savior both among themselves and before the world was deemed the sole consideration in the life and structure of such a settlement.”⁸

Theology, for Schleiermacher, is first and foremost incarnational, both in Christ’s epitomizing God and in the church’s epitomizing Christ. Above all, it is the act of preaching that constitutes the locus of the re-presentation of Christ in the church, for the Lord himself was most effectively present in his preaching and teaching. “The entire effectiveness of the Redeemer himself was conditioned by the communicability of his self-consciousness by means of speech, and Christianity has, in the same way, always and everywhere spread through proclamation alone.” (*Glaubenslehre*, 15.2)⁹ Let

there be any confusion about academic theology’s secondary and derivative status, he goes on to say, “The dogmatic procedure has reference entirely to preaching, and only exists in the interest of preaching.”¹⁰

This is not to demean the role of theology, since, while preaching is to be done in everyday language, it is also to be informed by a carefully articulated system of doctrine.

Indeed, eloquence alone can be pernicious in the service of false teaching. The point is that while preaching presumes such a system, it does not display it directly. The emphasis in preaching is to be upon lived coherence, and not merely upon logical consistency. Drawing upon his life with the Moravians, Schleiermacher argues that the life of a religious community and, indeed, the life of every individual within it, embodies the witness of Christ in a particular way (this is, in fact, one reason why different versions of Christian truth can amiably coexist).

Consequently, as Terence Tice has put it: “This general understanding of human beings and of their diverse relationships with God helped make Schleiermacher a truly ecumenical theologian. For him, ‘speaking the truth in love,’ a motto for the full array of ministry in his eyes, did not entail rejecting all but one expression of the truth.”¹¹

In current parlance, Schleiermacher understood all Christian truth (and, in fact, all truth) to be contextual; and it is especially here, I believe, that we can take some worthwhile cues from several African-American theologians and pastoral counselors in describing “God consciousness.” For Schleiermacher, it was at this

juncture that Christianity could press its claims against, variously, Enlightenment rationalism, an anti-intellectual Pietism, and Romanticism. Briefly stated, for Schleiermacher theology was properly grounded, not in the rational mind detached from its life in the body and in community, nor in a solitary emotionalism, but rather in the consciousness of God as manifested both in the human heart and in the concrete life of a particular community of faith.

In this connection, to frame the issue in more contemporary terms, James Cone reminds us that the fundamental theological question for the Black church has always been, not so much, “Does God exist?” as “Does God care?” This, I would suggest, is actually very close to Schleiermacher’s sense of the core question. Especially in his later and more systematic writings, Schleiermacher based his theology on what he called the human feeling of “absolute dependence” upon something other than itself — in short, upon God. I would argue that it is the way in which this question of absolute dependence is framed that is determinative of whether theology “matters” in the life of the church, and that academic theologians can rightly stake a claim to be taken seriously if, and only if, they attend seriously to the real existential questions posed by the community in its life together.

In a sense, what is at stake here is whether the existentialist European theologies of the twentieth century continue to dominate the theological discourse of the twenty-first, or whether a new theological idiom is called for. I apologize if this may seem, to some readers, to be covering well-trodden territory (aren’t we over

Bultmann and Tillich yet?); but I think that these theologies both have permanent lessons to teach us, on the one hand, and that we need to reframe them if we are to make theology accessible and relevant to the church of the present moment.

Insofar as they have convinced us, once and for all, that all theology is “located,” situational, embedded in a particular place and time, they have performed an inestimable service to the theological enterprise. But to the extent that they have oriented themselves around such categories as “anxiety” and “the quest for meaning” (at least in a kind of middle class suburban sense), they have failed to address the core concerns of enormous numbers of Christians who need to know, most fundamentally, that God loves them and has saved them from oppression, sin and death.

I would suggest that most Christians do, indeed, face serious existential questions, but that for many of them the operative categories are much more those of self-worth and shame than they are of “anxiety.” Put somewhat differently, the fundamental question is not so much that of existence, either ours or God’s (*ex-sistere*, of course, meaning “to stand outside”), but of making one’s way in a world that largely denies one’s value and selfhood; the operative categories here become, not so much finitude and guilt, as oppression and shame (one may also think here of such terms as *han* in Korean Minjung theology). The motto of a theology responding to this question would be less Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am” than Jesse Jackson’s “I am somebody!”

Pastoral counselor Edward Wimberly has outlined this kind of theology in his description of Jesus' God-consciousness as, most fundamentally, an assertion of his worth as a child of God in the face of society's persistent attempt to shame him.¹² Similarly, Bruce Chilton has argued that Jesus' status in his community as a *mamzer* — a child of uncertain parentage — was fundamentally determinative of what he understood himself to be as God's beloved Son.¹³ I would argue that for the many Christians who sense their place in the "new world order" to be precarious and provisional — not in a cosmic sense, but in the very particular sense that they may find a pink slip on their desk when they come in next Monday morning — this could be the basis of a theology that really matters (and, we might note with New Testament scholars like Bruce Malina, that likely brings us much closer to New Testament ways of thinking than a theology that bases its assertions upon the "Cartesian self"). Such a self-understanding is inextricably bound up with culture, since one not only feels shame but is "shamed." I also suggest that African-American pastors and theologians, whose work has been forged in the crucible of discrimination and oppression, have much to teach the broader church in this regard.

Everybody asks existential questions, but, as the saying goes, "Where you stand depends on where you sit." The real question is not whether one "does theology," but from where one does theology. As the Rev. Cecil Williams of Glide Memorial Methodist Church in San Francisco puts it, "When I was a child I learned that church was the place where you went to work on your stuff." Can anyone doubt that

the problem with both church and theology, for many people in our "spiritual but not religious" age, is their disappointment at not having found a sympathetic and trustworthy community in which, in Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they could work on their stuff? On the other hand, how many pastors have burned out because they were constantly expected to be dispensers of answers and defenders of God, rather than trusted friends who could in the breach with a brother or sister when there simply was no answer — or better, when in the words of the old graffito, "Christ is the answer," not to this or that specific question, but to the question posed by life itself?

At this point, Schleiermacher provides some useful cues, arguing that the preacher is properly less the expositor of doctrine than the embodiment of Christ-consciousness in and on behalf of the community. In his understanding,

The human Word that so renders Christ is both supernatural and natural, both divine and human. The Word arises from the being of God in Christ, but it only expresses itself in the concrete particularity of human life. Preaching then, itself, is analogous to the person of Christ: it is human and divine, historical and ideal. Hearers of the preached Word, under the appropriate conditions, encounter not a feeble human speaker but the Redeemer himself. In this sense, preaching is a re-presentation of the self-presentation of Christ.¹⁴

And yet, at this point, we may reasonably ask, why should this responsibility rest solely upon the shoulders of the pastor? If, in fact, the church is itself the body of Christ (a proposition with which Schleiermacher himself would

surely agree), then why should it not be the congregation’s responsibility to model Christ in proclamation as well as in action? In this model, the preacher would be freed from playing all the positions to assume the role of coach (thus, in many instances, nudging the members of the church to talk as good a game as they play). Actually, Schleiermacher himself opens a door for us here. In his view,

religious language is mutual or reciprocal in that no one finite being can fully represent the Infinite. And since the purpose of religious language is to mediate between finitude and the Infinite, that mediation will be complete only when every finite being has reflected Infinity in its own mode.¹⁵

Indeed, these “modalities” of religious language will involve revelation, invitation, celebration, and conviction/confession (in both senses of the terms) as contrasted with the language of argument/persuasion/demonstration, leading the hearer to respond in faith to the lived experience of Jesus Christ rather than being forced to a conclusion. We are in the realm of evocation and invocation, of presentation and expression and performance, not of analysis, here. This is theology as “God talk” in the most direct and resonant way of which human beings, in the image and likeness of God, are capable.

There will certainly be a time for the second-order work of theological reflection, and this will constantly have as its norm the scriptural witness to Jesus Christ as explicated in the light of the best scholarship available. There will always be a need to “test the spirits,” and to balance the sense of the community with the legitimate claims of the

individual conscience. But these moments will be organically rooted in the primary experience of the community in ways that have yet to be fully explored (the base community experiments of the church in Latin America being an early instance of this kind of approach).

This leads me to the phrase that heads this article, and which I have gratefully absorbed from my Black colleagues. It comes when, in a moment of intense engagement with a text, the group shares a flash of insight and somebody declares, “That’ll preach!” No one could have engineered it, and no one person “owns” it. It is not a logical conclusion. One doesn’t say, “QED,” but “Eureka!” (in the call and response mode of preaching, this is, of course, an indispensable part of the preaching event itself). No one needs to make a case; everybody just knows. I believe this is nothing less than a moment when we experience Christ’s presence in our midst. And, for Schleiermacher, it was the very essence of preaching (and theology, for that matter). It is the product, not so much of a single mind, as of a Mind reflected and refracted through the life experience of the members of the Body.

A final word on the place of theology. It should be clear that none of the preceding could have been said without some pretty intense theological training. But theology, as reflection upon embodied and enacted truth, is at its best when it is done in service, not so much to the classroom or the professional seminar, as to the body of Christ. From Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther, Barth, and the great Orthodox theologians, to contemporaries like Gustavo Gutierrez and Letty Russell, theological giants have seen theology itself as irreducibly

confessional and saturated with prayer. In the end, it is the church itself that does the work of theology. The task of the theologian is to bring us into conversation with both contemporary culture and the “tradition” (and, incidentally, it is amazing how one’s reading of the great theologians deepens and becomes real soul food when we see them as people who, like us, struggled to represent Christ to their worlds in times of turmoil and transition – and what time hasn’t been such a time?).

Where does this leave us? It leaves the theologian (and, by extension, the preacher) in, perhaps, a less exalted but more authentic and useful place. He or she will no longer be the referee, or even the quarterback, but the coach who (informed by a deep knowledge of the theory and history of the game) encourages and guides each member of the team in playing his or her best, as God gives each particular gifts for ministry.

As for the act of preaching, it will become more collaborative, less the fruit of one person’s solitary study and reflection and more a core sample of the ongoing life of the community brought to conscious awareness and expression, and will undoubtedly require new forms and methods.¹⁶ Like the parables of Jesus himself, to go back to a root meaning of the Greek word *parabole*, it will be less a definitive statement than a “venture,” a risk, a conscious and faithful approximation to a truth which, finally, is the fullness of Christ in our midst. And in the process, to borrow once more from Wilco, rather than thinning his heart with “little things,” we may find ourselves dwelling in him in ways that remind us, again and again, that he is with us every day.

(Endnotes)

¹ Wilco. Theologians. *A Ghost is Born* (Nonesuch Records, 2004). <<http://wilcoworld.net/records/ghost.php>>

² Dale Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

³ Henry Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), quoted in Andrews, 18.

⁴ Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), esp. ch. 2.

⁵ Quoted in Brian Gerrish, *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 13.

⁶ Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, tr. John Oman (New York: Harper & Row, 1958).

⁷ *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964), 212.

⁸ James Nelson, *Herrnhut: Schleiermacher’s Spiritual Homeland* (Univ. of Chicago: Ph.D. diss., 1963), 56.

⁹ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. by H. R. MacKintosh and J. S. Steward (London & New York: T & T Clark, 1999), 77-78.

¹⁰ *Glaubenslehre*, 88, quoted in Dawn DeVries, *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 103.

¹¹ Terence Tice, *Schleiermacher* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 22.

¹² Edward Wimberly, *From Shame to Self-Worth: Preaching and Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

¹³ Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2002).

¹⁴ DeVries, 63.

¹⁵ DeVries, 50.

¹⁶ Such an approach has recently been suggested by O. Wesley Allen, *The Homiletic of All Believers: A Conversational Approach to Proclamation and Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

Responses

Sarah Groves

I have read and re-read Dr. Simmons’ article with pleasure. He is attempting to deal with a huge area of thought and practice and to plot a way ahead in for the Church in contemporary society. I’m not sure that Dr. Simmons has fully answered his own question in this essay, but just disentangling the threads of the argument helps us to see the difficult place that we are in as Church now, compared to even twenty years ago. So I welcome his description of his article as exploratory and will look forward to further development of his ideas.

I write as a British Moravian minister working at present in the multicultural and multi-religious atmosphere of an industrial city in Northern England. Although we share a common language I am well aware that British and American societies are very different, and I hope that a different cultural perspective will add to the debate. For example, church going is numerically less common in Britain, and although the faith agenda is unusually high in British politics at the present time, the Christian Church is not usually seen today as a ‘pillar of society’. Rather it often seems to be a dissident voice, criticising various Government policies and unthinking devotion to materialism. From a minority position, the Church challenges society to embrace ‘the other’ amongst us.

In many denominations in the UK, not just in the Moravian Church, many ministers look after two or more congregations. This has the

effect of swamping ministers with administrative tasks and reducing the amount of time that can be spent on theology and Biblical reflection. A response to this from many ministers, as Dr. Simmons noted, is why don’t theological colleges do courses in balancing budgets, management of volunteers, professional fundraising... or (add your own particular problem here). I am sure that this call for multi-disciplinary training completely misses the point about our role as ministers. What we need is more “thinking about God,” studying the Bible and relating it to the situations we and our congregations find ourselves in.

This knowledge of Christian theology, particularly the works of contemporary writers, an understanding of Christian History, and the theology of and practice of other faiths has to become a wellspring that we can draw on when times are dry and hard. We have to know who we are, what shaped us in the past, and how our faith relates to the world around us. Our congregations deserve the best of our hearts and minds. If this knowledge is not deep within us then we have nothing to share with those we serve.

My gut feeling is that it is not just theology that is the problem but a number of other contributing factors. Ministers, certainly in the British Province, have had other work added to our ministry, like barnacles to a ship’s hull, slowing us down so that we become starved of the time to absorb theological input and new ideas. Of course there is also the reluctance of our

congregations with regard to evening meetings or extra meetings on a Sunday which has had the effect of reducing the theological input in the congregation life to a 20 minute slot on a Sunday. This is because our congregations are made up of busy people whose time is precious to them and their families or of the active retired who are doing many other interesting things or much older folk who are not so keen about coming out at night to something that doesn't interest them. Yet, the idea that theology is the work of the community rather than the sole responsibility of the ordained outsider is an insight, often neglected, of our Moravian heritage that Dr. Simmons picks up through his study of Schleiermacher.

So the obvious thing would be to start with issues that have gripped people and look at the theological questions that are associated with them. An example of a passing interest would be the Dan Brown book, *The Da Vinci Code*. A major continuing concern would be the environmental. An issue of particular local importance here in Bradford is how we respond spiritually to devout people of another world faith. We could use theology as the tool to understand the world God has given us rather than proclaiming a particular theology and then using it to mould the world and people to the shape prescribed by it. But this is a pipe dream in our current situation. It requires ministers with time to think, and we are too often judged by what we do, the state of our buildings and budgets, and how compliant our policies are.

Along with the ideas of using theology in a new way must also come a redefining of the role of the Pastor. I like Dr. Simmons' sporting

analogy. Our role must not be to determine and to enforce what people believe, but to encourage them to grow into a fuller knowledge of God so "that with deep roots and firm foundations may you in company with all Gods people be strong to grasp what is the breadth and what is the depth of Christ's love and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge" (Ephesians 3:18-19). So, rather than enforcers of right doctrine, we become educators, encouragers and enablers. Our congregations are encouraged to think for themselves in other spheres of life, and we must help them to apply it in their Christian understanding too.

The problems Dr. Simmons looks at include the problem of why theology is unpopular; how its importance can be transmitted to ministerial students, pastors and congregations; which theologians are relevant for today's pressing concerns. How we do this will need new ways of trying to educate congregations in theological understanding; and most challengingly, encouraging congregations to live as the body of Christ. These issues cannot be ignored and must be confronted because they are at the heart of what it means to be a living Christian community.

The Rev. Sarah Groves is a Moravian pastor serving the Fulneck and Gomersal congregations in the British Province.

Karen Meyers

I found Dr. Steve Simmons’ article fascinating and thought provoking, in the same way that I am fascinated and blessed by sermons or lively Sunday School discussions or books that provoke and stimulate new ways of thinking. In other words, the notion of worshipping God “with our minds as well as our spirits” has always appealed to me. As a result, I was somewhat surprised by the claim that “theology [is] so often perceived as an impediment, if not an actual threat, to the life of the church.”

If, indeed, there is a “widespread aversion” to theology in the church, I suspect it is part and parcel of a more generalized anti-intellectualism in the land. But I also suspect it is because whatever exposure many of us have had to theological discourse has, indeed, involved “the clever interlocking of abstract propositions divorced from the vital relationship with God exemplified in Jesus” that both Simmons and Schleiermacher eschew. I have not read Schleiermacher, but this article certainly makes a compelling argument for examining his work and that of other theologians whose thinking is central, rather than extraneous, to our pursuit of a right relationship with God.

So my interest in Schleiermacher has been piqued. And yet, I’m not likely to go out and buy one of his books. Why? Because, to be quite honest, the thought of reading a nineteenth century German theologian makes me break out in hives. As a lay person, I don’t feel I have the knowledge or training to decode theological discourse on my own; I’m not adverse to theology, but I am certainly intimidated by it.

Like most lay people, I need someone to mediate, interpret, explicate, and, most of all, help me apply that scholarship and wisdom to my own faith journey. I believe many lay people crave such nourishment (I love that Simmons calls it “soul food”) or at least could develop a taste for it. That’s why, as a parishioner, I *do* want my pastor to be thoroughly grounded and educated in theology that will inform, deepen, challenge, and stimulate his or her thinking, so that the message he or she delivers to me — whether through preaching, teaching, individual spiritual counseling, or just by the way he or she lives — reflects that knowledge and in turn nourishes my mind as well as my spirit.

But as a church member, I also need to recognize that such study on the part of a pastor, such “serious theological reflection, like good digestion, takes time and energy,” as Dr. Simmons puts it. In addition to the foundation laid in seminary studies, it takes ongoing individual effort, continuing education, and opportunities for discussion and renewal with other students of theology. It needs to be recognized by church boards and members as part of the pastor’s job.

I was saddened to read that many pastors wish they had been taught how to balance the congregation’s budget instead of how to read Karl Barth, because that speaks to the unreasonable demands we place on them. If we as parishioners expect our ministers to spend their time visiting inactive members, mediating disputes about Sunday School curriculum, camping out with the youth, and cleaning up the kitchen to boot, we can’t very well expect them to also find the time and psychic energy for serious theological exploration. That means we shouldn’t be

surprised if both they and we are malnourished in the faith. I am grateful to Steve Simmons for helping me to think seriously about what our priorities should be.

Dr. Karen Meyers is a member of First Moravian Church in Greensboro, NC.

Truman Dunn

My thanks to *The Hinge* for inviting me to be a respondent to the very thoughtful article by Dr. Simmons concerning the plight and promise of theology in the Church today. I want to begin by commending Steve for bringing the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher to a forum for Moravian theological discourse. The Moravian connection to Schleiermacher's life is, perhaps, our most significant contribution to theology, even if it is somewhat indirect.

While some might disagree, I have found that the "aversion to theology" of which Simmons speaks at the beginning of his article is something we Moravians possess in spades. We Moravians seem to take great pride in saying that ours is a simple faith, unencumbered with the "wrangling of words," (to cite another phrase Simmons uses) which plague other denominations. We often use our long-standing motto about being united only in the few essentials to illustrate what we mean, implying that Christian faith is much simpler than many seek to make it.

It is not surprising, then, that there have been few books of theology written by Moravians in

our more than 550-year history. That, in itself, is quite telling as to how unimportant theology has been to Moravians over the centuries. Instead, we say, you can find our theology in our Easter Morning Liturgy. Never mind that the work of theology would be to understand and discern the meaning of the Easter Morning Liturgy.

Because this is to be a brief response, let me cut to the chase. As I understand what Simmons is trying to say, there have been a number of reasons for the aversion to theology in most of Christianity. Simmons seeks to identify the reasons why, suggesting that many of them are self-inflicted by theologians themselves. Using the voices of Schleiermacher and African-American Christians in particular, Simmons then seeks to demonstrate why he believes "theology matters."

I think Simmons is right when he says that serious theological reflection takes time and energy, and we live in a fast food, instant gratification world. This, in turn, has led to what Simmons describes as a "marketable Jesus," along with health and wealth interpretations of the gospel. The implication, of course, is that few Christians are really interested in serious theological reflection, including most pastors. In my experience, most pastors do not seem to be interested in serious theological reflection, nor do they see the need to do so. Like Simmons, I have also listened to many pastors bemoan having been required to read Karl Barth when they could have been learning something useful such as how to balance a congregation's budget or settle church fights.

And, in my view, it has been the aversion to theology by pastors of local congregations which is the primary, if not singular reason, why most laity don’t see serious, thoughtful and deliberate theological reflection as important or even necessary. Add to that, in our own Moravian context, our long-standing minimizing of the importance of theological reflection, it is no wonder that we Moravians are not accustomed to theological discourse with one another and the result is polarization and lack of civility when there is disagreement.

I would agree with Simmons that theologians can think of themselves as an intellectual elite, substituting abstractions for a living faith. I’m just as weary as the next person when hearing someone drone on about eschatology and hermeneutics, while using words like “salvific.” However, in my view, it is those of us in pastoral leadership who have literally “dumbed down” the laity over the years, feeding them countless “marketable Jesus” sermons and platitudes that allow them to go away feeling warm all over. There, of course, is nothing wrong with warm and uplifting sermons. Yet, in my more than thirty years in the ministry, I have found that many who are out there in the pews are struggling with far deeper questions of faith.

What I have found to be true of so many among our Moravian laity when they are willing to trust you with their doubts and their fears, is that they have more questions than answers. But, they feel a great sense of guilt for having doubts or having questions. We who lead often see ourselves as shepherds and our congregations as the sheep. My own sense is that we pastors aren’t publicly asking questions, thinking, struggling,

or sharing our doubts. That is not the kind of image most pastors want to project. It makes us appear weak or lacking in faith.

About five years ago, I began to offer a Sunday morning class in reading theological works, both classical and contemporary. At first, only a few came. Those who were already interested in struggling with the questions of faith, despite having been discouraged from doing so by pastors or fellow Christians, were thrilled to finally have a community, a place to be open and vulnerable.

These days, the John Hus Class, as it is called, is moving to the largest classroom we have, and it is still not large enough. There has been an almost insatiable hunger among class members to go deeper, but more than that, to share their questions, their doubts, their insights and discernments with others. The sense of community, that “I am not the only one” with these questions or doubts, is the first step in letting go of the guilt they have carried inside for years. Most also admit to a bit of fear, wondering if serious theological reflection might cause them to “lose their faith.” I wonder where that fear might have come from. Those pastors I know who have an aversion to theology have all talked about how their seminary professors tried to destroy their faith and how glad they are to be in the local congregation with real believers.

I realize that the congregation I serve has its own unique context and history. However, I am convinced that our pews are filled with people who, when permitted or encouraged by pastors and church leaders to explore their deepest thoughts and longings, will welcome and

embrace the opportunity to share their hearts and souls with others.

The John Hus Class at Messiah is an extremely diverse group theologically, coming from very different backgrounds. That is why all class members are asked to sign and embrace *The Covenant for Christian Living* as the model for how we reflect and share with one another despite our differences. And, much of our growth in numbers at Messiah has come from those who have left the Church for years, because they longed to go deeper and to not be ridden with guilt for having doubts and questions. We Moravians have long seen “missions” as who we are. Our mission statement at Messiah truly does reflect our mission: “*Messiah Moravian Church seeks to be a window to faith and service in Christ.*”

Brother Simmons, I’m with you! Theology matters. It matters deeply to many, many Christians. Let’s open the windows to faith and allow the Spirit to take us where it will!

The Rev. Dr. Truman Dunn is pastor of the Messiah Moravian Church in Winston-Salem, NC.

Lisa Mullen

Theologians aren’t the only obscure people around. “Have you heard of Wilco?” I asked my husband. “Oh yea, they played with Billy Bragg.” Doing a little hermeneutical Google browsing, I found the rest of the words to *Theologians*, in where I encountered some pretty obscure lines. The little I know of this art/rock genre of singer/

song writers is they sing songs of protest. They sing of the “Common man,” capitalistic bullies, war, and slag heaps. Their version of theology might just ring true with the “pedagogy of the oppressed,” albeit for a limited audience. So my guess is that this is not slur against the guild of theologians, but against anything that smacks of elitism or anyone paid by the “establishment” to think. Maybe we have entered the time when theologians, pastors and teachers are dismissed as irrelevant. For many, it’s a simple issue of who has the power, or perceived power, and, well, who doesn’t.

Some of my most formative years were at the Presbyterian School of Christian Education (P.S.C.E) and Union Theological Seminary. We shared a dining hall and library, and whenever we needed to journey from one campus to another, we would have to “cross the brook,” that is Brook Road. At times that road might as well have been an ocean. Some people on one side of “the brook” viewed P.S.C.E. as a place where students actually used puppets to tell the story, a community for the “not so serious” student. PSCE eyed Union with equal disdain, a place where disconnected, “heady” professors nourish students to focus their energy on mental gymnastics with little or no regard for truly communicating the faith. A goodly portion of these “slurs” were perpetrated by some of the faculty, but perhaps these attitudes were born out of a sin of neglect—neglecting to notice the whole body of Christ. I didn’t feel whole until I “crossed the brook” and attended both schools. For the sake of the congregations we serve, we needed to ask, “how can I communicate this to a kindergartner, a middle schooler, the “person in

the pew?” But this gap seems to be everywhere — between thinking and feeling, theory and practice, priests and laity, academicians and well, the rest of us pastors.

I admit it. I haven’t cracked a book of theology from my seminary days for at least five years. I do miss Brunner, C.S. Song, Moltmann and, maybe even hmmm... Barth. I loved theology. I took eight theology courses, some even at the “playground” they called P.S.C.E. I love ideas, the leaven of intellectual ferment. Theology is like good music. I can’t always remember the tune, but it is beautiful while it lasts. But, there are seasons in our life and, as of late, my diet now consists of books like, *Crazy Busy*, *Overstretched*, *Overbooked and About to Snap*; *Moravian Women’s Memoirs*; *Get out of My Life, but first could you drive me and Cheryl to the mall*; *In Praise of Slowness*, *Challenging the Cult of Speed*; *Leaving Church, a memoir of faith*, and *A life like mine, How children live around the world*. I generally carry in my book bag of six or seven books to read, between matching socks and answering e-mail. All this is to say that theology, while it does matter, takes different expressions in our lifetime. In this season in my life I read God through a very different lens. But I wouldn’t trade any of these seasons, one for the other, and I count all of the education afforded me as a blessing.

My thanks to Steve for his thought-provoking article. I find in Steve a kindred spirit, for we are both Presbyterian pastors who have received the hospitality of the Moravian community. I, too, am deeply disturbed by self-righteous anti-intellectualism, such as the flippant attitude of a former U. S. president who

dismissed the consensus of the environmental scientific community with the quip: “this guy is so far off in the environmental extreme we’ll be up to our neck in owls and out of work for every American.” The truth is “inconvenient.” It takes precise, faithful labor, time and sustained labor. The church does not have the corner on the general “dumbing down” in our culture. The intellectual communities bring much to the table, which we ignore at our peril.

I resonate with much of what Steve explored. Probably the most salient point for me is that “serious reflection, like digestion, takes time and energy.” For years I’ve wondered: what is it about our citizens? Are we too lazy? Are we too busy? Too soft and flabby in our thinking? Have we enjoyed sports more from the sofa than actually moving around on the ball field? Are we simply consumed with our own “devices and desires”? “Spare me the details.” We who have little tolerance for ambiguity say, “just cut to the chase!”

But I, too, am guilty of “catching nourishment on the run.” I have so much to do and miles to go before I sleep. Intentional reflection takes time... pondering time. Time, these days, seems to be our chief commodity. Perhaps this is why so many people have become so interested in spiritual formation. We just want to slow down, ponder and be. There is so much information to digest, so we are hungry for a slow, but simple mantra... something like, “Jesus loves me this I know,” or “Jesus Christ, have mercy on me”... one that reminds us to breathe. My neighbor has taken to repeating Buddhist chants. Never mind that she doesn’t understand a single word of what she is chanting, she likes the way they

sound and she is intent on meditating. She is no dummy, just a recovering Catholic, and she really is ardent about Buddha. This confirms Steve's suspicions that we need only invoke the name of Jesus, and incarnate him with a dance, or in her case Buddha and yoga. We do incarnate God in different ways.

I'm not sure I understood rightly Steve's claim that churches are opposed to theology because they are afraid. I see anyone's aversion to theology as an issue of how we appropriate and make meaning of God, what gifts we are given to express our love, enjoyment and worship of God. That same seminary theology professor who poked fun of puppets was teaching about how important it is to cognitively appropriate the meaning of the Lord's Supper. I asked, "Then how does someone who is mentally challenged ever appropriate our Lord's body and blood?" To his credit, he didn't try to give answer, but the next day said that he had to rethink his position about how the children of God understand.

I must concur with Barbara Brown Taylor, "There is no substitute for a primary (first-hand) meeting with the divine," even if it means sweating it out in the sweat lodge of ordinary life. No matter how much I resonate with the beauty of such encounters in books, I am most alive when I can taste my friendship with Christ Jesus. And while I'm suspicious of any cheap substitute or "Cliff Notes" of worship, I still feel my way through most theological discoveries and believe that I sometimes need to get knocked off my horse and be led by a child or some other "least-likely" candidate. There are simply different stripes of Christians, each with diverse gifts. There are those who are not rhetoricians

but are so pure in heart and truly learned in the 'first order' experience of the Holy Ghost that even scholars know to "sit silently at his feet and learn the wonders of the word of God."

"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received," we read in I Peter, and in Ephesians 4: 7, "for each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift." While we all "do theology," systematic theologians and those who have the gift of discerning their wisdom, bring to us a certain gift. Artists, archivists, economists, ecologists, musicians, nurses, scientists, farmers, framers, mechanics, sales people, mothers, cashiers, police, poets and children also bring wondrous gifts to the body of Christ and the body politic. The pastor shouldn't say to the theologian, "I have no need of you," or visa-versa. Theologians, take comfort, the church needs you. Of course, language is always borrowed; the key is helping the children of God experience God's fullness in manifold languages, as they seek to incarnate God. These days, however, we all might want to heed the prophet Habakkuk: "Write the vision; make it plain, so that a runner passing by may read it."

The Rev. Lisa Mullen is Director of Children's Ministries for the Southern Province of the Moravian Church.

The Author Responds

I’m grateful to all the respondents who took the time to write thoughtful comments on my article, and so to reinforce what I think is one of the great strengths of *The Hinge* — that it not only encourages discussion of significant issues in the church, but actually initiates it within its own pages. Since the opinions expressed by the respondents were largely in accord with one another, I would like to lift out a few salient themes that I find running through their comments, and that could serve as a springboard to the next round of discussions.

- There are, in fact, plenty of people in our churches who would relish the opportunity to discuss matters of theology, and who look to their pastors to help them do this with integrity and responsibility, but in a safe place where they can bring their honest doubts and half-baked theological formulations without having to apologize for them. To use that word again, we need to provide places in the church where people can be *exploratory*, even playful, in their appropriation of the faith. As Truman notes, this makes something like the *Moravian Covenant for Christian Living* the beginning of a conversation, and not the “last word.”

- This entails the notion that there are lots of ways to do theology (including, yes, “puppet theology” — one of the resident theologians at my own church is a hand-held hippo named Augustine who assists my wife with the children’s sermons and other occasions). Many of these draw from deep places in the heart and soul, as well as the mind, and we need to create the kind

of environment, through spiritual formation and the arts, to enhance the more typically linear approach that we tend to employ in preaching and teaching.

- As congregations, we need to encourage our pastors to be spiritual leaders, not simply administrators, counselors, mediators, etc. This, in turn, requires more than paying lip service to the biblical claim that there is “a variety of gifts” in the church with which *all* members are endowed. It also requires pastors to disabuse themselves of the notion that any one person can do it all. The pastor will always be a generalist (indeed, this is one of ministry’s attractions), but whatever he or she does needs to radiate out, first and foremost, from a sound theological core. Congregations, in turn, need to recognize and affirm that cultivating this theological core is part of the proper work of ministry, and not an add-on to it.

Thanks again for the opportunity to reflect on this important topic. Let the conversation continue!

Book Reviews

Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (Free Press, 2006). Reviewed by Al Reynolds.

Several new books by scientists criticize all religion as flawed. But here we see a scientist with a worldwide reputation explaining his Christian faith. Francis Collins is the Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, one of the two organizations that completed the first sequencing of the human genome. He holds impeccable scientific credentials: a medical degree as well as a Ph.D. in physics. His title, “The Language of God,” is taken from words spoken by President Clinton, when he announced the success of the Human Genome Project with Dr Collins by his side, “Today we are learning the language by which God created life.”

Collins came to his faith by an unusual route. He grew up in a non-religious family and he recalls thinking “Don’t go there” when a religious issue came up. But as a medical student caring for patients in North Carolina, he was amazed by the courage and peace shown by many who faced frightening prospects of pain or death. “If [religion] is a psychological crutch,” he thought, “it must be a very powerful one.” He asked a Methodist pastor for advice and was directed to read *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. He found to his amazement that Lewis, a highly respected scholar at Oxford University, had also been an atheist who had found a powerful faith in Christ. His questions were answered effectively by Lewis. He could feel the presence of a God who wanted a loving relationship with

people, and saw this in Jesus Christ most clearly. He made a personal commitment and is holding to it firmly, now making presentations around the nation to share his views.

He is swimming in the waters of thought with Darwin and Jerry Falwell, with evolutionists and fundamentalists, with strongly held views of every stripe. Reviews criticize his book from every side—“He’s too liberal” is heard along with “He bases too many of his views on the Bible.” No matter what he says, someone will disagree. He discussed the issues with Richard Dawkins, sometimes called “Darwin’s Rottweiler,” in *Time* Magazine on November 2, 2006. That shows he is able to adequately debate his interpretations with a very tough opponent.

The author discusses “options” in the interplay between faith in God versus trust in science, specifically “Atheism and Agnosticism, when Science trumps Faith;” “Creationism, when Faith trumps Science;” “Intelligent Design, when Science needs Divine help;” and what he calls “BioLogos,” his own understanding of Science and Faith in harmony. Collins has his own views on several issues that do not agree closely with any one school of thought, and thus he occasionally made my eyebrows go up. But it just reminds us that no author is guaranteed to get it all right, that we should look to God for light rather than to fallible human beings.

A good read for those with scientific concerns.

Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (Free Press, 2006). Reviewed by Dr. Reed D. Acheson.

(Editor’s Note: It is rare to receive two reviews for the same book, but it can be helpful to have two viewpoints.)

“The advances of science in the modern age have come at the cost of certain traditional reasons for belief in God.” This statement, which begins chapter 4 of Dr. Francis Collins’s very readable and understandable book, *The Language of God*, could stand as a summary for his motivation to contribute substantially to the science and religion ‘debate’ and his very personal testimony of faith. Dr. Collins, best known for his efforts to identify the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis, and head of the recently completed effort, known as the Human Genome Project, to characterize the human ‘genetic code’, has written convincingly of his belief that science and faith are more than just compatible. Collins suggests that there are positive reasons to believe in God, based on a real knowledge, which affirms his personal faith, and can confirm that faith of others in this scientific age.

The recent popularity of the writings of atheistic evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), and philosopher Daniel Dennett (*Darwin’s Dangerous Idea*), have promoted the idea that belief in God is pointless, and for a scientist to affirm a personal faith in God is akin to intellectual suicide. Whether one embraces the scope of scientific understanding, or is more comfortable in avoidance, or ignorance, of such matters, those in the parish know that the tensions which seem to surface

when scientific understanding, and faith issues ‘rub together’ remain real.

Refreshingly, Dr. Collins lays out a summary which enables a layperson, or pastor, with minimal background in science, to understand the source of tensions in the evolutionary debate, and those of the companion issues of creationism, and intelligent design. Collins’ concise style minimizes detail and cuts through the rhetoric and passion in a way enabling those seeking clarity in these matters to either satisfy their curiosity, or propel one to further exploration. Dr. Collins suggests that there are “clear, compelling, and intellectually satisfying” solutions to the search for truth in what he terms “theistic evolution” or “BioLogos”, or as he states without reservation, “The God of the Bible is also the God of the genome.”

Professor Collins completes his book with a personal statement of faith which, from one of the pre-eminent scientists in this day, is truly refreshing!

Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (San Francisco: Harper Perennial Reprint Ed., 2004). Reviewed by Andrew Lumpkin.

Timely for her insight into the psychology of religious militarism, Jessica Stern investigates the factors that create terrorism. Written in narrative format, the author interviews members of several militant movements in order to understand how religion can be used as a tool of violence. By dividing the book into two parts, Stern first examines the factors leading to religious terrorism, and in the second part of the book, she studies typical terrorist organizational structures. Written in the last two years, Stern concludes with public policy implications to counter the rise of religious terrorism.

In each chapter in the first part of her book, Stern interviews religious militants from differing religions in order to uncover the factors that increase the likelihood a person will join and remain in a terrorist organization. Although “fun and profit” (5) provide incentives for religious militancy, Stern believes five other factors influence the decision to join in a jihad. Whether real or perceived *humiliation*, terrorist leaders have learned to harvest the outrage youth feel against occupying powers. Because of the oppression of these powers, terrorist organizations set up legitimate charitable organizations to ease the suffering of the oppressed class. Youth join terrorist organizations to strike back against their oppressors because of their alienation and humiliation, and out of a sense of obligation to return the favor to those terrorist organizations that provide charitable relief to their families.

Ethnic *demographics* also play a key role in terrorism. When a government creates a “policy [that] deliberately shifts an ethno-religious mix” (62) (i.e., a migration policy), the power of the once dominant ethnicity becomes weakened. As a result, the privileges this group once received begin to diminish, and this group seeks to reestablish its authority. Eventually, a “holy war” is called, and militants flock to either side believing they are fighting an eternal struggle. Ancient *history* can be a “powerful weapon in extremists’ hands, including in their efforts to expand national boundaries and to seek redemption” (85). Terrorists use a selective reading of history and religious texts for justifying violence and mobilizing recruits. Disputes over *territory* also create an Us versus Them mentality, which helps establish a “clear identity and a definite purpose in life” (137).

Stern writes the second half of her book in an attempt to understand terrorist organizational structures. She believes terrorist organizations fall into four categories. Within each of these organizations is a tension between being able to withstand loss of members (resiliency) and the organization’s ability to optimize the destruction of the attack (capacity). First, terrorist organizations can be structured by an inspirational leader. In this type of organization, one leader headlines a movement, but does not give explicit orders or material benefits to his/her followers. The movement is tied together by a special narrative and language, and followers are

inspired to take violent action on behalf of the group.

Second, lone-wolf avengers use their own ideologies and agendas to fight for their own cause. The lone-wolf avengers cannot cause damage on a large scale, but at the same time, these terrorists provide difficulty for investigators, as networks are individualized.

Third, commander and cadre organizations provide a large hierarchical network that are highly destructive, and members of the organization and their families benefit from their large fund-raising efforts. Because of the structure of this organization, it can be easily penetrated, and this organization necessitates a large cash income.

Fourth, Stern examines Al Qaeda as an example of the ultimate organization. This organization has a hierarchical structure, but hires militants for specific geographical areas to use in one-time missions. This organization takes careful interest in planning its attacks, has allies in high governmental positions, and has the ability to acquire conventional, unconventional, and nuclear weapons. Recruitment and training are a high priority for this organization. This organizational structure vocalizes and articulates the grievance it wants addressed, advertises its mission, and has the patience and ability to

change its mission objectives. This organization is structurally a network of networks weakly tied together, optimizing resiliency. This organization receives incomes from licit and illicit businesses and charitable organizations, and it uses leaderless resisters, freelancers, and franchises to optimize its effectiveness.

In her concluding chapter, Stern explains the vulnerability of Islamic states to terrorism. America’s support for Israel, increasing globalization leading to lower standards of living, and the vulnerability of states transitioning to a democracy all increase the likelihood of terrorism in Islamic states. With this in mind, Stern closes with a handful of foreign policy suggestions. America must understand that violence against terrorism is partially effective, and violence provides terrorist organizations with the ability to recruit new militants.

Therefore, we need to learn to penetrate these organizations. We should not impose the death penalty on terrorists. We should not use torture during interrogation, and we should purchase the expertise of unemployed terrorists. America should also promote and develop alternative educational methods in Muslim nations, combat infrastructures that mobilize recruits, and make it more difficult for terrorist organizations to obtain weapons.

Read a good book lately?

Write a review! *The Hinge* accepts reviews of books in theology, pastoral care, church and society, and related topics. Send reviews by email attachment to Craig Atwood at atwoodcd@wfu.edu.

Special Feature: Youth in Mission in Kenya

Emily Wright

Why do we go on missions? Why do we leave the comfort of our home, friends, and family to go somewhere we have never been before to take care of people we have never met before? For me, it was a feeling. An indescribable feeling I had in my heart. I simply knew that I had to go. It reminds me of the verse 1 John 3:17: “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

This past summer I traveled to Kenya with the Amani scholars program to learn about the AIDS orphan crisis and see the truly remarkable and heroic work being done with it. I went to make a connection, to find something there that united me, personally, to this great struggle. I definitely found this connection, and in only my second day there.

This connection is named Sharon. She was less than a year old when I met her. She was one of the first babies at New Life Homes Orphanage in Nakuru, Kenya, one of the first and few orphanages in Kenya to except HIV-positive babies. Although she was crying and had food all over her face the first time I met her, she was the most beautiful baby I had ever seen. I played with her, held her, fed her, took pictures with her (a lot of pictures), let her fall asleep in my arms,

and made her laugh. Sharon truly touched my heart. Even though I am home now, a piece of my heart is in Kenya.

My work for Amani is very meaningful to me not just because of my connection to Sharon, but because of what she taught me. There are 14 million-plus AIDS orphans on this planet right now, a huge number that didn’t really gain true meaning until I held one of those victims in my arms. Holding Sharon in my arms and seeing her healthy, bright eyes look back at me taught me just how important love is.

I John 4:7-15 describes this: “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

One of my fellow Amani scholars once said, “the world is one big community, and we must be sure that we take care of our neighbors.” This connects directly to one of the main tenets of

both the Jewish and our Christian faith that is to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

There is a Maya Angelou quote I would like to share that says a lot about what I’ve learned. It tells us, “If you find it in your heart to care for somebody else, you will have succeeded.”

Emily Wright is a member of Home Moravian Church and will be attending Wake Forest University in the fall.

Jon Barnes

I am going to share some stories from my journal during the third week of my trip in the lakeside city of Kisumu, Kenya. The New Life Home here is beautiful, and the directors, John and Prisca Ondече are nothing short of wonderful caretakers. There are 39 babies here in Kisumu, and this region around Lake Victoria has the highest incidence of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. John Ondече explained to us that at one of the primary schools in the area, there are around 700 students in attendance, 400 of them are orphans. Meaning that more than 50% of them have no living parents; unfortunately this is not an uncommon story here.

A group of us went to visit one of the elementary schools in Kisumu. As we approached the gate, what seemed like a torrent of green uniform-clad children came running by us. The school’s principle later explained that it was lunch-time and that most of the kids were headed back home for lunch. While talking with

the principle in his office, we noticed through his window that many of the children had not left the school with the others, but were sitting in the grass some of them eating the traditional meal of beans and ugali, but most of them without any food at all. The principle explained that the most of the children who stayed at the school during lunch were the ones who had no parents and no relatives to provide for them, they had no one to go home to.

The following Sunday we attended John and Prisca’s church, Christ Church of Kisumu, and were warmly greeted by the congregation. The charisma of worship was really invigorating. The praise and worship team lead the congregation for about 45 minutes in song and dance. We sang both in English and Kiswahili, and I was caught by surprise when one of the songs that popped up on the projector was one that I had learned at Laurel Ridge “Open the Eyes of My Heart.” I am reminded of how small the world really is, and how our experiences can be so different, yet much the same.

The text for the message was Matthew 28:19, which urges us to go and be disciples, to make disciples of all nations. Pondering the text began a line of questions and thoughts: What does it mean to be a disciple? Certainly, to be a disciple of Christ is to believe in the Gospel, and to help others to know Christ.

How do we know Christ? Does knowing Christ mean to believe that he is the Son of God, our Lord and Savior? Or is knowing Christ, to follow in his example — by practicing his discipline? Having compassion, knowing true poverty, sickness, and above all, loving others?

If the discipline of Christ is exemplified through his life's work, then it seems to me that, in order to be a disciple, we must be concerned with the needs and the welfare of our brothers and sisters throughout the world. As human beings, is it our compassionate works and loving actions that make us Christian, or is it our belief in Christ as the son of God?

I struggled with these questions as I encountered others whose mission in Kenya was not to help those in need with their earthly predicament, but solely to "save men's souls" for heaven.

To put the HIV/AIDS crisis into perspective, we can consider the devastation caused by the tsunami of 2003. This natural disaster took the lives of over 200 thousand people, and the world community responded to its victims with great compassion. In 2006, HIV/AIDS is estimated to have taken the lives of 2.1 million men, women and children — what would be the equivalent of 10 tsunamis ravaging a single continent in only a year.

What's worse is that in Sub-Saharan Africa last year 2.8 million people were infected with HIV/AIDS. The disease is wiping out an entire generation, leaving children without the primary economic providers. Famine is widespread not only because of severe drought from human-induced climate change, but also because there is no one to tend to the fields. In countries where your children are your economic security during retirement age, grandmothers are being left to care for their grandchildren. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is certainly the most pressing humanitarian crisis of our time.

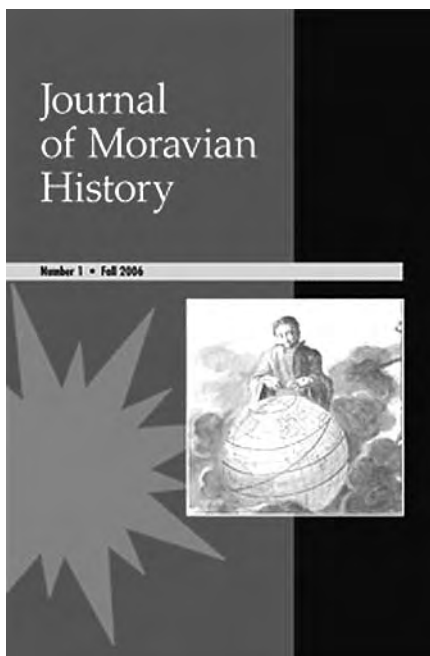
I would argue that as Christians we cannot turn away from the more than 12 million orphans in Africa who have been robbed by a virus, robbed of their childhood innocence by the death of their mother and father. In the face of this adversity, somehow Kenyans seem to stay hopeful. This hope can be seen in the eyes of orphans like David who was given a second chance at life because of the contributions of people here in North Carolina. Although most of us may never step foot on the continent we can no-less have a tremendous live-giving impact on the fate of these children.

Since last August when I spoke with you, the Amani Children's Foundation has officially pledged to care for all 39 of the babies in the Kisumu home, but this can only be done with your continued support. If every member of our congregation gave just a dollar and some change, we could provide a year's worth of food, medicine and care for two infants at New Life Homes.

I encourage you all to think of ways that you might like to contribute to the work of the Amani Foundation, whether by sponsoring a child or creating your own fundraising event.

Jon Barnes is a member of Home Moravian Church and is attending UNC-Asheville.

Announcing
The Journal of Moravian History



This JMH is published jointly by the Moravian Archives and the Moravian Historical Society. Readers of *The Hinge* are encouraged to subscribe. The first issue appeared in December 2006 and features articles by Peter Vogt, Daniel Crews, Paul Peucker, and Craig Atwood.

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FALL EVENTS FOCUSING ON MORAVIAN TOPICS

- August 10-12** MID-STATES MORAVIANS CELEBRATION OF THE 550TH ANNIVERSARY
For more information, contact registrar Sandy Petrella at 330-339-6857.
- September 17-28** A CHRISTIAN HERITAGE TOUR
Visit Prague, Kralice, Berthelsdorf and more. Leaving from Toronto and NYC.
For more information contact Rev. Marge Hassler, New Dawn Moravian Church,
at 416-656-0473 (office) or 610-751-4220 (cell).
- September 18** TERESA FRY BROWN, WORSHIP IN WAIT CHAPEL
11:00 am, A Public Theology Event of Wake Forest Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC
- October 2** BICENTENNIAL CHAPEL SERVICE AT MORAVIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
- October 5** COUILLARD LECTURES WITH DIANA BUTLER BASS
Moravian Theological Seminary, Bethlehem, Pa.

MTS BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION BANQUET
Moravian Theological Seminary, Bethlehem, Pa.
- October 6** WALKING OUR HISTORY AT MORAVIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Travel to Nazareth, Pennsylvania, for walking tour with picnic lunch and historical
presentation at the Whitefield House. Return to Bethlehem for Seminary
Haunts and History Tour and Cup of Covenant Celebration.
- October 19-20** AGAPE CONFERENCE AT WAKE FOREST DIVINITY SCHOOL
A Public Theology Event of Wake Forest Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC
- October 20-27** MORAVIAN 550 CRUISE TO THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN
Travel to St. Thomas, Antigua, St. Kitts, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.
For more information call 562-688-4971 or visit www.moravian550cruise.com
- October 28** TONY CAMPOLO, WORSHIP IN WAIT CHAPEL
8:00 pm, A Public Theology Event of Wake Forest Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC
- November 4** MISSION SOCIETY LOVEFEAST: CELEBRATING 550 YEARS OF MISSION
3:00 pm, Wait Chapel, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC
- November 10** 550TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Gala variety show featuring groups and individuals from around the Eastern District.
7:00 pm, State Theatre, Easton, Pennsylvania

For More Information:

Public Theology Events of Wake Forest Divinity School, visit divinity.wfu.edu/publictheology.html
Bicentennial Celebrations of Moravian Theological Seminary, visit www.moravianseminary.edu/bicentennial/

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Upcoming Issue of The Hinge:
14.3 Elizabeth Miller, "Toward a Missional Ecclesiology
of the Moravian Church, Northern Province."