



The Hinge:
International Theological Dialog
for the Moravian Church

“Issues of Life and Death”

Elizabeth McOwat

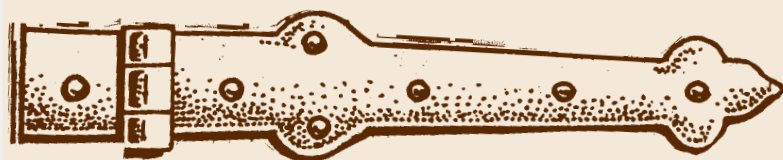
Responses

Sarah Atwood, Rebecca Craver, Willie Israel, Keith Kapp,
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Book Review

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The Hinge

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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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The cover design was provided by Todd Tyson of Kernersville, N.C.

Notes from the Editor

Changes You may have noticed that *The Hinge* has a new title. It is now *The Hinge: International Theological Dialog for the Moravian Church*, and there will be more attention to the broader Moravian Unity. For years the Moravian Church in America was blessed with a unique international journal called *ITD: International Theological Dialog for the Moravian Church*. What made *ITD* unique was that there was both an English-language version published in Bethlehem, Pa., and a German-language version published in Bad Boll. There were separate editorial boards in each country, but the content was the same. The goal of *ITD* (originally titled *TMDK*) was to foster theological discussion among clergy and laity on both sides of the Atlantic as a way to strengthen Moravian identity and the bonds of the Unity.

ITD was born through the efforts of Arthur Freeman in America and Hartmut Beck in Germany. In addition to being a professor of New Testament at Moravian Theological Seminary, Br. Freeman taught courses in the theology of Zinzendorf and spiritual formation. He is one of the leading authorities on Moravian theology, and spent much of his career helping the Moravian Church learn from and apply its theological heritage. Hartmut Beck is a retired Moravian missionary who has published a definitive history of Moravian missions. Until recently, he was the editor of the German version of *ITD*, which has been the mainspring of theological discussion for Moravians in Europe.

After many years of voluntary labor, Brothers Freeman and Beck have now retired from their roles as editors of both versions of *ITD*. The Moravian Church owes both men a debt of gratitude for the contribution *ITD* has made to the life of the contemporary Moravian Church. Rather than simply appointing someone to replace them, it seemed wise to all concerned to explore new ways of fulfilling the mission of *ITD*. The amount of translation required led to frequent delays in publication in America. Also, the costs for production and distribution rose sharply over the years. Many people questioned whether it was good stewardship to have two journals, *ITD* and *The Hinge* serving similar goals and audiences in the Moravian Church.

Though the format and style of *The Hinge* is different than *ITD*, the mission of the two journals is very similar. In recent years, articles from *The Hinge* have been translated and published in the German-version of *ITD*, and many authors have been published in both journals. After a long period of discussion, the editorial board of the North American *ITD* and the editorial board of *The Hinge* decided to merge these two English-language Moravian theology forums into a single journal now titled *The Hinge: International Theological Dialog for the Moravian Church*. The European edition of *ITD* will continue to be published under the guidance of a new editor, Rev. Volker Schulz of Basel, Switzerland.

The Hinge will work closely with brothers and sisters in Germany, but there will no longer be an English translation of the German *ITD*. Instead, the two journals (*The Hinge* and *ITD*) will freely share content. Articles from either journal may be translated and republished in the other, but no longer will all content appear in both languages. The editorial board of *The Hinge* now includes representatives from England, Germany, Canada, and the Caribbean, which will expand our perspective considerably.

The Hinge will continue to be published by the Center for Moravian Studies, which is part of Moravian Theological Seminary. *The Hinge* is grateful for the assistance of Dean Frank Crouch and Jane Burcaw at Moravian Seminary.

In this Issue *The Hinge* will continue to address controversial issues in a spirit of brotherly and sisterly love and respect. It is appropriate that we begin this new endeavor with an article supplied by our brothers and sisters in Europe. In this issue Elizabeth McOwat, a member of the British Province, challenges Moravians in the United States over the issue of the death penalty. The death penalty is a very controversial issue in the United States, particularly since the Innocence Project has successfully overturned the wrongful convictions of dozens of inmates, saving dozens from execution. Several states have issued moratoriums on executions while they review hundreds of cases to insure that innocent people are not falsely executed. Though eroding, public support for the death penalty remains high in the United States, and most government officials support the practice.

In contrast, most “First World” nations view this practice as a barbaric anachronism from a less civilized age. After World War II, most European nations gradually abolished the death penalty. Having seen the depths of evil that a government could commit with a legal death penalty, there was widespread opposition to the death penalty throughout Europe. Now, as Sr. McOwat points out, no nation can join the European Union without abolishing the death penalty. In Canada, the last execution was carried out in December 1962 and the death penalty was formally abolished in 1984.

There are many issues surrounding the question of the death penalty, as the respondents to Sr. McOwat indicate. We can approach this issue primarily in terms of public policy and effectiveness. Does the death penalty lower the rate of violent crime and make citizens safer in their homes and workplaces? Or we can approach it from the perspective of the law and ask if death is administered fairly. Are we executing people who are truly guilty of heinous crimes? We can even approach it from the perspective of common decency as is demanded in the US Constitution. Is it possible to terminate lives in a humane manner or is it always a form of “cruel and unusual punishment”?

These are all important questions that need to be discussed openly, honestly, democratically, and with the best research available, but Sr. McOwat challenges Moravians to think deeper. She asks us to consider the death penalty from the perspective of our Christian faith and morality. Is the death penalty a denial of the essential humanity of another individual, whether innocent or guilty? Is it possible to fulfill Jesus’ commandments of love for neighbor and radical forgiveness while advocating for the execution of a neighbor?

Obviously, Christians through the centuries have had different opinions on whether the death penalty is justice or state-sanctioned murder, but we should be able to agree that every execution represents a failure and a tragedy. The fact that our society feels the need to kill wrong-doers is an indication that our system of justice has not made us safe and secure. The fact that so many people have committed capital crimes is itself a sign of failure.

Christians may disagree over whether the death penalty is a necessary evil, but I think we can agree that it is an evil. Moravians may be particularly interested to learn that John Hus preached against the death penalty, and the Ancient Unity did not want its members to serve on juries lest they unwillingly participate in the destruction of another human being. This past summer, the bishops of the Unity issued a unanimous statement opposing the death penalty in every situation.

We live in a complex and dangerous world, and it is hard to express our Christian morality in the political and social arena. Some Moravians, like Sr. McOwat, do stand alongside Quakers and Catholic nuns protesting executions in the United States. Others quietly express their views in the voting booth. Still others are content to let the state function according to its own rules without interference from the church. And many Moravians, like Christians of all churches, simply do not reflect on what the differences are between being a citizen and a follower of Jesus.

Issues of Life and Death

Elizabeth McOwat

With the assistance of Rev. Sarah Groves

“The Unitas Fratrum appreciates the inestimable value of each human being for whom Christ gave his life, and counts no sacrifice too great to ‘win souls for the Lamb’.”

— Essential Features of the Unity 1995
(*Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum*, 2002)

I am British, a lifelong member of the Moravian Church. I am also a long time member of LifeLines, an organization that reaches out in friendship to the men and women on death rows throughout the United States. I am a member of Amnesty International, and a voluntary official prison visitor, approved by the British Government Home Office. I come from a European background, and from an ethos that does not allow the death penalty to be considered under any circumstances. No country is allowed to join the European Union unless it renounces the death penalty.

I need to understand, as a Moravian, why it is that so many of our Moravian brothers and sisters in the USA. feel that the death penalty is both morally and ethically acceptable whereas most European Moravians take a different view. What is it about our cultures or belief systems that makes for this difference?

My problem, and that of many Europeans, is that if I support capital punishment, I have to accept the fact that (a) some of the people executed will be innocent, (b) and until very

recently that some will be children, (c) many of them will be mentally ill or mentally retarded. I have also to accept the fact that (d) it is often the poor and the disenfranchised who are executed, and that (e) the race of the victim, and also of the perpetrator, plays a large part in determining who receives the death penalty. I have to be prepared to accept that (f) I have judged these people, whom the law has sentenced to death, to be literally as dead men (and women) walking, that they are incapable of, or beyond, redemption and reconciliation, and that (g) the message that I am giving out to the family of the murder victim is that they are incapable of forgiving.¹

Many years ago I watched a documentary called *Fourteen Days in May* which followed the last two weeks of a young black American, Edward Earl Johnson, who was executed in the State of Mississippi on May 20, 1987. That documentary, made by a British television crew, made me realize that the death penalty was an abhorrence and something that I wanted to fight, but I needed to work out where I stood in relation to general moral and ethical thinking. That documentary was also responsible for bringing into existence the British based organization, LifeLines. The film shocked me beyond belief, but I was comforted by the fact that the British television crew were unable, at

one point, to continue filming, as they were so horrified with what was being done in the name of justice.

“The calculated killing of a human being by the state involves, by its very nature, an absolute denial of the executed person’s humanity. The most vile murder does not, in my view, release the state from constitutional restraints on the destruction of human dignity.”

— Justice William Brennan, 1986.

In my role as a member of LifeLines, I became the penfriend of a young black man, Perrie D. Simpson, who was a prisoner in Raleigh in the North Carolina State Prison. Perrie had been my friend for five years, and it is mainly because I am still so angry at the fact of his execution on Friday, 20th January 2006 at 2:00 in the morning, that I am trying to put my thoughts together. Perrie was a young twenty year old black man when he committed his crime, which he has always acknowledged, and for which he was bitterly sorry. He was given his execution date just before Christmas of 2005. For twenty years he had been isolated on the North Carolina death row, not allowed to touch friends or family, until the week before his execution when he was given the opportunity to have a visit with his brother in another prison, and finally to have a contact visit with his family.

Perrie, according to execution protocol, would have been required by the prison to follow a very strict timetable once his last day on earth arrived. This protocol is counted down

by the hour, coldly and clinically. Prior to this Perrie was given his last meal, chosen by him. The execution protocol can be found on a web site, but the actual method needs to be read, to be absorbed, in its obscenity and detachment. Forgive me, I am still very angry — this was my friend who was to be trashed. All clocks are synchronized, telephones checked, Perrie would be given clean clothing, including a nappy. He would have been offered a sedative, in order that his walk to the death chamber did not cause embarrassment to anyone. In other words, so that his legs would not buckle with fear. Perrie would be laid on the gurney (in the shape of a cross, incidentally), and then according to a strict timetable three drugs would be administered to him. First, sodium pentothal which is supposed to cause unconsciousness. Then, pancuronium bromide, which causes paralysis to the nervous system. Finally he would be given potassium chloride which shuts down the heart and causes cardiac arrest.

None of the people who operated the needles would have been seen by Perrie or the audience watching his death. I wonder why not. Before the actual execution a doctor would have tested the electrocardiograph machine, and then pronounced on Perrie’s death. The cold and calculating method of his killing is something that I find obscene and terrifying. And there is no doubt, from the evidence being collected from various states, that many of these executions are botched, and cause intense suffering, in the same way that execution in the gas chamber, and in the electric chair, did.

Perrie's last words were to apologise again to those he had harmed so terribly.

I felt closely involved with Perrie during his final hours because I was able to be in contact with a wonderful group of Christians, of all faiths, but mainly Catholics and Quakers, who protested outside the prison during the time of Perrie's execution. I am told on good authority that sixteen of those Christians were arrested by the police and had to attend court at a later date. Again I question — why does this particular group of American Christians find executions so abhorrent that they are willing to go to prison as a protest? This execution took place in the heartland of the American Moravian Church. I scrolled down the list of meeting places and groups involved in this act of civil disobedience, and hoped so much that I would see that our Moravian brothers and sisters were involved, but could not find a mention of them.

A final cruelty, in my eyes, was that one of my final letters to Perrie, offering him encouragement and assuring him of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, was returned to me, simply marked Inmate Deceased. That letter, which arrived in plenty of time for Perrie to receive it, was lying around for four weeks in the North Carolina prison before it was sent back to me.

On January 31, 2006, Amnesty International, an organization totally opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances, made a call to the USA, to at least call a halt to the execution of mentally ill inmates on death

row throughout the States. Admittedly the US courts have finally ruled that it is unlawful to execute child offenders and those with learning disabilities, but it still accepts, in all states with the death penalty (except Connecticut) that it is lawful to execute people suffering from schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, brain damage and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (or PTSD). Some prisoners suffering from these conditions have been allowed to conduct their own defense, and many are allowed to “volunteer” to be executed. Amnesty International is concerned that many jurors do not understand the issues inherent in mental illness, and that therefore mental illness becomes an aggravating, rather than a mitigating factor.

In a recent report, reprinted from the *Tucson Citizen*, and based on a question and answer session with Carla Ryan, a Tucson, Arizona, attorney, Ms. Ryan was asked to comment on various aspects of the death penalty. Ms. Ryan, who is well known for her work in death penalty law (I myself have been involved in one of her cases) and has appeared before the World Court in the Hague, was asked to say what gave her the most pause about the death penalty. Ms. Ryan felt that human error gave her most concern as so often the sentence of death depends on who is the prosecutor in the case, and also the county in which the crime is committed. She commented on the fact that so many of the people on death row are mentally ill, poor and uneducated, and also on the fact that so many of them have to accept incompetent counsel to defend them at trial. She concluded by saying that many people involved in these cases see

the defense lawyer as the criminal. So I need to ask if these defendants are perceived as guilty before the trial even begins.

In my work with LifeLines, and as a visitor to several American top-security prisons, one of my abiding memories is of the distress and grief caused to many of the families of the prisoners. This is not to take away from the distress and grief of the families of the victims, but their grief, in this context, is another issue. Neither is it to accept that the human being who commits a terrible crime should walk free. On the contrary, punishment is a necessary and an integral part of the judicial procedure. But from my limited experience, and from the experience of lawyers and counselors who work with the families of the prisoner, the suffering experienced by those families is often quite dreadful. We have to remember that these people too are, in the main, innocent of the crime of murder. Yet the ripples of distress and suffering seem to spread outwards to involve so many people, both involved with perpetrators and victims.

I have talked to a mother who makes the round trip to a death row prison to visit with her son, every month. 900 miles. She is never allowed to touch him, or to buy him food or drink. She only sees him behind Plexiglas, and talks to him through a grille. Her family has been split by the crime of her son, but she is his mother. She always will be. When my husband and I met her in the prison, we offered to sit with her for the evening following her visit. She

told us her history and cried, apologizing for doing so in front of strangers.

How do you deal with distress on that level? She is innocent. Many of the people who are involved with the victims of the crime feel that closure will be achieved when the murderer is finally executed, but according to many interviewers, and as you would expect, that just is not the case. Closure does not happen. The empty chair, sadly, can never be filled. It is for very different reasons that closure occurs.

“No man is the sum of his crimes.”

— Sr. Helen Prejean, Catholic nun, abolitionist, author of *Dead Man Walking*.

I have talked with wives, with daughters, with sons, with mothers, with fathers, with family friends, the sadness and distress never leave the people involved. But the horror of the actual execution affects so many more people also. It is a well-known fact that it affects the officers who are in charge of the prisoners. It affects the doctors involved and the officials who actually press the buttons. As we, who live in an ever increasingly small world, know only too well, any man’s death diminishes us.

I think that this is an appropriate point at which to talk about the religious emphasis that much of our Bible places on various aspects of justice, compassion, and redemption, with particular reference to prisoners, and especially to those who have been given the death penalty. I think, too, that it is helpful to remember that Christ himself was the victim of a judicial execution.

“Even though this new evidence may establish Mr. Richey’s innocence, the Ohio and United States constitutions nonetheless allow him to be executed because the prosecution did not know that the scientific testimony offered at the trial was false and unreliable.”

— Prosecutor Dan Gershutz with reference to the Kenny Richey trial circa 2005.

Isaiah speaks to us with a voice that resonates particularly today: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Isaiah 61:1). Jesus, in the Galilee Manifesto, accepts these claims for himself. Luke 4.

There is no injunction against the death penalty in scripture, in the same way that there is no injunction against slavery, but I would recommend reading an article by Rabbi Gershon Winkler titled “The Murderous Court.” He quotes from the Babylonian Talmud, Makot 7a: “A Court that has executed someone as infrequently as once in seven years is a murderous court; others say, even once in seventy years.”² Within these ancient Judaic laws there were severe restrictions around capital punishment. It took a “minimum consensus of twenty-three judges and a maximum of seventy-one to actually send someone to their death.” It is enlightening to read from the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 5.5, the very careful steps taken to ensure that justice prevails. If the death penalty is finally handed down, then last minute

changes of heart, favourable testimonies or any piece of new evidence, even if it is presented by the defendant, are immediately responded to, the execution is halted and the defendant is returned to the house of judgment. And this can happen many times. I cannot find anywhere in these texts a comparison with our modern insistence on revenge, and “an eye for an eye” mentality. How can that be consistent with the old Hebraic laws as described above? I do not understand. I really do not understand.

The Bible makes clear that there is an ethical belief framework that governs the way in which we live and treat others. It makes clear that each human life is individual, precious, and known by God; even the hairs of our heads are numbered by a God who sees and notes the fall of a sparrow. Each hair on Perrie’s head was numbered by God. Each step that he took towards the death chamber was walked also by God. In Luke 12:6-7. Christ gives an injunction to love, not just our neighbours but also our enemies (Matt. 8:43-44). How then, I ask, can we kill someone we are called to love? We may need to restrict his freedom, but we cannot, surely, in the eyes of God, carry out the calculated obscenity of the death penalty.

Again, how can we read the account of the Beatitudes and carry out the calculated obscenity of the death penalty? “You have heard that it was said to the men of old,” says Jesus, ““You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.” And in Matthew 7 we read that Jesus tells us very clearly that we should not judge others. “Judge not, that you be not

judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.” We recognize that whilst we should not judge our fellows, the law indeed has to do just that.

So we talk of life imprisonment for very damaged human beings, recognizing that certain people need to be restrained for the sake of everyone in society, but we then need to recognize that to execute another human being is to say to him or her, in effect, “your life is worthless and it is therefore right for us to trash you.” Jesus makes it very clear in Matthew 24 that it is God himself who will judge us all. And I would ask here if we should not, in fact, leave that final judgment to God and trust him with it.

We are all sinners and all capable, given the “right” circumstances, of doing terrible things. But God loves us. One of the main concerns of our Lord on the cross was for the comfort and care of the thief crucified alongside him. Jesus could say to him with absolute conviction, and without knowing the facts of the case, that he would be with Jesus in Paradise that very day. It is as we see Jesus, lifted on the cross, suffering our human pain and terror, that we can hear him say to us: “I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” Our query, as always, is “when did we see you thus Lord?” and as always we hear Christ’s reply, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one

of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”

“Criminals do not die by the hands of the law. They die by the hands of other men.”

— George Bernard Shaw 1903.

Sr. Sarah, who has worked with me on this document, and who encouraged me to write it in the first place, has reintroduced me to *The Ground of the Unity*, and I can think of no better way than to use it, along with Sr. Sarah’s comments, to bring our thoughts and questions to a conclusion.

“We oppose any discrimination in our midst because of race or standing and we regard it as a commandment of the Lord to bear public witness to this.” Yet, looking at the death row statistics, it is evident that those who face judicial execution are overwhelmingly those who are poor and black and from the most disadvantaged walks of life.

“Our Lord Jesus entered this world’s misery to bear it and to overcome it. We seek to follow him in serving his people. Like the love of Jesus this service knows no bounds.”

Our calling to serve must take us past the bounds of “the deserving poor” and through the barriers of good taste and decency to the most marginalized and oppressed — the “undeserving poor” whom Christ loves just as he loves us — the unlovely as well as the lovely.

“Jesus Christ maintains...his commitment to this fallen world...we may not withdraw from it through indifference, pride or fear.”

We cannot be excused from action because we do not want to know what is done in our name. We cannot be indifferent to the horror of what is done behind closed doors in our prisons — we have no excuse for not knowing or caring.

This is our common Moravian witness — our common heritage — our common code of practice. This is what we share — in Christ. In the light all that we share, how is it that we differ in these fundamental issues of life and death?

Endnotes

- ¹ Claudia Whitman & Julie Zimmerman, ed. *Frontiers of Justice*, vol. 1, *The Death Penalty* (Biddle Publishing Company 1997).
- ² Gershwon Winkler, “The Murderous Court,” in Claudia Whitman & Julie Zimmerman, ed. *Frontiers of Justice*, vol. 1, *The Death Penalty* (Biddle Publishing Company 1997).

Sister McOwat is a Moravian in the British Province, and Rev. Sarah Groves is pastor of Fulneck Moravian Church in Yorkshire.

Responses

Laura Schattschneider

My first impulse when asked to respond to Elizabeth McOwat’s call to Moravian action on the death penalty was to seek out recent death penalty statistics. I discovered the following: “In 2006, 53 persons in 14 States were executed — 24 in Texas; 5 in Ohio; 4 each in Florida, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Virginia; and 1 each in Indiana, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, California, Montana, and Nevada. Of persons executed in 2006: 32 were white [and] 21 were black. All 53 inmates executed in 2006 were men. Lethal

injection accounted for 52 of the executions and electrocution for one. Thirty-eight States and the Federal government in 2005 had capital statutes.”¹ I also discovered that in 2005, the numbers of persons on death row declined for the fifth year in a row. In that year, there were 1805 white persons (including 362 persons of Hispanic descent) and 1372 black persons on death row, and 77 persons of other and unknown ethnic origins. Fifty-two women were imprisoned on death rows. The youngest person on an American death row was 20 years old.

These statistics track the first measurable decline in American reliance upon the death penalty since the Supreme Court reinstated it in 1976, following a brief hiatus in its use after the Court declared it unconstitutional in 1972. The graphs tracking executions since the 1950s available on the Bureau of Justice Statistics website illustrate how shockingly prevalent sentences of death became after 1976. Before 1972, the number of persons on death row was rising, but still had only just crested 500. After 1976, the number of persons under sentence of death shot up dramatically, reaching an all-time high of 3601 in the year 2000. Recent Supreme Court cases have curtailed executions for the developmentally disabled (*Atkins v. Virginia*) and juveniles (*Roper v. Simmons*), and in several states executions have halted indefinitely following court challenges arguing that lethal injections violate the Constitution’s prohibition on “cruel and unusual” punishment. In January 2008, the Supreme Court will hear oral argument in one of these cases, *Baze v. Rees*.²

Moreover, American support for the death penalty has declined in recent years from an all-time high in the mid-1990s. In October 2006 a Gallup poll revealed that 67% of Americans supported the death penalty, whereas 80% had favored it in 1994.³ Notably, Black Americans have struggled more than White Americans to support the death penalty. During several periods since 1972, a majority of Black Americans has opposed it.⁴

It is unclear whether these statistics indicate that American support for the death penalty is

undergoing a sustained decline. On the one hand, the efforts of advocacy groups such as Amnesty International and the Innocence Project have exposed the errors and biases of our criminal justice system.⁵ It is likely that most Americans, even those in favor of a death penalty, would not want injustice perpetrated in their names.

On the other hand, very few of the Americans who oppose the death penalty do so because they believe that our flawed, all-too-human justice system is incapable of dealing justly in death. A majority of the 67% who supported the death penalty in October 2006 did so out of what criminal legal theorists call “retributive” impulses. They support executions because they believe that crime should have consequences, and that the “punishment should fit the crime.” Most of those opposing the death penalty did so out of the mirror image of this impulse — because they felt that it was “wrong” to take a life. (See Gallup information cited above.) Rather than focusing on the human-made inadequacies of their criminal justice system, Americans try to make the system further superhuman, if not divine ends. I am opposed to the death penalty because what I have seen of our justice system leads me to believe that we can never be perfect enough to condemn others to death. But in opposing the death penalty for that reason, I am unlike most of my fellow Americans.

Thus, what I take away from my review of the statistics is that Americans seek not fact-based or rational support for their opinions on the death penalty, but moral support. They seek

answers to questions that include the following: How do we balance the need to incapacitate truly dangerous individuals with the need to protect human dignity? How can the Christian idea of redemption square with recent studies demonstrating that some criminals may be neurologically incapable of true human sympathy?⁶ What else are we called upon to do once we realize the harm we do to others in our prisons and jails, or the harms suffered by families of crime victims? How do we find the strength to reach out and help heal both groups of our fellow humans? How can we rely so heavily on human institutions to bring us safety and healing?

I do not presume to know whether and how the American majority can turn away from the death penalty. What I do know is that the Church's traditional role has been to help all persons seeking moral guidance on difficult and emotional issues find that guidance, through meaningful discussion and debate. The Church may be one of the few places in our society where honest, yet respectful dialogue between persons with strong opposing viewpoints is still possible. If nothing else, American Moravian churches should take Elizabeth McOwat's article as a call to meaningful dialogue on the death penalty.

Dr. Laura Schattschneider is a Moravian and a lawyer in Washington, D.C.

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Dep't of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Capital Punishment

Statistics, available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/cp.htm>. Since I first reviewed these statistics, New Jersey has repealed the death penalty.

- ² See the discussion of Atkins and Roper at the Death Penalty Info website: <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/article.php?did=1686&scid=64>. Copies of the merits and amicus briefs in *Baze v. Rees* are available at <http://www.abanet.org/publiced/preview/briefs/jan08.shtml#baze>
- ³ See <http://www.galluppoll.com/content/default.aspx?ci=1606>.
- ⁴ See <http://www.galluppoll.com/content/?ci=28243>
- ⁵ (<http://www.amnesty.org>); (<http://www.innocenceproject.org>)
- ⁶ See discussion of neuropsychologist Adrian Raine's work in this area at <http://www.usc.edu/usnews/stories/9861.html>.

Keith Kapp

"Thou shalt not kill."

— Exodus 20:13, King James Version.

"You shall not murder."

— Exodus 20:13, New Revised Standard Version, quoted in the "Liturgy of Grace," *Moravian Book of Worship* (1995), p. 32.

North Carolina Pattern Capital Punishment Instructions based on North Carolina General Statutes §§ 15-189 and 15-194: *The prisoner, (name prisoner), having been convicted of murder in the first degree by unanimous verdict of the Jury duly returned at the term*

of the superior court of (name county), North Carolina, and the Jury having unanimously recommend the punishment of death.

IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that the same (name prisoner) be, and he is hereby sentenced to death and the Sheriff of (name county), North Carolina in whose custody the said defendant now is, shall forthwith deliver said prisoner, (name prisoner), to the Warden of the State’s Penitentiary at Raleigh, North Carolina, and the said Warden shall cause the said prisoner, (name prisoner), to be put to death as by law provided.

May God have mercy on his soul.

The first two quotations are two versions of one of the 10 Commandments — one in archaic language familiar to most American Christians from childhood and the other integrated into the congregational responses of current Moravian liturgy in North America. The differences between the two translations illustrate starkly how people of faith can and do disagree about the “Christian” point of view on the very difficult issue of capital punishment. Sister McOwat eloquently states her view on where to draw the moral and ethical lines on capital punishment.

The third, longer quotation is one used only in the most tragic circumstances. These are the words spoken by judges in North Carolina pronouncing death sentences, and defendants hear them only after:

(1) Law enforcement has determined that probable cause exists to believe that the accused intentionally killed another human being;

(2) The accused has stood trial, defended by at least two attorneys with the duty to represent him (or her) zealously, putting aside personal prejudices;

(3) A jury of 12 North Carolina citizens has determined unanimously beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused committed the crime of first-degree murder;

(4) The jury, in a sentencing hearing separate from the “guilt phase” of the trial, has weighed “aggravating factors,” such as the heinous nature of the crime (e.g., “with the victim being slashed so viciously and repeatedly that in her last moments she was able to see her own intestines”) against “mitigating factors,” such as the brutality of the accused’s upbringing (e.g., the accused was abused or tortured in childhood), and concluded unanimously that the aggravating factors outweigh the mitigating factors such that death is the appropriate sentence; and

(5) The trial judge has reviewed the entire proceeding, has agreed with the jury verdict and has not overturned it.

Only then does the task fall to the judge of invoking God’s mercy on the condemned.

Where is God’s mercy in a capital case? Where is *human* mercy, when a victim has died terribly, a defendant faces the end of hope and loved ones on all sides struggle with grief?

Years ago, I heard the director of prisons in another southern state offer his sincere opinion that many of the condemned do find mercy through faith before their executions, coming

to an understanding of the need to reconcile with God and seek forgiveness. In this warden's understanding, heaven has a place for the condemned as well as for the victim.

Sometimes, mercy emerges from the fact that the last words of the sentence are far from the end of the process of justice, which demands meticulous attention to the possibility of error. Multiple appeals can take years, even decades, with many lawyers, courts and judges reviewing a case. Our governor, at his sole discretion, can and does extend mercy through his absolute power of commutation and pardon, which cannot be overturned by anyone.

North Carolina is one of a majority of states whose citizens, including Moravians, have determined the need to draw an ethical and moral line, by law, that allows and supports this exacting judicial process. Moravian citizens have an obligation to obey the law. We also have the right to advocate change in the law to reflect what we believe to be right, just and humane.

Whether one supports or opposes the death penalty is not, of course, only a question of citizenship. Certainly it is a question of individual moral conviction and the understanding of Christian duty. How can and should North Carolina Moravians express those convictions? Some volunteer in prison ministries. Sister McOwat's work with LifeLines is commendable. Some are lawyers and judges, committed to the integrity of the judicial process. Many of us are — and all of us should

be — active participants in the governance of our state, our nation and our church.

Keith Kapp is a member of Raleigh Moravian Church and a lawyer in North Carolina.

Rebecca Craver

Thank you, Sister McOwat, for your insightful words and challenge to the North America Moravian Church in regard to the death penalty. I believe that the death penalty has been part of human government for millennia in order to serve as an example and deterrent to murder and other crimes which take away the lives of others. While I believe that we should be held accountable in our societies for actions which demean and take away the lives of our fellow human beings, the death penalty does not serve this purpose. If it was in fact a deterrent then there would be far fewer people on death row this very day. As I read your paper I was in agreement with your arguments against the death penalty and with the facts that you shared to back up your argument. I would like to try and answer the question you posed at the beginning; in hopes of explaining the way one could support the death penalty in the USA.

“I need to understand, as a Moravian, why it is that so many of our Moravian brothers and sisters in the USA feel that the death penalty is both morally and ethically acceptable whereas

most European Moravians take a different view. What is it about our cultures, or belief systems, that makes for this difference?”

The cultural myth of North America is that each individual is free. In that freedom we are all expected to respect the freedom of others by allowing them to carry on their lives unharmed or hindered by another. This freedom also dictates that when an individual does not allow for another to live, then they have given up, *by choice*, the rights inherent to them. In an idealistic and philosophical sense this is true. If we all respected the individual rights and freedoms of others there would be no need for a judicial system because society would carry on without needing to focus on that.

However, the world we live in is much less than ideal. The interpretation of freedom and the equality of all is warped by a history filled with racism, classism, and violence of many kinds; not unlike any other human society that I have heard of. The freedom that would seem to clearly alleviate the need to kill or be killed does not function as it would in its most ideal sense. We tend to use the ideal as the basis for making judgements of what is real in our society.

Clearly there is a disconnect between the ideal and the real which causes the dilemmas you mentioned: killing innocent people, recognizing the reality of the disproportionate amount of people on death row who are poor and disenfranchised, the effect race has on the outcome of trials, and the lack of forgiveness and hope for reconciliation or rehabilitation in

the decision to execute another human being, etc. It is for those same reasons that many United States citizens do not support the death penalty.

It is difficult to go against the myth, in the sense of a defining story of a people group or nation, of freedom in the USA. I believe that our culture holds tight to the ideals of our founders who, not so many years ago, established this government on the basis of inalienable rights and the dignity of humankind. However, throughout those years we have known slavery, civil war, racism, male-dominated discourse and power which we are still experiencing and struggling with. It is a mix of denial, disconnectedness from the victims of capital punishment and privilege that creates the possibility and probability of a positive attitude towards the death penalty among US citizens. If we each knew someone who faced such a sentence I believe our opinions would change significantly. Many North American Moravians can avoid the reality of the injustice of our capital punishment system because there is a large disparity between the privileged and disenfranchised. We must make ourselves see and work for justice in all matters.

I believe that growth is a long process and I appreciate the voices of others who call out my own ideals and thoughts in order that I might re-access my own beliefs to adhere more fully to the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we all profess.

Rev. Rebecca Craver serves as Associate Pastor of Edgeboro Moravian Church and is on the staff of the Board of World Mission.

Willie Israel

I will begin by saying that I agree with the Sr. McOwat's views on capital punishment. The article powerfully conveys the author's deeply held conviction concerning the immorality of the death penalty. In writing her article, Sr. McOwat asks the question: "Why [do] so many of our Moravian brothers and sisters in the USA feel that the death penalty is both morally and ethically acceptable." In this response, I hope to provide my understanding of the mentality Sr. McOwat describes, react to the rationale behind this mentality and offer my own thoughts as to the legitimacy of the death penalty from a Christian perspective.

It is true that the death penalty question is one of many issues that have led to the polarization of the American political scene. My reading leads me to generalize three reasons for acceptance of the death penalty in this country. These are:

1. Deterrence. Needless to say, the executed criminal will be unable to repeat his or her crime. In addition, fear of the death penalty will make potential criminals think twice before committing a capital offense.

2. Purification of society. As a surgeon removes a tumor from the body of a cancer sufferer, the elimination of a violent offender makes for a healthier society.

3. Retribution. The family(ies) of the victims receive closure — "payback" for the hurt engendered by the crime.

Depending upon individual experience,

Christian rationale for support of capital punishment may be related to any or all of the above reasons, along with a certain interpretation of scripture. The Old Testament provides an example of ancient scriptural support for the death penalty. In Leviticus 24:17, we are told, "Anyone who kills a human being shall be put to death" (NRSV). For the Jews, murder was a capital offense, along with adultery, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, profanity, and sorcery. (Leviticus 20).

In the New Testament, support for capital punishment centers around Romans 13:1-4; verse 4 reading, "for [*archon* — ruler or leader] is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer." (NRSV)

Deterrence: Taken at face value, the most persuasive argument in favor of capital punishment is the deterrent effect. Because senseless, violent crime is a growing source of fear in the United States, our communal anxiety compels us to seek a solution to the problem. Proponents of the death penalty offer compelling statistical evidence of its deterrent effect on crime. In an article entitled "The Deterrent Effect of Capital Punishment," Wesley Lowe presents the following statistics:

"In 1960, there were 56 executions in the USA and 9,140 murders. By 1964, when there were only 15 executions, the number of murders had risen to 9,250. In 1969, there were no executions and 14,590 murders, and 1975,

after six more years without executions, 20,510 murders occurred rising to 23,040 in 1980 after only two executions since 1976. In summary, between 1965 and 1980, the number of annual murders in the United States skyrocketed from 9,960 to 23,040, a 131 percent increase. The murder rate — homicides per 100,000 persons — doubled from 5.1 to 10.2. So the number of murders grew as the number of executions shrank.”¹

I submit, however, that we must be careful in making moral decisions based on statistical evidence alone. While statistics are a tool that can help us understand trends, they are not the only factors to be considered in our search for truth. It is a fact that statistics can be used to “prove” nearly any point of view. The study mentioned above considers only two variables: the murder rate vs. rate of executions. Before making cause-effect assumptions, we should carefully scrutinize all societal and environmental influences that may have led to the documented increase or decrease of violent crime.

Purification: This rationale is based on the premise that humans live in a culture that has the inherent potential to free itself from the blemishes of crime and violence. If there is an element in that culture that mars the potential of perfection, that element must be eliminated — either through reformation or removal. If there is an assumption that a person’s crimes are so severe that reformation is impossible, then capital punishment is seen as a reasonable alternative to life imprisonment. This rationale fits most closely with the Levitical code that

prescribed the threat of death as a means of keeping God’s people holy.

This argument is, as I see it, flawed in several ways. First, humanity has proven time and again its inability to attain a sin-free existence. Second, in order to justify the death penalty, we must assume not only the absolute infallibility of the judicial system, but also the premise that the accused has no hope of redemption. To the latter, I would comment that if God was able to reform and use two murderers (Moses and King David) as leaders of God’s people, how can we presume that God’s redeeming power does not extend to those we condemn? Finally in an article entitled “The Economics of Capital Punishment,” Phil Porter gives evidence for the argument that lifetime imprisonment of a convict is economically more feasible than the death penalty.²

Retribution: The current psychological buzzword, “closure” is often used as a euphemism for vengeance. When a person, a family, or a society has been grievously wounded by the consequences of needless violence, the desire for revenge is a natural human reaction. However, as satisfying as it may feel to hit back — to repay violence with violence, this action cannot restore the loss or heal the hurt. Evil is not eradicated through human vengeance.

True “closure,” or the restoration of wholeness to a family or individual comes, not through acts of vengeance (which are God’s prerogative) but through forgiveness. I will illustrate this point using two situations involving acts of extreme violence.

In 1991, eleven-year-old Junny Rios-Martinez was kidnapped, raped and murdered. His killer, Mark Dean Schwab, was sentenced to death a year later. For sixteen years, Junny's family waited for "closure," and as the date for Schwab's execution approached, fifteen family members gathered to watch the ending of the killer's life. When Schwab's execution was delayed once again (November 15, 2007), the family was angry and frustrated.

There is a marked contrast between this family's reaction and that of the Amish community in Quarryville, Pennsylvania, in the aftermath of the October 2006 school shootings. Instead of seeking vengeance, that community relied on their love for each other, and their belief in Jesus' admonition to forgive. The Amish community, I believe, has already experienced healing and "closure" as they have supported one another through their grief.

As the Supreme Court continues to wrestle with the question of whether or not the death penalty is "cruel and unusual" punishment, the questions that Christians must consider are equally challenging. Are we willing to accept the possible execution of innocents, and the ongoing racial/social bias in sentencing persons convicted of capital crimes? Do we believe that God has the power to redeem even those who have committed unspeakable acts of violence? And finally, do we believe the Biblical claim that vengeance belongs to God? I believe that Christians must prayerfully consider all of these questions before supporting the government's right to take human life.

Rev. Willie Israel is pastor of the Rolling Hills Moravian Church in Longwood, Florida.

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.wesleylowe.com/cp.html#deter>, accessed 10-16-2007.

² <http://www.mindspring.com/~phporter/econ.html>, accessed 10-16-2007

Hermann Weinlick

I thank our authors for their passionate words about the effect of the death penalty on those who are executed and also on the others involved — their families, doctors, prison employees — all of whom suffer from their contact with capital punishment. I would like to add a few comments on other aspects of this issue that seem important to me.

First, the death penalty has to do with what sort of God we as Christians worship. What does our God look like? How does our God relate to creatures like us? The Bible as a whole gives us contradictory pictures of God. God is pictured as destroying Sodom and Gomorrah and all of humanity except the family of Noah. That sort of God seems like the kind of God who approves of capital punishment, indeed metes it out. But the Old Testament God is also pictured as marking Cain to preserve him from revenge for killing his brother, as giving second chances to such guilty characters as David and

Jacob, and as having enormous patience with the descendants of Abraham. This does not feel like a God eager to use the death penalty.

The Gospels, however, in their picture of the one we Christians believe is God in the flesh, reveal a God who is consistently nonviolent, does not use murder as a tool, and suffers the death penalty. At his arrest he tells a defender, “All who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). While there are no specific prohibitions of capital punishment in the New Testament, we have the words in the Sermon on the Mount, “Love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44), and we know that, for the most part, Christians in the first three centuries after Christ, before the time of Constantine, did not feel military service was consistent with Christian profession.

The New Testament shows me a God who does not bless the death penalty. (I have heard many times — in sermons or in biblical commentaries — about the illegality of Jesus’ trial or trials before Jewish and Roman authorities. But I cannot recall anyone in the treatment of the passion narrative raising the question of the justice of the death penalty.)

Second, the death penalty has to do with what kind of people we are. Since we reflect the God we worship and are the body of Christ, as Paul tells us frequently, it seems to me that we cannot bless the death penalty. I heard a Christian say once, “I oppose the death penalty because I could not in good conscience pull the switch or press the button or do the injection

myself.” Simply, the death penalty makes us less like the kind of people God wants us to be, and less like the kind of people who reflect the character of God, at least the God revealed by Jesus. That statement could be made about many human activities: from war to playing violent video games to prostitution, some of which the state considers illegal and some of which the state considers legal. But, if we are US citizens, the death penalty is an activity that is done for us, by those who as government employees work for us.

Some of those activities that make us less like what God wants, like war and divorce, are defended as last resorts, when other ways of dealing with differences prove ineffective. But it is hard to defend the death penalty as a last resort, when we have alternatives like prison, unless the conditions of our prisons are such that death is a more merciful penalty.

Third, one of the unspoken assumptions behind the death penalty is that there are good people (us) and bad people (them), and the death penalty is reserved for bad people (them). This seems to me to question one of the central truths of Christian faith, that we all fall short of God’s intent for us and that we all may be redeemed. One of the things that Jesus’ ministry seems to imply consistently is that the people his followers thought were different — women, lepers, those who were demon-possessed, Samaritans, tax collectors and prostitutes — were like his followers. Or more directly, in the Gospels, Jesus’ followers included all kinds of people.

Certainly some criminals are sociopaths who need to be separated from society, perhaps permanently. But some are people more like you and me whose lives have been complicated by mental illness, the misuse of alcohol or other drugs, or skin color. This does not mean that their acts should have no consequences, but it does mean that they are not as different from us as we like to think.

Hermann I. Weinlick, a retired pastor living in Minneapolis, MN, is ecumenical officer of the Moravian Church, Northern Province. He was editor of The Moravian 1987-98.

Sarah Atwood

Elizabeth McOwat asks what is wrong with Americans that they still have the death penalty? Quite honestly, I cannot say what is wrong with us. I'm a sophomore in high school. My civics class has just finished reading the novel *The Chamber* by John Grisham. We have discussed all the pros and cons of the death penalty. Still, as an American I am not proud of the death penalty, and as a Christian, I am confused by it. I agree with a bumper sticker that says "When Jesus said 'Love your enemies,' I'm pretty sure he didn't mean kill them."

What purpose does the death penalty serve? It does rid us of dangerous criminals because they can't kill if they are dead. However, jails also rid us of dangerous criminals. They can't kill if they are locked up.

We claim to kill only when we are sure beyond a shadow of a doubt that this person is guilty. However, we are only human and therefore make mistakes. In North Carolina, a man named Darryl Hunt was falsely convicted of murder and spent 19 years in prison for it. Twenty years after conviction, we discovered the true murderer. What if we had killed Darryl Hunt? We can't give back a life after it has been taken. Even one mistake in one thousand is too many. Yes, we get rid of 999 murderers. But if one person dies innocently, the State becomes the murderer.

I believe the only real purpose the death penalty serves is for one of the most primal human instincts — revenge. Say a man steals, rapes and kills your daughter; you would want him dead, wouldn't you? Humans naturally want revenge. We say it solves the problem, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. I disagree. I say it creates more problems than it solves. One family is hurt if a man steals, rapes and kills their daughter. But another family is hurt as much when the State kills their son. He may be a bloodthirsty psychopath, but he is still their son. In *The Chamber*, Sam Cayhall is on death row for blowing up an office and killing two Jewish boys. His daughter, Lee, is embarrassed by him. But when Sam is put in the electric chair, Lee cries for her lost dad. In some ways she hated him, but she still cries for him, she is still hurt, she is still angry with the State for killing her father. Does revenge ever work the way we think it should? Do we ever feel better afterwards? Coupled with the instinct of revenge comes the emotion of guilt.

Is it right or moral to kill a person because he or she killed someone? The old saying holds true — two wrongs don’t make a right. Just because we have an excuse to kill him doesn’t mean we should. Just because we have an excuse, should we play God? Who gave us that right, who decided that judges and juries are demigods? How can we hold their blood on our hands with a clear conscience? I asked a friend who answered, “They gave up their rights when they committed a murder. Therefore, we aren’t

murdering them.” I was under the impression that the founding fathers of America said God gave us inalienable rights, rights that no one can take away. No matter how criminally insane, how bloodthirsty a person is, they are still a person. We cannot take away their humanity; therefore we cannot take away their life.

Sarah Atwood is a member of Home Moravian Church in Winston-Salem and is fifteen years old.

The Authors Respond

We want to thank all the respondents for their thoughtful and insightful replies to our article. We wrote the paper in great anger shortly after Perrie had been executed in Raleigh, and we wanted to know, or understand, how such a thing could happen. We expected hostility in response to our views and the questioning anger that we felt (and still feel). This expectation of hostility was based on the experiences that Elizabeth has had from some American Moravians when she has visited another friend, Daniel, on death row in Arizona, and other prisoners.

However, your careful responses have heartened us greatly. We appreciate the way in which each person has looked at a different aspect of the debate around the death penalty.

Each contributor has emphasised a different and important aspect of this life and death issue — our search for moral answers, a reflection on our common humanity, our individual and societal rights, reaching closure through forgiveness rather than revenge, the fact that we, as humans, are made in the image of God, and our need to understand where God’s mercy may be found in the judicial process. Sr. Atwood and Sr. Carver address the aspects of society in the United States that have made the death penalty part of the culture. In a society built on individual rights, they show that some people feel that criminals have, by their actions, forfeited their own rights, but as Sr. Atwood argues, they have not lost their humanity. Sr. Carver resonates with our belief that there is

a need to know a person who has been sentenced to death — who then ceases to be a statistic but becomes a real person with a life story, whom God loves and whom we are called to love.

Sr. Israel also looks at the background to the acceptance of the death penalty in the United States and shows the kind of statistics that can be used to support the death penalty but also the limitations of these kinds of figures. Most helpfully she contrasts two different stories relating to closure for a victim's family, following a murder. Revenge or retribution does not look as attractive as forgiveness.

Br. Weinlick looks at the biblical witnesses and calls us back to reflect on our understanding of God and His dealings with us. This call asks us to act as people who reflect God in all

our civic, political and social attitudes and to examine our prejudices and assumptions.

Br. Kapp shows with clarity how the law is supposed to work but he does not address the mechanics or brutality of that law that then goes on to take a life through capital punishment. We appreciate his call for active citizenship in state and nation decision making but believe that there are times when the call to obey God's law must override the law of the land. Sr. Schattschneider, another lawyer, rejects the death penalty because of the imperfect nature of legal systems written by imperfect human beings. We appreciate her call for dialogue within our Churches about the death penalty. Our prayer is that meaningful dialogue will be initiated by this issue of *The Hinge*.

Book Review

Frank Hiddemann, *Site-specific Art im Kirchenraum* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2007).
Reviewed by Craig Atwood.

There is a long and rich tradition of art in Christian worship that dates back at least to the catacomb drawings of the 2nd century, but in modern times there has been little interchange between the arts community and the worshiping community. This has been due, in part, to Protestantism’s suspicion of visual arts in worship, particularly art that does serve a clear didactic purpose. But the artistic community also left the churches in order to pursue “art for art’s sake.” The desire for autonomous art inspired artists to explode boundaries of style, theme, and composition. Rather than producing icons or stained-glass images for sanctuaries or illuminated manuscripts for private devotions, artists produced paintings and sculptures intended to be displayed in galleries and museums. Art in the 20th century was generally presented in “white cubes” so that the viewer’s focus was entirely on the art.

Frank Hiddemann is a young pastor in Germany who was engaged in an effort to reconnect the artist community and the churches as part of his doctoral studies. Drawing heavily on the theology of Paul Tillich who saw modern, expressionist art as revelatory, Hiddemann argues for the importance of bringing contemporary art into sacred space both for the sake of worshipers and artists. He proposes that “site-specific” art, which was pioneered in America by Richard Serra and others, offers the potential for positive engagement between contemporary artists and congregations. Urban church buildings can provide opportunities for “site-specific” installations that connect the gospel with the existential concerns of the local community.

With funding from governmental and ecclesiastical agencies, Hiddemann was able to bring in various artists to set up installations in a number of churches in Erfurt, Weimar and Neudietendorf. His book recounts the history of these installations and some of the difficulties he encountered in bringing together artists, pastors and worshipers. One installation that included whispered confessions of an erotic nature was deemed inappropriate for the sanctuary and was moved to the church tower. Hiddemann concluded that there are indeed limits to the use of art in the chancel area. The liturgy itself is an art form that must be respected.

His most successful installation was in the Moravian Saal in Neudietendorf. The artist Hannelore Landrock-Schumann turned the sanctuary itself into a new piece of art. Like all Moravian Saals, the sanctuary is white with white pews. She placed red and green fluorescent lights under the pews. At times the sanctuary was red symbolizing the active passion of the heart. At other times it was green,

symbolizing the heart at rest. It could even be a combination of red and green symbolizing the pulsing between active and contemplative aspects.

Hiddemann organized a three-day conference in November 2003 on the theme of the heart, which included a paper on Zinzendorf's theology of the heart. The sanctuary was different colors for the different presentations. On Saturday night, there was a musical concert. After each piece, the room went black and then was light in a color appropriate for the next selection. Hiddemann reports that there was a lively discussion after the event among the participants. On Sunday morning, the sanctuary was lit in red for worship. The initial hesitancy among the congregation was quickly overcome.

Hiddemann theorizes that many factors contributed to the success of the installation in Neudietendorf. One was better communication between the artist and the pastor leading up to the installation. He had learned from his previous efforts. Secondly, the artist was more engaged with the sanctuary as a site for both art and worship.

The most important reason, though, was the Moravian Church has such a rich tradition of art in worship. The pastor understood that Zinzendorf promoted artist expression as a form of spirituality. Moravian "theology of the heart" lends itself to non-didactic art, such as that created by Landrock-Schumann. Hiddemann's experience indicates that there can be a place for contemporary creative art in worship if pastors, artists and worshipers work together and communicate clearly.

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