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The opening words of *The Ground of the Unity* read: “The Lord Jesus Christ calls His Church into being so that it might serve Him on earth until He comes.” This phrase serves to encompass the entire document, and in my experience summarizes the uniqueness of Moravian theology for the Church today. This phrase contains what has consistently been the foundation for the history of the *Unitas Fratrum*, a firm proclamation of the significance of both Jesus Christ and His Church. There is much more to be found within *The Ground of the Unity*, however, everything comes back to these central themes.

In *The Ground of the Unity* the doctrine of the Trinity is presented quite clearly. However, a description of the make-up of the divine essence and its *perichoresis* cannot be found. Like the theology of the Count Zinzendorf, modern Moravian theology teaches that God in Jesus Christ reveals in fullness the nature of the Trinitarian God. Consequently, the Christian life in its entirety is manifested in Jesus of Nazareth. There have been Christians throughout history to accuse the Moravian brethren of neglecting the Father. However, the Church wholeheartedly stands under the writings of the gospels when Jesus says, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). Therefore, in my understanding of Moravian theology, the revelation of the Son is the revelation of the Father. God’s complete revelation in Jesus of Nazareth existed for the purpose of his death and resurrection, the full redemption

of humanity from the stains of sin. The word of the cross, the mystery of Jesus Christ, is “revealed completely and clearly” within the Holy Scriptures and is the center of the Old and New Testaments.

The Ground of the Unity understands the Church to be made up of sinners. This is reminiscent of Martin Luther’s theology of the Church, a people who are simultaneously sinners and saints. The cross of Jesus Christ is the shield of faith for Moravian theology; the instrument of God’s grace which covers the sins of humanity’s past, present, and future. There is not an explicit doctrine of sin or an extended list of forbidden behaviors found in *The Ground of the Unity*. The only references available for us to formulate an understanding of sin are found: 1) in the reference to the historical creeds and confessions of the Christian Church, and 2) two references to redemption in Jesus Christ, whose mercy redeems believers from their isolation (division) and unites the children of God into His Church. Once again, it is not difficult to notice that there remains an emphasis on the importance of the Church of Jesus Christ. Within the recognition of the certain historical confessions of faith, it is important to notice that the council of Chalcedon is missing. This is most likely a statement against political resistance that took place around the council. Also, this council witnesses to the first major divisions among the churches (Orthodox, Catholic, Coptic, Armenian). In true ecumenical fashion, the

Moravian Church has chosen to distance itself from events that have elements of doctrine that create division.

“He (Jesus Christ) joins us together mutually, so that knowing ourselves to be members of His body we become willing to serve each other.” Within *The Ground of the Unity*, the gift of the Church is not only indicative of the salvation found in Christ, but is also its present manifestation on the earth. However, the Church is currently divided, indicative of the world’s current fallen state. Nonetheless, the sacrament of communion is the means by which we are reminded of Jesus’ promise to unite the Church. The real presence of Jesus Christ in communion “makes evident” the unity that believers have in Christ. Unity in Christ is the foundation for unity of the Church. When believers are gathered in the name of Christ, their united confession of faith unites them, a foreshadowing of a greater unity still to come.

The practice of communion within the Moravian Church is not a mystical experience, but a true witness to the unity of the Church. For this reason, *The Ground of the Unity* reminds the reader of the Holy Communion of August 13, 1727 in Berthelsdorf, the day in which the historical tradition of the Unity of the Brethren was reborn, establishing continuity of witness and purpose within the Christian tradition(s). *The Ground of the Unity* also speaks to the diversity of the Christian Church. Not only does it specifically refer to the different churches as such, but recognizes that “through

the grace of Christ the different churches have received many gifts.” This firmly establishes the continuity that the Moravian Church seeks with the diverse Christian community—not a submission of authority, but a common confession of witness and purpose. Without this unity, *The Ground of the Unity* argues that ecclesiastical divisions thwart the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this way, all churches are responsible for this division until all seek unity in Jesus Christ.

The firm declaration of *The Ground of the Unity* to unite the Church also provides a detailed description of how the members of the body of Christ should act toward one another. First, the Moravian Church seeks to recognize no distinction between the members of the body of Christ, forbidding any discrimination on the basis of “ethnic origin, sex, or social standing.” Being aware of Moravian global missions, this declaration seems quite necessary. For all of humanity to be united in Christ (the purpose of the Church), there is a need for the Church to be open to all people.

In addition, the Church of Jesus Christ is a unique manifestation of grace, and therefore should not succumb to the hate that has consistently divided humanity throughout history. This example of love extends to neighbors within the Church and the entire world, challenging “humanity with the message of the love of God, striving to promote the peace of the world and seeking to attain what is best for all.” The witness of love towards all of humanity is the beginning and fulfillment of

the task of the Church to create an atmosphere for the return of Jesus Christ; victorious over sin and death.

The theology of the Moravian Church is founded upon both scripture and tradition(s), in continuous reflection upon the original revelation of God in Jesus Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit. In the hope of communicating a “fuller understanding and clearer proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ,” the function of tradition within the Moravian Church remains congruent with that of the reformation churches. The Moravian Church argues that there is not one, single doctrinal system found within the Holy Scriptures. As a result, they have not developed a doctrinal system, believing that “the mystery of Jesus Christ which is attested to in the Bible, cannot be comprehended completely by any human mind or expressed completely in any human statement.” But the Holy Spirit has revealed God’s will for salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Moravian Church also relies upon certain creeds within the history of the Christian Church which have explained the essential doctrines of Christianity in “clear and simple expression.”

There are statements within *The Ground of the Unity* that are in need of attention for the sake of the Moravian Church’s future involvement in the ecumenical movement. It would be beneficial to explain their insistence that all of Christendom holds to a Trinitarian confession of faith. Unless this is an intentional statement against Unitarian congregations,

there is a need to expound upon this proclamation. Also, although the Moravian Church suggests that it has intentionally neglected to articulate a doctrinal statement, its reliance on certain historical confessions and the statement concerning the lack of doctrinal systems within scripture is in fact a doctrinal statement. And because all of the historical confessions included in *The Ground of the Unity* are all traditionally accepted by the churches of the Reformation, clarification is needed when relating to the Roman Catholic Church and younger Protestant traditions in ecumenical dialogue. Nonetheless, the theology of *The Ground of the Unity* coincides with the attempt of the Moravian Church to remain but one member of the body of Christ among many, rather than its authority.

Moravian theology today within *The Ground of the Unity* articulates the Christian faith within the confines of the relationship of Jesus Christ to His Church. Every principle of the document takes place within this relationship and all creeds are tested on account of it. In my opinion, this document is significant for the Church today for several reasons. It provides a voice of unity and hope into a Church that is fractured and broken. This document also makes room for dialogue between different congregations, instead of arguing for a strict allegiance to an individual system of principles. This encourages churches to exist within their uniqueness, similar to the ecumenical concept of unity within diversity. This creates certain difficulties when attempting to relate to diverse traditions. Since

The Ground of the Unity includes a discussion on the “boundary of heresies,” therein specifies the limit for diversity to occur. In such a case, churches who do not adhere to orthodoxy find themselves on the margins of the Christian faith. This raises the common problem within ecumenical theology on the role of tradition, authority, and the extent of Christian diversity.

Lastly, I would suggest that *The Ground of the Unity* is significant because of its honesty. The history of the *Unitas Fratrum* is a history of people on the margins. The Ancient Unity was largely ignored during the ecumenical situation of the 17th century. As a pacifist church, it also found itself diminished by an

age of wars between Christians. The Renewed Moravian brethren were also marginalized within their unique communities; attempting to be Christian witnesses to the ever-changing modern world. In this way, I think it is profound that *The Ground of the Unity* exists within this tradition of Christians who know how it feels to be left out of the unity. The history of the Moravian Church is filled with men and women who attempted to remain faithful to their ecumenical convictions. If the current ecumenical movement seeks to move forward in its quest for unity, it is necessary for it to pay more attention to their elder brothers and sisters.

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