

Philip Pfeiffer

Moravian theology to me, based on my continued studies in the Theology of the Heart, is simply the essential work of God in creation, redemption and sanctification through the work of the Father, Son and the one who brings blessing (Holy Spirit) and the human response to God's work in faith, love and hope. This is a simple statement, but it represents the heart of Moravian theology over the last 550 years that continues today.

The response in faith is clearly seen in the Heart Theology of Zinzendorf and modeled in the lives of the early members of the Renewed Moravian Church. It is a faith and lifestyle that is based on orthopraxy (right living) rather than orthodoxy (right belief), producing the virtues of humility, gentleness, unity, friendliness, patience and doing good to others. This faith, evident in the lives of the members of the Ancient Unity and the Renewed Moravian Church, through the daily life lived out both individually and collectively in the context of the closed-communities they were a part of, is a Christocentric faith that melds the sacred and the secular of one's life into a 24 hour a day/7 days a week visible and real love for the Savior and for others that flows from the heart. It is a response to the Gospel message that is shown in the reality of one's daily life modeling the Gospel message to the world.

The response in love to God's work is based, according to Moravian theology, on Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount. It has to do with a real, tangible love for your neighbor and even for your enemy that is based on action and not

emotion. In this regard, the same principle of orthopraxy (right living) over orthodoxy (right belief) is also at work in this essential of Moravian theology. Furthermore, this essential of the faith has to do with following the will of God, his purposes for this world and having a hand in making it a better place for all his creation. For instance, in the Ancient Unity and the Renewed Moravian Church this purpose, with a singular focus and devotion, was the spreading of the Gospel message to the entire world. For the latter, this included an unprecedented effort in mission work all over the world that demanded the commitment of one's entire life and great personal sacrifice put into action to this end.

The response to hope, which was the most powerful and meaningful essential to me personally in my studies, is the essential that allows a believer to look toward the future with confidence and expectation rather than with fear and anxiety. It is also the essential that speaks to hope in this life and the next, knowing who you are and where you're going due to Christ's work of salvation and redemption in your heart. What really speaks to me regarding this essential is the recurring theme that as a Christian, living out the Gospel in this world, we ought not to be filled with fear and anxiety, no matter how dark or bleak things may look. Rather, if our heart is right with God, we ought to respond daily with expectation and an *embracing of life with confidence* as we look to live out the Gospel message in this world. We must choose hope. We must bring hope to this world in both our words and our actions.

We can see this recurring theme of living out these three essentials through the work of God in our inner life in all the main documents of the Moravian Church through the ages (*Ratio Disciplinae* of the Unity, *Brotherly Agreement* of the Renewed Moravian Church, the *Moravian Covenant for Christian Living* of the modern Moravian Church). Sometimes in the past more forcefully, more thoroughly, more passionately. Sometimes in the present more subtly, more subdued, more succinct. But these essentials are the basis of Moravian theology and are also evident in the words of *The Ground of the Unity* and the *Essential Features of the Unity*, two contemporary documents of the church, as follows:

“With the whole of Christendom we share faith in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe and confess that God has revealed Himself once and for all in His Son Jesus Christ; that our Lord has redeemed us with the whole of humanity by His death and His resurrection; and that there is no salvation apart from Him. We believe that He is present with us in the Word and the Sacrament that He directs and unites us through His Spirit and thus forms us into a Church. We hear Him summoning us to follow Him, and pray Him to use us in His service. He joins us together mutually, so that knowing ourselves to be members of His body we become willing to serve each other.”

Essential Features of the Unity

A living church is the clearest witness for its Lord to the world. A church is and remains a living one when it:

➤ Is attentive to God’s Word,

- Confesses its sins and accepts forgiveness for them,
- Seeks and maintains fellowship with its Lord and Redeemer by means of the Sacraments,
- Places its whole life under His rule and daily leading,
- Ministers to its neighbor and seeks fellowship with all who confess Christ,
- Proclaims to the world the tidings concerning the Saviour,
- Awaits wholeheartedly the coming of its Lord as King.

Why is Moravian theology important today? Because Christ’s church still resides on the earth today, as it has since the first century, and these are the biblical and essential principles established by the early church for the universal church in Christ Jesus through the ages, based on his teachings to us and the world, and the work of the church in this world today is the same as it has always been—to lead us all to greater faith, love and hope through the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit/the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, in our hearts. I pray this will hold true in the Moravian Church today, as in ages past, so that we might continue to be equipped as a church to accomplish great things for God and to proclaim his Gospel message according to his will in the world today.

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