



THE HINGE

*A Journal of Christian Thought
for the Moravian Church*

Summer 2001
Tenth Anniversary Issue

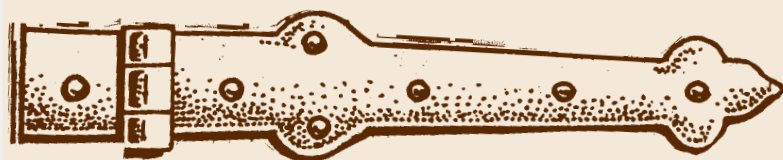
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The Hinge

Volume 8, Number 3: Summer 2001

The Hinge is a forum for discussion in the Moravian Church. Views and opinions expressed in articles published in *The Hinge* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board or the official positions of the Moravian Church.

According to the Bethlehem Diary, September 1742, "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. He is the mainspring of the life of the congregation" (Kenneth Hamilton, Bethlehem Diary, vol. 1, p. 80).

This idea from the Moravian past has been chosen to represent the character of this journal. The Hinge is intended to be a mainspring in the life of the contemporary Moravian Church, causing us to move, think, and grow. It is especially sensitive to troublesome factors that may be an obstacle to our mutual accord. Above all, it is to be an instrument for opening doors in our church.

The artwork of the Hinge was designed by Todd Tyson of Kernersville, N.C.

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Other correspondence should be sent to the editor at 2444 Ardmore Manor Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27103 or atwood@saalem.edu.

Notes from the Editor

It is with fear and pleasure that I take on this task of editing *The Hinge*. I apologize that this issue is so late, but there were a number of complications in making the editorial transition. We now have a new board, a new business manager (Tom Hensley has taken up the reins again), and a new home. Please note that *The Hinge* remains an independent journal and is not an official publication of the Moravian Church.

It is my intention to publish the next three issues in rapid succession in order to catch up some of our lost ground. In the future, the editorial board will be working on four issues simultaneously and publish the issue that is most ready at the time for publication. Delays in writing articles and responses have led to delays in publication so I will attempt to observe deadlines. Since many readers are also writers, I ask your help in this.

We will accept unsolicited articles and book reviews. In the future, there may be some issues that have multiple articles without responses, but the current format will be the norm. There are plans to publish important lectures, such as the annual Moses Lectures at Moravian Seminary. Letters to the editor of less than 750 words will also be published although they may first be returned for editing. Suggestions for future issues, including suggestions for authors and respondents are encouraged. Please address all corres-

pondence to me at my email address: atwood@salem.edu.

Speaking of email, there is some debate whether *The Hinge* should even be published in this day of the Internet. We could just go on-line. Certainly the Moravian listserv "Unitas" meets some of the same goals as *The Hinge*; however, there is a benefit in having a lasting account of these discussions. We will continue to use paper and ink. Cyberspace has the advantage of immediacy, but *The Hinge* has the goal of careful reflection.

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| Many of you have received this issue even though your subscription has run out! Please renew today. Others have received it as an invitation to join <i>The Hinge</i> . |
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In This Issue

In this issue we will look at a controversial aspect of Zinzendorf's theology and whether it has any relevance for today. Could wounds theology provide insight for our pastoral understanding of suffering?

Riddick Weber, a graduate student at the University of Virginia, presented this paper at the Zinzendorf@300 conference sponsored by Moravian Seminary in November, 2000. Our respondents include a Zinzendorf scholar, a pastor of a relatively new congregation, and an Episcopalian who worships in a Moravian congregation.

Blood and Righteousness, Blood and Wounds:

The Development of Zinzendorf's Theology and its Relevance for Today

C. Riddick Weber

A version of this paper was read at Zinzendorf Conference sponsored by Moravian Theological seminary Zinzendorf @ 300: The Ecumenical Community Doing Theology, Bethlehem, PA and Winston-Salem, N.C. on November 19, 2000.

Introduction

The Unity Archives in Herrnhut houses a famous picture of Count Zinzendorf at age three. The artist rendered the young Zinzendorf as a miniature adult. He wears armor, a sign of strength, maturity and wealth, but he also seems to be wearing a skirt which in our day would cry out for an explanation if not outright apology.

I believe we have traditionally looked at the theology of Zinzendorf much as this artist rendered the person of Zinzendorf. We view his theology as if he already held his adult views while only a child. Any changes in this theology appear to us as problems that had to be corrected, and that these changes cry out for apology. The traditional scholarship argues that Zinzendorf's christology began in his childhood devotion to Jesus. His powerful experience before the *Ecce Homo* painting in the Dusseldorf art gallery strengthened his devotion to the bloody wounded Savior. This devotion then reached its fullest expression (or sank to its lowest sentimentality) in the blood and wounds theology of the Sifting Period.

I want to challenge this relatively static view of Zinzendorf's christology. When we look at later portraits of the adult Zinzendorf we see that the child Zinzendorf, even if seen as a miniature adult, was different than the adult Zinzendorf. I believe the same is true of Zinzendorf's christology. It did develop over his lifetime, and this change is indeed significant. Moreover, this developing christology is indeed relevant as we consider the Christ to whom we bear witness in the twenty-first century. This paper will look at the development of Zinzendorf's "Blood and Wounds Theology" by comparing references to Jesus in the 1736 Berlin sermons to men (known in English translation as the Sixteen Discourses) with similar references in the Nine Public Lectures, delivered in London in 1746.¹

Zinzendorf's early christology focused on the blood of Christ, but out of that a separate wounds theology gradually emerged in the 1740's. Zinzendorf's interest in the wounds did not end with the end of the "Sifting Time." This was not passing emotional fancy or an aberration, as commonly

assumed. The emphasis on the wounds of Christ remained a vital element in the mature Zinzendorf's theology and in the life of the Moravians, rather than being an embarrassment for which he later recanted. This emphasis on the wounds should significantly influence our understanding of the person and work of Jesus and the relevance of God to human life and suffering.

Zinzendorf's Early Christology

The Sixteen Discourses are a natural starting point for any American discussion of Zinzendorf's theology, because they are among the few collections of Zinzendorf's sermons translated into English. In *The History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum 1722-1957*, the Bishops Hamilton give the Sixteen Discourses pre-eminence in their chapter on Zinzendorf's theology.² Though they never claim so, this chapter is really a summary of the Sixteen Discourses, which they claim "presented in lasting form, mature and carefully expressed thought to the wider public." The bishops dismiss other Zinzendorf writings since they can be "recognized as the product of passing emotions, often of heated controversy, and have less significance in determining Zinzendorf's fundamental theological concepts." It is interesting that the Hamiltons do not even mention the word "wound" in this chapter, though they do mention blood, suffering, and humiliation. Though the bishops write that "Zinzendorf's biblical studies led him to an exaltation of the person of the historic Christ," and mention the "true and essential humanity of Christ," they portray Zinzendorf's christology in terms of the

Son of God who offered the atoning sacrifice for the ransom of humanity.

For those who like to read Zinzendorf as a creative and possibly a little problematic theologian, the Sixteen Discourses make a good read. First their structure stands out. These talks, delivered in Berlin in 1736 are a series of discourses delivered point by point on the second article of the Augsburg Confession. Not only do the talks follow logically one from the other, but there is also an internal consistency in them that one is not supposed to find in Zinzendorf.³ For those leery of graphic depictions of the blood and wounds or embarrassing references to the heavenly Husband, the Sixteen Discourses offer a comforting treatment of the person of the second person of the Trinity. There are relatively few references to Christ as the Bridegroom. Zinzendorf makes several references to the blood of Jesus, but very little is said about the wounds. His discussion of the blood of Jesus follows very orthodox Pauline arguments. Jesus offers the blood of the perfect sacrifice, of ransom, of atonement. Zinzendorf presents Jesus as the slaughtered Lamb and the Son of God. Zinzendorf's assertion "You are altogether redeemed, purchased, and ransomed by the merit, sufferings and death of the eternal Son of God, our Saviour, our Head, and our Lord" sums up Zinzendorf's early christology.⁴ Jesus Christ is the sacrificed Son of God. However, Zinzendorf makes a very few, scattered references to the wounds that hint of a developing christology that blossomed in the works of the more mature Zinzendorf.⁵

Zinzendorf states in his author's preface (written in 1738) that he will be presenting four main points in the Sixteen Discourses. They are:

The first is, the substantial and eternal God-head of Him who was made Man.

The second is, the true, substantial natural and unconfounded humanity of the God from Heaven.

The third, that the only way to salvation for all mankind, is, that for the merits of the sacrificed Lamb, they obtain grace and remission of all their sins.

The fourth (in much condensed form) is that Christians do not sin any more since Jesus purchased them by his blood.⁶

Even though Zinzendorf's interest in the wounds began in 1734, notice that he makes no reference to the wounds. One finds a similar predominance of the references to blood over references to wounds in the verses Zinzendorf added to the old Lutheran hymn "The Savior's Blood and Righteousness" in 1739 (hymn 460 in the German hymnal). The very title indicates the importance of the blood of Christ as the atoning sacrifice that makes us righteous. In the sixteen verses known to have been written by Zinzendorf, he never refers to the wounds of Jesus, but there are five direct references to blood and eleven references to atonement for or removal of sin. Jesus is named "Christ," the "holy, guiltless Lamb," "Lord," the "Lord who hung on the cross," "King of Honor" and the "only Son of the Father." Here in this

hymn, as in the Sixteen Discourses, Zinzendorf presents a christology of the divine Christ whose shed blood atones for sin.

Interestingly, we can trace in the Moravians themselves a growing interest in the wounds. The editor of the English translation of the Sixteen Discourses (published in 1740) included a dedication "To the Right Reverend and Reverend the Archbishops, etc. grace, peace, and salvation through the Wounds of Jesus, the Chief Cornerstone of the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles."⁷ In a mere five pages, the editor mentioned the wounds three times (half as many times in five pages as Zinzendorf had mentioned in 170 pages.) Though the editor's dedication fit perfectly well with the theology of the Moravians as it had developed by 1740, it stands out remarkably from the interests of Zinzendorf in the 1730's and points towards Zinzendorf's theological developments. With this transition in mind an examination of the Nine Public Lectures shows how substantially these themes were developed.

Wounds Theology

Zinzendorf preached a series of sermons in London in 1746. Here he presents a much more graphic and developed theology of the blood and wounds than in his earlier Berlin sermons. Zinzendorf remains committed to his earlier blood theology, mentioning the atoning blood of Jesus thirty separate times. However, unlike the Sixteen Discourses, he complements his blood theology with wounds theology. He makes thirty-five references either to the wounds in general or

to specific wounds such as the nail prints and the side wound.

Several key passages summarize the function of the wounds in Zinzendorf's blood and wounds theology. "Here we have a great advantage over the first disciples, since he shed his blood for us, since we are healed by his wounds, since his passion now reigns in us."⁸ The wounds heal and serve as the object of meditation, yet they do recognize suffering as a key point of Christian life and a point of identification with the Savior. "Oh, how ardently this soul meditates on this part of the body, which on the day of his coming will be the sign of the Son of Man, the hole in His side, His heart, out of which flowed blood and water."⁹ And again, "Then a person begins to look and listen in the hopes of finding the Savior as his Creator in his true suffering human form, with his corpse wounded for us, before our eyes."¹⁰

Zinzendorf offers many of his prayers for the wounds' sake, and he ties life in Christ to the wounds. "The new begetting, when the Spirit from God comes into our heart, when Jesus Christ with His five wounds is formed in us, when we are allotted to Him in heaven above-- this is a divine moment."¹¹ His recounting of Philip's baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch refers to baptism into the death and wounds of Jesus.¹² The baptism into the wounds of Jesus correlates with Zinzendorf's view of the side wound as the entry point into the life of Christ. It is a spiritual birth canal for the Christian, as well as a rest-placing for the soul, the bride of Christ. Zinzendorf also says that belief comes through the

wounds, and indeed at one point writes that Christians are saved not by the atoning blood, but by the wounds.¹³

Having noted the distinct starting point and growing emphasis on the wounds, should we then dismiss them as so much "Sifting Period" excess? I don't think so. These observations point to a different understanding of the development of Zinzendorf's christology -- one that recognizes this emphasis as part of larger, connected set of theological issues that remained important in the life of the Moravian Church.

Craig Atwood's dissertation argues that devotion to the wounds was an important part of the life of Bethlehem long after the end of the Sifting Period.¹⁴ Moreover the 1783 hymnal shows that the emphasis on the wounds remained an important part of Moravian Hymnody decades after Zinzendorf's death. In 1749 Zinzendorf wrote a letter to all the churches and communities in the Moravian Church, reprimanding them for certain practices.¹⁵ Later historians have pointed to this letter as a turning away from, among other things, the theology of the wounds, however the contents of the letter indicate that Zinzendorf did not renounce or even de-emphasize the theology of the wounds. Zinzendorf addresses certain practices, not theological issues. He disapproves of a certain way of referring the side wound, but on the whole, Zinzendorf actually upholds reverence for the side wound writing, "The Holy Side of the Savior is the Mother of Our Souls," and "We are a people born from Jesus' side."¹⁶ All of these indicate that the wounds theology

maintained a vital role in Zinzendorf's theology and in the theology and practice of the Moravian Church after the Sifting Period and even after his death.

Wounds Theology Today

What does this say about the Christ we proclaim at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Is wounds theology simply an embarrassing part of our history that we need to hide or dismiss, or does it continue to communicate something significant to believers? I believe we must continue to complement the atoning blood of the Son of God with the wounds of the Son of Man. The traditional doctrine of the atoning sacrifice of the perfect Son of God, which I believe to be true and important, may seem too abstract and removed from the complicated, imperfect world in which we live. *The wounds that emphasize the humanity of Christ emphasize his relationship to this complicated and imperfect world. Just as we are, Jesus Christ was a human participant in the world, with the positive and negative potentials that entails.*

Why must we emphasize this part of our theology? I will close by sharing several examples that underscore the importance of human identification with the wounded Christ who identified with us even to the point of experiencing human suffering and death. In the 2001 commencement address at Duke Divinity School, Dr. Willie Jennings spoke of the cross as the intersection of suffering and hope. Since we are baptized into the death of Christ, our entry point into the life of Christ is also this intersection of hope and suffering. Dr.

Jennings pointed out that while suffering in itself is never salvific, we must remember that our Savior suffered. As Christians we do, too. Dr. Jennings' comments seem to be a contemporary rephrasing of wounds theology. They do not glorify human suffering, nor give them a salvific, human-oriented power apparent in some modern theologies, yet they do recognize this a key point of Christian life and identification with the Savior. Being able to approach the woundedness of the suffering Savior in such a manner is not a theological nicety. It is a pastoral necessity.

When the Spiritual Formation class offered by Moravian Theological Seminary in Fall 2000 addressed the issue of suffering, a student spoke about her father who was suffering from Parkinson's disease. He asked his daughter, "What did I do to deserve this?" Professor Asquith pointed out that in this moment of suffering there is a wonderful pastoral opportunity for reflection and possibly confession, but such reflection may lead to the answer "Nothing." The man may not have done anything to merit such suffering. In that case, the shed blood of the Son of God may not seem very relevant or comforting. But in such cases, I believe the suffering of the wounded Son of Man may be very comforting. The Son of Man did nothing that merited his suffering and his being wounded, yet he endured this as part of the human condition, part of his complete identification with humanity.

That Christ was wounded, and that Christ suffered, can also be an important focus of prayer for those who are suffering

and those who attend the suffering. I recently visited a patient in hospice. The patient was a day away from death, and in no pain, but her breathing was so labored that her spouse prayed for comfort and relief for her. He told me that as he watched her the thought of Jesus hanging on the cross came to him. He almost involuntarily prayed aloud, "Jesus you prayed for relief on the cross. Won't you comfort my wife?" This couple had lived lives of devoted service to the Savior. Intellectually and by faith they each trusted in the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God for their salvation. But in this tender parting moment the theological importance of such a sacrifice paled in comparison to the heartfelt plea that came in the reciprocal identification of the suffering Jesus and a suffering fellow human. This prayer, arising spontaneously from the heart of a suffering yet hopeful Christian, demonstrates the practical importance of wounds theology. I believe the practical importance of this theology will grow as the church seeks to minister to a wounded and suffering world. Such practical pastoral considerations require that we continue to study Zinzendorf's wounds theology. We must not dismiss it as emotional fanaticism, but rather embrace this part of Zinzendorf's theology as an important part of our Moravian heritage and as a gift from Zinzendorf and the Savior to the Moravian Church as it seeks to minister in the twenty-first century.

¹ Zinzendorf, Sixteen Discourses on the Redemption of Man by the Death of Christ Preached at Berlin, translated by John Gambold (1740); Nine Public

Lectures on Important Subjects in Religion Preached in Fetter Lane Chapel in London in the Year 1746, translated and edited by George W. Forell (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 1973).

- ² J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum 1722-1957 (Bethlehem, Pa.: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education of the Moravian Church in America, 1967), pp. 154-156.
- ³ Zinzendorf's reputation for being a charismatic speaker, hard to follow and to understand, does not mean that his sermons themselves were unstructured. They display more overall structure than one might expect, though Zinzendorf can bring in rather far-flung or seemingly disjointed examples to make his points.
- ⁴ Sixteen Discourses, p. 98.
- ⁵ The disparity between the number of references to the blood and the number of references to the wounds overwhelms those accustomed to thinking of the blood and wounds as inseparable in Zinzendorf's theology. He makes sixty-three direct references to the blood of Christ, but only six to the wounds. Of those, two refer to the nail marks. Remarkably, Zinzendorf refers to the side wound only once in the Sixteen Discourses.
- ⁶ Sixteen Discourses, p. xvi.
- ⁷ Sixteen Discourses, p. ix.
- ⁸ Nine Public Lectures, p. 22.
- ⁹ Nine Public Lectures, p. 31.
- ¹⁰ Nine Public Lectures, p. 84.
- ¹¹ Nine Public Lectures, p. 29.

¹² Nine Public Lectures, p. 22. Acts mentions only that he was baptized. The insertion of the wounds was made by Zinzendorf.

¹³ Nine Public Lectures, p. 72.

¹⁴ Atwood, "Blood, Sex, and Death: Life and Liturgy in Zinzendorf's Bethlehem" (Ph.D. diss. Princeton Theological Seminary, 1995).

¹⁵ Atwood's article, "Zinzendorf's 1749 Reprimand to the *Brüdergemeine*," Transactions of the Moravian Historical

Society 29 (1996): 67-81, included the first publication of the entire Zinzendorf letter in either English or German.

¹⁶ Reprimand, pp. 71 and 73. He did write that "a single brother who can be convicted of having contemplated or spoken of the Holy Side of the Savior in the manner that our enemies describe it or according to a way in which an example has become known to me, be it ever so innocently explained, shall be excluded from the Holy Communion for one year" (p. 70).

Responses

Arthur Freeman

Weber presents the development of Zinzendorf's theology during a crucial period, 1738-1746. The Berlin Sermons (dealing with Luther's explanation of the second article of the Creed and thus Christology) were preached in 1738 just following the period of Zinzendorf's significant Bible studies and "conversion" to the thought of the early Luther. The Nine Public Lectures were presented in England during what has been called the "Sifting Period," a time characterized by language about Jesus' wounds. Fortunately the Nine Public Discourses are still available in modern English translation, but the Berlin Sermons are only available in libraries in an eighteenth century translation: *Sixteen Discourses on the Redemption of Man by the*

Death of Christ. This presents the problem faced by the average North American who is interested in the rich heritage of Zinzendorf but cannot read German. Presently in the Olms reprint series there are seventy volumes of Zinzendorf's or supplementary materials, little of which has been translated. In my book on his theology, *An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart*¹ I try to make available a great deal of material in translation. Fortunately, Julie Tomberlin Weber, Riddick's wife, has translated, and Craig Atwood edited, a volume of sermons Zinzendorf preached in Pennsylvania.² We are deeply indebted to scholars such as the Webers who recognize the importance of the Moravian Church's significant theological heritage to its present life and mission and have dedicated themselves to research and translation.

Riddick Weber's article makes a significant contribution to this. We cannot meet the present without knowing the past and the answers forged in response to its issues. We appreciate the significant roles in this of two journals, *The Hinge* and TMDK (*Transatlantic Moravian Dialogue Correspondence*), which provide Moravian theological dialogue. In its invitation to dialogue, TMDK speaks of doing theology as "formation."

Theological formation is the process of a community where individual insights are respected as gifts and the community provides the balance of shared wisdom. We call this theological formation because theology is not merely a matter of developing concepts and constructing a theological system, but of being formed by the theological reality we seek to describe. Thus theology is close to prayer.

Weber challenges the idea that Zinzendorf could have lived through his many-dimensioned life without responding to his experience and thus being engaged in process. By this he not only argues for development in Zinzendorf's Christology but also legitimizes our need for a Christology relevant to our time. He indicates that Bishops J. Taylor and Kenneth G. Hamilton in their *History of the Moravian Church* focused on the Berlin Sermons as the primary expression of Moravian theology in Zinzendorf's day and did not take seriously the additional developments within the Sifting Period as part of a natural theological process. This has long been a Moravian atti-

tude to this period and materials concerning the Sifting have even been destroyed. As Weber points out, recent research indicates that much of the language of the Sifting Period continued long afterward, even after Zinzendorf's death, although Zinzendorf and the Church called a halt to some of the practices and expressions of that time. Thus both Zinzendorf and the Church were engaged in a process which was intentional, natural and continual.

Weber focuses primarily on a movement from speaking about the blood of Jesus in the Berlin Discourses to the increasing use of the term "wounds" both in the preface to the Berlin Discourses (of course later than the Discourses themselves) and in the content of the Nine Public Discourses of 1746. When one observes the paintings by Haidt of Christ with his wounds they are very real but the blood is represented largely by a red line around the wounds. There is little flow of blood. One of Haidt's paintings places Zinzendorf before the various members of the community, including children, and light rather than blood, streams from the wounds of Jesus to Zinzendorf's head, mouth and heart. I would guess that though the wounds language was very significant for Moravians, "blood" was only part of the terminology of the atonement and was not as significant as the wounds themselves. As Weber indicates, the wounds portray the nature of the Savior. His suffering form is key to his meaning.

There are also other interesting Christological developments, not discussed by Weber, such as the movement towards preference for the term "Lord" for Christ

(Lord as "Housefather") in the late 1750s and the role of the Holy Spirit as Mother of the Church which had its beginnings in 1738 and was given a specific festival date in 1756. Both of these seem to suggest a diminishing of the November 13th celebration concerning Christ as Chief Elder. The Spirit was understood to mediate the Savior to the Church and care for it as a mother would care for the estate while the husband was away (Christ's Ascension). Yet Jesus was not seen as really absent. In the paintings of Haidt, he is shown as present among the "First Fruits" of Moravian missions and in the midst of Choir groups. He is sometimes located in the balcony of the church, just above the worshipping congregation, thus retaining the ambiguity of the experience of Christ and the experience of Christ through the Spirit. I would like to think that the retention of various ways of describing the experience of the presence of God in life ministered better to the needs of various persons.

In a sense, the consistency of Moravian Christology lies in the person of the Savior at its center. This was the experience of Zinzendorf during his childhood. The meaning of the Savior was then developed in various ways as the significance of his presence and the relationship with him and the biblical witness were worked through. Even the language of the wounds can be understood as a way of keeping Jesus at the center by the presentation of his vivid, unforgettable reality. Weber's presentation of the significance of wounds theology is important for the present Moravian Church. As he indicates: "The wounds that emphasize the humanity of Christ emphasize his

relationship to this complicated and imperfect world. Just as we are, Jesus Christ was a human participant in the world, with the positive and negative potentials that entails."

I have struggled with what it might mean to take the imagery of the wounds seriously. Some of the language about Jesus' wounds and the mystical marriage with Jesus may be offensive to those unaccustomed to it and similar language in mysticism. Yet over the years I have constantly found myself strangely moved by it. It leaves me with images in my head and heart which somehow make Jesus and what he did a part of me, or me a part of him. I find myself changing under its impact. This language was the language Zinzendorf used to paint the Savior before the mind and heart of believers so that they could experience the objective, not subjective, reality of the Savior and thus be equipped for life. In some sense, the first Tablet of the Law enters my heart. I see him in his suffering which, more than his resurrection, makes him God to me. His side-wound becomes the womb of my birth and life. His blood flows in mine as well as tingeing the earth with atonement where it fell. In his dying I not only live but die. And I feel his eyes upon me and hear him ask, "Do you love me?" And as the Mother Spirit comes upon me I surrender to her care and find myself in the family of Father, Mother and Son. If this language at all works for the reader, what does this say about our over-intellectualization of the Christian message, though the raising of this question should not be seen as anti-intellectual?

Thank you Riddick Weber for raising significant issues. Keep on.

Arthur Freeman is a retired Professor of New Testament at Moravian Theological Seminary and is the author of An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart: The Theology of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf.

¹ An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart: The Theology of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (Bethlehem and Winston-Salem, The Moravian Church in America, 1998).

² A Collection of Sermons from Zinzendorf's Pennsylvania Journey (Bethlehem and Winston-Salem: the Moravian Church in America, Department of Communication, 2001 anticipated).

Keith Stanley

The era of AIDS has reminded us of the dual potential of blood, keenly felt by ancient Greeks and Jews alike, as source both of life and of deadly pollution. This has had marginal effect on ordinary Christian practice—much less consideration of Zinzendorf's wounds-theology—except upon those who fear contamination from their fellow-believers and prefer to drink the Blood of Christ by intinction rather than the common chalice.¹ But we continue to prefer an empty cross and a Reformed risen Christ — washed and draped in unstained white — to the wounded, tormented figure of Byzantine and Western mediaeval devotion. Riddick Weber's welcome paper prompts both a brief glance at the precursors of Zinzendorf's wounds-theology and a further suggestion for its relevance today.

I. Though it has strong earlier roots, emphasis upon the wounds of Christ is especially characteristic of Western devotion in the 14th century, a time of ecclesiastical abuse and conflict that cried out for reform. One result was a remarkable spiritual renewal, inspired by the ideal of authentic individual religious experience, that has given us some of the great mystical writing in Christian history, from *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Richard Rolle to Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Siena; this is also the ferment out of which the *Unitas Fratrum* and, ultimately, Zinzendorf's wounds-theology, will emerge. A significant expression of the new devotional emphasis may be found in the prayer *Anima Christi*, an anonymous composition of the early 1300s, which is still well loved and much used by Roman Catholics and Anglicans as a post communion meditation:

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesu, hear me.
Within thy wounds hide me.
Suffer me not to be separated from thee.

During this period the blood and water that flowed from Christ's pierced side is commonly associated with the mingled water and wine of the Eucharist; in a related notion, just as Eve was derived from Adam's side, so the church was born from the side-wound of Christ, the second Adam. Variants proliferate.

For Dame Julian (*Showings* 60), "Our tender Mother Jesus he may homely lead us into his blessed breast through his sweet open side, and show us there a part of the godhead and of the joys of heaven." On this conflation of nourishing breast and birth canal Leo Steinberg comments "Where are we, having passed through that portal? And who in this passage is 'us'? It is both the liquescent self and the throngs of the faithful, all at once sliding in between two of Christ's ribs. Whatever Mother Julian is doing here, she is not seeing a physique of this or that sex, but gazing — to quote from Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism* — upon 'unendurable glories veiled in a merciful mist.'"²

Further development of these ideas, again anticipating Zinzendorf, is apparent in the next century in Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* 2.2, where each individual soul is described as a bride of Christ

("Therefore, faithful soul, prepare your heart for the Bridegroom, that he may come to dwell within you") and 2.4, where we are urged to seek refuge from hurt in Christ's wounds "Rest in Christ's passion and dwell willingly in his sacred wounds. If you flee devoutly to the wounds and precious stigmata of Christ, you will find great comfort in your suffering."

It is worth noting also that a new phase in this period of spiritual renewal — self-consciously regarded by its practitioners as "modern devotion" (*devotio moderna*) — is accompanied by a theological impulse, not unlike that among Enlightenment Christians, to bridge the gap between conventional thinking and the new 'mystical' experience by a bracingly critical view of both. For Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris (1395?-1418), "Mystical theology is the knowledge of God drawn by experience from the embrace of unifying love" (*theologia mystica est experimentalis cognitio habita de Deo per amoris univi complexum*). A contemporary of Jan Hus, Gerson was forced by theological and political controversy to flee his post, though he died not by martyrdom but in a monastery in Lyons.³

In St John of the Cross — to pursue for a moment the imagery of Christ as bridegroom of the soul — we find an even more radical, if perfectly traditional, anticipation of the physical language of devotion that has been so offensive to critics of Zinzendorf. In John's first great work, *The Spiritual Canticle of the Soul*, written in 1578 while imprisoned in unspeakably

squalid conditions by church authorities in Toledo, we read (Canto XXVIII):

There He gave me his breasts,
There He taught me
The science of full sweetness.
And there I gave to Him
Myself without reserve:
There I promised to be His bride.

This deliberately paradoxical imagery, inaugurated as early as the apocryphal Acts of Paul and Augustine, among others, and developed by the seventeenth-century devotional poets George Herbert and Richard Crashaw is expanded more broadly (and famously) by the unequivocally manly John Donne:

Batter my heart, three-personed God....
Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Among Zinzendorf's contemporaries the influence of these traditions, via German Pietism, can be sampled almost at random from the texts of Bach's cantatas (the closest most of us nowadays get to this world), which train an unflinching eye upon the Incarnation and its implications. Contemporary Moravians are largely unaware of wounds-theology, which has been carefully expunged from the 1995 *Book of Worship* (cf. the hymns on pp. 152, 161, 173, and 193 of the 1969 *Hymnal* that are no longer with us). The result, for the doctrine of the Real Presence, is a not infrequent mentalism that borders on Gnosticism, both in private theology and in church life, reducing the prime celebration of the Incarnation and its

implications to an expression of casual good cheer, remote from the Holy Table, with handshakes and a balancing act of service book and plastic cup or host.

II. Metaphors do not make life but they can help to express and enliven it just as actions do (a tender embrace, a punch in the nose, Holy Communion). Zinzendorf's piety is not an aberration in Christian history but an individual expression of an established tradition that became central to the devotional life of the western church. His wounds-theology is not and should not be a source of embarrassment any more than the excesses of his adherents, which he took vigorous efforts to moderate. What matters for us is the occasion for invoking this complex of ideas. Riddick suggests pastoral application in times of great trial. I would suggest that the wounds of Christ should not only inform our everyday experience of trials great and small but serve as a constant liturgical reinforcement of our debt to and our fellowship with Jesus. We need to join Him not just on the road to Emmaus but on the journey to Calvary, and remain there at the cross in the way He Himself ordained: an injunction that is not so much canceled as confirmed by the symposium in the Upper Room, where His identity is established precisely by His wounds. We may not wish to reproduce the Eucharistic liturgy of Zinzendorf's Bethlehem, with its prostrations and emotional ecstasy inspired by a sense of participation and indeed rebirth in these wounds; nor is the ideal of individual perfection within the life of a closed religious community presently at issue. But surely we can find means to share in a common rite the practical truth that only

through an ongoing, essential, sacrificial transformation of the self through unification with Christ can we begin to apprehend the meaning of the atonement and of a triune God.

Beyond the weekly communion practiced by early Utraquists, Moravian celebrations have ranged from monthly to quarterly and back again. Often involved in the eighteenth-century marginalization of the Eucharist among Protestants was a certain Enlightenment embarrassment with sacramental worship itself, along with a Pietist inclination towards unmediated experience of God already present in the believing heart. Modern studies on the relevance of ritual have advocated an integration of heart, mind, and action. A Greek Orthodox priest, recently asked how often one should receive communion, compared the issue to a question of how often we should breathe. Eucharistic worship is not a periodic prize for good conduct, conferred with a handshake and wink: it is a way of life defined by risk, and a perpetual invitation to “unendurable glories veiled in a perpetual mist.” And here, I think, Zinzendorf’s wounds-theology might best be restored and here convey its most meaningful benefit.

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¹ Communion straws seem to have been available to mediaeval laity, so it should be no surprise to learn that packets of individual hosts and filled cups, hygienically sealed, are now available for consecration and distribution, so as to avoid all intermediary human contact in providing a guaranteed no-risk communion.

² Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, 2nd edition (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1996), p. 377.

³ Gerson was in fact a member of the French delegation to the Council of Constance, and Hus was condemned in language framed by Gerson himself: a circumstance all the more painful to observe, as both were convinced of the need for reform—in Eucharistic practice as in the Church at large—but differed radically in their approach to achieving it; ironically, it may be that Gerson has more to offer the modern Moravian concept of a religion of the heart than does Hus.

Tracy Pryor

Riddick Weber's thesis forces us to look again at the sacred moments that break into our ordinary lives. He calls us to reconsider the theology of one of our most controversial leaders while at the same time challenges us to embrace the incarnational nature of God as experienced in Jesus Christ. Weber points out our human tendency to limit people and their ideas by placing them into categories, thereby forming changeless impressions of their life and character. When we classify and qualify those who speak of their experience we deny the reality of continued growth and change in response to the experiences of a lifetime. We limit not only in the way we form quick opinions of others (regardless of their validity) but also in our desire to control the interpretation of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, thus denying the possibility of theological development within the texts and ourselves. This same phenomenon can be found in our own limited human attempts to understand the nature and character of God.

Small children frequently view their parents with admiration and it is not until adolescence or even adulthood (unless there is unexpected tragedy) that they begin to truly recognize and accept their parents' humanity. As adults we learn of the suffering that shaped our parents' lives, and as we come to recognize their mortality, we come face to face with our own. Like children and their view of parents, we often come to faith with an initial concept of God

that is immature. As we encounter the realities of life we find our initial impressions of God's nature are challenged and transformed by our experience of God in the midst of human life and suffering. Although we may understand or relate neither to Zinzendorf's mysticism nor an experience of the side wound of Christ as being the womb of our soul, the woundedness of Christ is essential to a mature expression of faith in a compassionate God who longs to be in relationship with the creation. Therefore, the development Weber points out in Zinzendorf's theology is a natural and expected transformation of his faith as he experiences the suffering of humanity that led him to new revelations of God's redemptive presence in all of life.

Zinzendorf was not alone in experiencing the woundedness of Christ through the *Ecce Homo*. Throughout European history, artists represented the search for meaning in the suffering of their own times in shockingly realistic and even gruesome depictions of Christ's suffering and woundedness. Grunewald's agonizing image of the crucifixion in his *Isenheim Altarpiece*, painted for the hospital chapel at the monastery of St. Anthony at Isenheim, was intended as a spiritual aid to the sick and infirm who came to prepare themselves for the treatment of blood and skin diseases. In this painting, patients were encouraged to find both hope and blessing in their own suffering through a reminder of God's own suffering through Jesus Christ.

The controversial language used by Zinzendorf and the Moravians during the so-called "sifting period" was actually quite

commonplace in their time. The later (Victorian) reaction against grotesque, visceral, or earthy language and realism conditions us to be shocked by it; however, there seems to be a growing need within our culture, particularly within the youth subculture, to embrace an experience of the wounded Savior. Each night on the news (whether we see it via the television or the World Wide Web), we are confronted with the realities of violence, suffering, abuse, loneliness, and woundedness in our world. We have only recently come to the frightening realization that we have the power to end our own existence through nuclear and biological warfare. Monika Hellwig addresses the theological implications of this situation in her statement, "The following of Jesus in our times confronts us constantly with human suffering on a massive scale, caused by structures of society which are the solidified deposits of the consequences of evil deeds in the world."¹ Gaining a more mature understanding and experience of God's own wounded nature, as described by Zinzendorf, may offer us a way to live with our own human failure and suffering. In the wounds of Christ, we may find a place of comfort and the nurturing reassurance of God's unconditional love.

In ministry I find that the acceptance of our own fractured nature often involves an ability to accept and recognize the presence of God's blessing in the midst of our suffering. Acceptance and recognition may help someone with depression gradually find within their suffering a source of personal creative inspiration. Someone grieving because of a death can move towards a newness of life. Someone whose body suf-

fers from the physical limitations of an acquired or genetic disorder may experience wholeness. Entering into our own suffering involves an examination and blessing of our losses no matter how great or small. As Diognes Allen writes, "Naturally we seek to avoid what is painful and unpleasant and to alleviate suffering. But we should not refuse to think about it, for we will then miss an opportunity to discover the redemptive presence of God."²

Weber indicates that there is a distinction between the power of the imagery of blood and that of the wounds to someone who is suffering. Although the body and blood of Christ are both images of grace, a wound is the hole or scar that remains after the flow of blood ceases. It is Christ's wounds that identify him as the one who was crucified and raised into newness of life. Human suffering is transformed when Jesus takes his humanity and his wounds, the scars that bear witness to his suffering, back into heaven and thus into the very nature and character of God. Unless Christ's wounds have healed, we cannot experience Christ as the wounded healer; thus our own experience of suffering is hopeless. The Risen Christ willingly shows us his scars, offering evidence that wholeness and healing await us as we enter into our suffering and into the suffering of others. I would agree with Weber in saying that an awareness of Christ's wounds, where there remains a flow of blood, can offer solidarity in the midst of suffering. However, it is only after the wounds begin to heal that humanity is offered a source of strength, hope and transformation.

The wounds of Christ allow us to enter into our own suffering and the suffering of

others in a way that is redemptive and transformational rather than self-serving or encouraging a pointless acceptance of oppression. Henri Nouwen makes this point in *The Wounded Healer*. "Christian leadership is accomplished only through service. This service requires the willingness to enter into a situation, with all the human vulnerabilities a man has to share with his fellow man...Indeed the paradox of Christian leadership [I would add of the gospel message] is that the way out is the way in, that only by entering into communion with human suffering can relief be found." ³

"No one can help with out becoming involved, without entering with his or her whole person into the painful situation, with out taking the risk of becoming hurt, wounded or even destroyed in the process... who can take away suffering without entering it?"⁴ We cannot alleviate the suffering of others until we choose to see it, accept it, and offer our own suffering in order to bring about change. Likewise, God knew that to offer salvation and reconciliation with humanity, its suffering would have to be embraced and experienced in God's own nature. God's self-limiting powerlessness on the cross offers companionship in our own experiences of powerlessness within a fractured community. "There can be no human beings who are completely alone in their sufferings, since God, in and through Jesus, has become Emmanuel, God with us." ⁵

A denial of this aspect of God's nature, wanting God to be above or in some way separate from the suffering of the world, may indicate a denial of our own humanity - a denial of our own human frailty and

woundedness. This denial not only keeps us from speaking to one another about our own painful experiences but it also limits our openness to relationship with the wounded Christ. It is the role of disciples, both lay and ordained, to be a reflection of Christ in the world. Out of compassion they may be called to give expression to the unspoken suffering within the community. "Compassion implies a movement towards the other to help, but also a movement into the experience of the other to be present in solidarity and communion of experience. It implies sensitivity, vulnerability, to be affected by the experience of the other but it also implies remedial action against suffering and oppression. Most of all, it implies involvement in the situation." ⁶

Bearing witness to the wounded Savior means bearing witness to our own wounds. However, making one's own wounds a source of healing does not call for a sharing of superficial personal pains. On the contrary, it requires a constant willingness to see one's own pain and suffering as rising from the depth of the human condition which is the shared experience of humanity. "Ministry can indeed be a witness to the living truth that the wound, which causes us to suffer now, will be revealed to us later as the place where God intimated his new creation." ⁷ If we are open to the wounded nature of God, then out of our own experience of suffering we can identify with and recognize the presence of God in the midst of daily life. Exposing our wounds to God and those we trust within the community of faith can be painful as we lift away the blood-caked dressing and allow the stench of infection to be released into the air. Some keep the sore hidden too long and the infec-

tion from the wound begins to spread into the surrounding areas of their life. Uncovering the wound allows it to receive fresh air and healing ointment so that the individual can begin to heal and find the way to freedom and newness of life.

Out of compassion for others, a follower of Jesus Christ enters into the suffering and the hope of all human persons with Christ. Moravians today, along with the entire body of Christ, the Church, have the opportunity and the responsibility to recognize the significance of this particular theological tradition within our faith and our world. The presence of the wounded Savior in the suffering around us calls us to “bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captive and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”⁸

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- ¹ Monika Hellwig, Jesus: The Compassion of God (MN: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 121.
 - ² Diogenes Allen, Traces of God In A Frequently Hostile World (MA: Cowley Pub., 1981), 13.
 - ³ Henri Nouwen, The Wounded Healer (NY: Image Books Doubleday, 1972), 77.
 - ⁴ Ibid, 72.
 - ⁵ Ibid, 178.
 - ⁶ Hellwig, 121.
 - ⁷ Nouwen, 95-96.
 - ⁸ Luke 4: 18-19, NRSV

The Author Responds

After reading the responses to my article several times, it indeed became a pleasure to read them, though I must admit they were not what I was originally expecting. Some articles in *The Hinge* have sparked lively debate. This one did not.

So after I took off my unused intellectual boxing gloves, I began to appreciate the divergent thoughts of the respondents and attempted to play the weaver. I looked for common threads and ways to tie some far-ranging concerns together. Both Tracy and Keith remind us that Zinzendorf’s theology is a part of a

much larger set of Christian theological and devotional interests. Art reminds us that the discussion of “wounds” within the blood and wounds theology of Zinzendorf is but a part of a larger set of complex and controversial issues in his overall theology.

In all three respondents I read the challenge to keep theology relevant and to recognize the danger of thinking that theology is or even can be irrelevant. Though I know all of the respondents can be quite rational, I read in their responses a common interest in the non-rational. The same could be said of Zinzendorf. All the works translated into English to which Art refers, including the forthcoming translations of Zinzendorf’s sermons from Pennsylvania, demonstrate that Zinzendorf was also capable of being quite rational. But it is his interest in the non-rational that makes him challenging and/or confusing, yet unquestionably compelling. The non-rational speaks to Art’s devotional interests. The non-rational gives us the space to be the wounded healers, especially to the youth culture that Tracy mentions. The non-rational addresses Keith’s Eucharistic interests.

Like Keith I have an interest in the Eucharistic life of the Moravian Church. I was surprised to learn in my church history classes how important the Eucharist has been to many theologians and reformers. Many scholars see a Eucharistic revival as a key component to the Wesleys and Methodism. Aquinas’s Eucharistic vision led him to call all his written works “straw.” Calvin argued that Communion should be celebrated on at least weekly basis, and he was

disappointed when his Reformed associates decided for monthly or quarterly celebrations of the Lord’s Supper. As Moravians it would benefit us to remember that the lovefeast service that we cherish grew out of an especially moving celebration of the Lord’s Supper, celebrated on August 13, 1727.

Maybe a Eucharistic renewal in the Moravian Church would provide the meeting ground for the interests expressed by the respondents. It is the tradition in which we best encounter the non-rational. Maybe if Moravian ministers celebrated the Lord’s Supper together a little more often, forcing ourselves to shake hands with each other twice and remembering that we are guests at the same table, we would better be able to address together the issues that face our church. The same might be true in our congregations.

Reading the responses has helped me clarify why I wrote this article in the first place. Though my article is historically driven, my concern is to show that we cannot reduce Zinzendorf’s interest in the wounds of Jesus to an aberration or even an unfortunate but irrelevant development. My primary concern is to show that Zinzendorf’s interest in the wounds was an important development in his christology, emphasizing Christ’s humanity and that his loving relationship to humanity is most fully expressed in his suffering with and for it. If we will cherish this emphasis we will be better able to minister to those who are suffering.

Reading the responses has also reminded me of how many questions I have left to pursue. How ironic that Hus, the reformer, was excommunicated and handed over to be executed by the ruling of the reforming Council of Constance. How important it is to remember that Zinzendorf, the ecumenist, has so much in common pre-Reformation mystics and the post-modern youth culture. How important that we continue to uncover and wrestle with the beliefs of our spiritual forebear so his thoughts can inform how we address the spiritual needs and questions of our day.

In closing I should note my own resonance with Art's comment, "I see him

(Jesus) in his suffering which more than his resurrection makes him God to me." While I have no problems with the victorious resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, theologically, I have founded greater significance in his willingness to die on the chance that I might live with him. As I grow older, I find that many supposed victories or successes have become less meaningful. Now I find greater significance in finding meaning in the hurts and disappointments and experiencing the grace and the power for ministry that Christ somehow gives through them.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I read your Fall 2000 issue with great interest. My pastor gave me a copy and said he thought I would be interested and particularly agree with Dr. Harvey's response. Perhaps the fact that I was also from a Calvinist background was pastor's main reason but also because I had discussed the Moravian motto with him. I had stated much the same idea as to the "essential" nature of the Bible as Dr. Harvey. I am new to the Moravian Church, joining the local congregation after retiring and moving here to the Pocono mountain area of Pennsylvania five years ago.

Before joining, I had discussed with the pastor the Church's teachings and made sure that the Bible was held as the only source and rule for doctrine, faith and practice. I had asked if there was a forum to discuss these matters and was told "no." I am delighted to find *The Hinge* and intend to subscribe.

I had thought to write and simply add a strong Amen to Dr. Harvey's article. After some considerable thought, I feel that one subject needs to be addressed which has bearing on the matter of "head" and "heart" and how they relate to the final part of the motto: "in all things, love." When pastor read I Corinthians 13 as our Epistle, I realized that without the Holy Scripture we

can't begin to know what love is! Without the whole of the Bible to show us God's love, his working out our salvation through Christ and Christ's love us as our Savior, we would be lost! Just look at the corruption of love and its meaning we see in the world around us. I love poorly but am saved by Christ's love for me. Without the Bible and faith in Christ, there is no way I could even begin to deal with love "in all things." So it seems that essential to following the whole motto is knowledge of the Scripture with our heads, so that we can love with our hearts.

I can see no way to accomplish the ideas of both Hus and Zinzendorf without the Bible. From the quotes I have read, I believe Count Zinzendorf would say that the Bible was an "essential" without hesitation, and perhaps he might wonder why such a question would need to be asked. (I know "The Bible" would easily fit on his "half sheet of paper.")

Christians have a unique blessing in that we have the Bible which God's, given to us for

our salvation (2 Pet. 1:16-21). No other religion can make this claim. They all have books written by men and they can add to or change them at will. They can make them relevant to whatever ideas men think are right at any point in history. When Christians try the same thing or try to interpret Scripture to suit what the world is doing they do so at the peril of losing the gospel and love of Christ. We have the example of the Hebrews and the disasters they got themselves into when they forgot God's word to them. We must be very careful not to make the mistake ourselves. God is love but He is also righteous and holy and demands that we do not continue in sin. He is forgiving but we need to be careful not to try his loving patience too far!

We need to affirm the Holy Scripture as the essential way to salvation through Jesus Christ as taught by the Moravian Church.

-- Elder Lew Parks, Canadensis, Pa.

Ten-Year Retrospective: 1990-2000

Craig D. Atwood

Time, as Einstein reminds us, is relative. *The Hinge* has been in publication for ten years, which is a blip in the five-hundred-year history of the Moravian Church, and yet it is a long time for independent Moravian journals. Several have been attempted through the years, including *The*

Saal which was the immediate predecessor of *The Hinge*, but few survived more than a few years. Often they have been the work of a single dedicated individual and were unable to continue under a new leader. *The Hinge*, however, now has its third editor and a new editorial board and is

making plans for years to come. Therefore it seems appropriate to celebrate the tenth anniversary of this publication by reviewing its unique contribution to Moravian faith and life while looking toward the future.

This journal was the brainchild of Truman Dunn, currently the pastor of Messiah Moravian Church, who wanted a serious forum to discuss issues of contemporary importance within the American Moravian Church. The unusual name comes from a rather obscure moment in Moravian history. In Bethlehem in 1742 the community experimented with a number of church offices, the most intriguing of which was the “hinge” who was to be a “go-between” that could resolve differences before they became destructive of the community or individuals. The hinge opened the door of communication. Dr. Dunn and the original editorial board envisioned a journal dedicated toward a similar goal in the Moravian Church. It would serve as forum for the discussion of “troublesome factors that may be an obstacle to our mutual accord” (*The Hinge*, vol. 1, num. 1, p. 2).

Unlike the old church office, however, *The Hinge* did not seek to bring all things into accord privately. Rather it offered an opportunity for Moravians to discuss differences in a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner so that genuine and faithful dialog could occur. The format has been consistent through the years. There is a lead article on a specific topic that affects the life of the church followed by several responses from a variety of perspectives in the Moravian community. Then the auth-

or(s) of the lead article responds to the respondents.

This has allowed many voices to join in this discussion. Included in this issue is an index of the first ten years. There have been twenty-eight different authors of lead articles, with the PECs providing one document for discussion. Over a hundred people have written responses to the articles. For a church our size, that represents an amazing number of different perspectives. Included among the authors and respondents are lay persons, professors, pastors, specialized ministers, church administrators, former Moravians, and outside experts.

David Fischler, currently the pastor of First Moravian Church in Greensboro, took over as editor of *The Hinge* in 1996. He brought to the journal a different editorial voice and insured that this journal would continue beyond the work of its originator. Rev. Fischler also brought a new look to the journal itself and a slight revision to its self-description. Rather than being “A Quarterly Moravian Journal of Christian Thought,” *The Hinge* is now described as “A Journal of Christian Thought for the Moravian Church.” This places more emphasis on *The Hinge* as a forum for critical reflection within a Christian context. While *The Hinge* is primarily a journal by and for Moravians, many of the questions raised are common to all Christian traditions. David also began the practice of including book reviews in *The Hinge*, a practice that will continue.

Having reviewed the first thirty issues of *The Hinge*, I am impressed with the

quality and seriousness of these articles and responses. Not only has *The Hinge* provided a necessary forum for Moravian theological and pastoral discussion, it has provided a useful historical record of the Moravian Church at the end of one century and beginning of another. Here are just a few of the topics addressed: racism, sexuality, euthanasia, evangelicalism, pacifism, spirituality, and social violence. Rather than give a summary of each issue of *The Hinge*, I invite readers to review past issues. In fact, past issues are available for \$7.00 to cover photocopying and shipping costs.

Many of the issues discussed in *The Hinge*, most notably the ordination of homosexuals, remain highly controversial and unresolved in the church, but *The Hinge* serves as a model for Moravian dialog. Although political forces in our culture encourage polarization into rival camps (e.g. conservative vs. liberal), *The Hinge* has shown that there is a range of understanding on even the most divisive issues. By encouraging dialog instead of debate, we see that brothers and sisters in Christ approach certain things from differing and yet faithful perspectives. Rather than a “winner take all” attitude, *The Hinge* has shown that we can grow in understanding together.

The Hinge has also demonstrated that labels such as “conservative” or “liberal” are useless in describing the complexity of ideas and attitudes in the church. Writers and readers alike have been challenged to go beyond labeling and posturing to discover the underlying theological issues

in the hope of reaching clarity. To quote from my predecessor, “It is usually the case that even when we totally disagree with a brother or sister in Christ, they [*sic*] are starting from some sound theological principle and the desire to serve God and His Church the best they can with the light they have” (David Fischler, *The Hinge*, vol. 8, num. 1, p. 3). *The Hinge*, I would assert, is in the wisdom tradition of old Israel.

The new editorial board is eager to continue and even revitalize the life of *The Hinge*. For now, it will remain located in the Southern Province merely for the sake of convenience, but it is intended to be journal for the whole Moravian Church, especially in North America. We are exploring ways that the distance learning facilities and the Center for Moravian Studies at Moravian Theological Seminary can increase the Northern Province perspective

One theme does stand out as a continual refrain over the past ten years, from the first issue to the most recent. What is our Moravian identity? More than one author referred to an “identity crisis” in the Moravian Church that profoundly affects our approach to burning social and pastoral issues such as homosexuality and racism as well as our ability to engage in local and world-wide missions. This “identity crisis” figures in the concerns over pastoral authority, denominational and local leadership, potential for renewal and growth in the church, and our ability to resolve or manage conflict within the church.

An identity crisis is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, identity is one of the crises that all individuals experience in life. It is the key crisis of late-adolescence as each person confronts the psychological task of differentiation that is necessary for maturity. Identity crises may also come at mid-life as a person becomes aware that there is limited time to live a meaningful life. Such a crisis may be wasted by foolishly grasping for a second adolescence (or even infancy) or it may lead to a deepening of the self and renewed commitment to living a truly human and humane life. Many of our pastors and lay leaders found their path to ministry through such a mid-life identity crisis.

An identity crisis may also happen at the end of one's life when the reality of mortality raises the issue of whether one lived a worthwhile existence. Of the various identity crises, that is the most difficult because there is little time to change one's life and leave a legacy. It is the crisis of what could have been rather than what will be.

Speaking more theologically, the gospel itself creates a crisis of identity

when individuals and communities are challenged by the questions: to whom do you belong and for what do you stand? The crisis of identity may be caused by an encounter with the living God in whom we each find our true self behind the mask we and the world have created.

I will not speculate on what type of identity crisis the Moravian Church finds itself in. I hope it is not one leading to death, but I do think that serious self-examination as a community of faith is called for at this juncture in our history. An identity crisis means that familiar ways of defining our existence have been called into question and we need to look deep within to see who we truly are. My hope is that this forum can assist us in that quest. Synods, committees, and programs will be of little help in defining who we are. Rather, our work in those governing structures must be informed by our self-understanding. For ten years, *The Hinge* has been assisting in that task by asking difficult questions and welcoming controversial answers.

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