

A Short History of The Moravian Church Touching on its History, Theology, Customs and Practices.

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The Name of the Church

Unitas Fratrum is the ancient name by which the Moravian Church was first known. It is a Latin phrase meaning, Unity of Brethren. World-wide, it is still our official name. We are called Moravians because the church got its start in Moravia and Bohemia.

The history of the Moravian Church is usually divided into two eras: 1) the time of the Ancient Unity which sprung to life in Moravia and Bohemia after the martyrdom of John Hus; and 2) the time of the Renewed Church which flourished in Germany after a party of religious refugees found a safe haven on the estate of Count Zinzendorf.

The desire to spread the Gospel carried the Moravian Church literally "...around the world." Today, there are seven hundred thousand Moravians in more than a dozen countries including Canada, Czechoslovakia, Jamaica, Germany, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, South Africa, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The Ancient Unity

Two bishops of the Greek or Eastern Catholic Church---which later became the Greek Orthodox Church, named Cyril and Methodius were responsible for introducing the gospel of Christ to Moravia and Bohemia. However, by the 13th century, the Roman Catholic Church had taken the people of Moravia and Bohemia under its tutelage. As the 14th century dawned, this relationship was tense. At least a few devout and patriotic people in the region felt that Rome had taken from them many of the rights and privileges they had once enjoyed.

Consider these few examples:

1. Under Constantinople, communion was served to the laity “in both kinds.” Like the Priest, the people received both the bread and wine of the Holy Communion. Under Rome the priests reserved the wine for themselves alone.
2. The Roman Church and its many monastic orders held title to much of the richest land in Moravia and Bohemia, land greatly desired by the native peoples.
3. The people were forced to accept foreign clergymen and government officials, most of them Germans, their natural enemies.
4. Many of the people complained about the use of Latin in church worship. They said, “Let us pray to God in our language rather than in the dead words used by the priests.”

John Hus

When John Hus [1] of Bohemia became a Roman Catholic priest in the year 1400, the times were tinder-dry. Not only was it the time of the Great Schism; but Rome had added corruption to the list of crimes which the people of Moravia and Bohemia already abhorred. Pope John XXIII, the first John 23rd, an infamous rascal deposed by the Council of Constance, who is not to be confused with the beloved 20th century pope of the same name, had authorized the sale of indulgences. Parish priest and other papal representatives and actually stooped to selling “...the forgiveness of sins.”

From his position as Rector, or President, of the great University of Prague, Hus started to speak out against abuses of Rome, particularly this last. Prague was the capital of Bohemia, and one of the great centers of culture in the world of that day. The university alone had a population of more than 7,000 students. Multitudes of people flocked to Bethlehem Chapel to hear Hus’ sermons. Repeatedly, he argued and pled for reform within the Catholic Church. Of course, Hus was not content merely to preach against abuse, he also preached the “...pure gospel of Christ” that he found in the pages of the New Testament. He further delighted his hearers by preaching it in Czech, not Latin, and by declaring that all Christians had the right and duty to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. This so-called “heretical” idea---would later lie at the very heart of the Protestant Reformation.

Rome was shocked into activity. Acting with the consent of John XXIII, Hus’ archbishop ordered him to stop preaching his heretical ideas, and urged him to recant. Hus refused; and preached all the more vigorously. Soon the charges against him multiplied----some of them were trumped up; but some of them were an accurate reflection of what he taught [2]. Their accuracy reflected the depths of depravity into which corrupt clergy had led the church of that day!

In the year 1415, Hus was ordered to appear before the Council of Constance[3] to recant his teaching. His allies warned him not to go, declaring that it was better for him to continue his work from the safety of Prague where he had many friends. However, Sigismund, who was then Emperor of The Holy Roman Empire offered to furnish Hus with a safe conduct. He dutifully promised that the Rector could safely go to Constance, safely defend his doctrine and actions, and safely return to Prague. Hus was eager to make the trip, for he was sure that his doctrines were anything but heretical. He was equally sure that, when the authorities had given his

arguments a fair hearing, he would be vindicated in preaching them.

Unfortunately, upon his arrival at Constance, Hus' safe conduct was waived. He was thrown into prison. The same authorities who had tricked him into coming, revoked his safe passage, declaring that it was not necessary to keep faith with heretics.

At his trial, Hus was allowed no defense. He was ordered to make his choice ---recant and be imprisoned for life, or refuse and be burned alive! Like Martin Luther after him, Hus refused to recant. He felt to do so would be to abandon the gospel of Christ.

Hus was condemned. On July 6th, 1415, Dr. John Hus, Rector of the University of Prague, and a pre-Reformation reformer, was stripped of his rank in the church, led to the site of his execution, bound hand and foot, and burned [4] to death at the stake. Today, a stone erected on the edge of Constance marks the site of this heinous crime.

Organization of the Unitas Fratrum

The martyrdom of Hus intensified the anti-Roman feeling in Bohemia. His followers multiplied, and fourteen years of war followed. There were three groups of Hus' followers: 1) Radicals called---Taborites, who were willing to take-up arms to accomplish their aims; 2) Conservatives called---Utraquist, who were concerned primarily with having communion in both kinds restored to the laity, and hoped for reform within the Church; and 3) Moderates who were willing to leave the church if need be, but refused to take up arms. These Moderates believed in the "heart religion" which had been practiced by the primitive Christians of the New Testament Era. For awhile there was some degree of cooperation among these various protesting groups; but in time, Rome drove a wedge between the radical Taborites and the conservative Utraquist. This was accomplished when Rome enticed the Utraquist back into the Catholic Church by granting the priest in Bohemia the right to serve the laity both the bread and the wine during the Mass.

As we have noted, the Moderates could accept neither the war-like ways of the radical Taborites, nor the quibbling ceremonialism of the conservative Utraquists. Like Hus, they believed in heart religion. To them the Christian faith was more than just a theological puzzle to be solved, more than just another means of organizing society, and more than a battle to be fought, it was a way of life laid down by the Master, Jesus Christ, himself.

In March of 1457---more than 500 years ago, a large group of Moderates gathered in the village of Kunwald, near the castle of Lititz in Bohemia, and formed a society which they first called The Brethren of the Law of Christ. Those who joined did not intend to become a separate church. Like the Conservatives, they were perfectly content to remain within the established church; but Rome would not allow it. The Unitas Fratrum traces its roots back to this society---making the Moravian Church, "...the oldest Protestant Church in continuous existence today!"

The Episcopacy Secured

Although possessing a number of Protestant tendencies, at the time of the formation of The Brethren of the Law of Christ, the [Waldenses](#) had not separated from Rome. So, like all other

Catholic bishops, their bishops laid claim to the Apostolic Succession, the historic Episcopacy, supposedly preserved from the days of the first apostles by a continuous laying on of hands from one generation of bishops to the next. In 1467, heedless of any supposed duty to Rome, the stalwart Waldensian bishops ordained nine members of The Brethren of the Law of Christ into the ministry. Three of them, Matthias, Thomas and Elias, were consecrated as bishops. So commenced the line of bishops in our Moravian Church.

The Moravian Church and Martin Luther

Persecution of the ancient Unity by Rome ebbed and flowed, but the new church grew. A little over a century after its inception, Rome was forced to turn its attention to a new trouble-maker, a German clergyman by the name of Martin Luther. Luther posted his *Ninety-Five Theses* on the door of the Wittenberg church, and they started a fire seven times hotter than the flames which consumed Hus. The fire Luther started was none other than the spreading flame of the Protestant Reformation.

Was Luther's message that much superior to the message of Hus? One invention which appeared between the time of Hus and Luther clearly made a quantitative difference between the results achieved by the two great reformers----the art of printing by movable type. Thirty-seven years after Gutenberg's death Luther used the printing press as "...a kind of technological megaphone--printing copies of his *Ninety-Five Theses* faster than they could be gathered up and destroyed." If Hus had been able to share his views through the power of the printed word, the fires of the Reformation might have been lit a century earlier.

As it was, a natural affinity existed between the two movements. Indeed, The Unity was delighted with the reforms demanded by Luther, and sought to make common cause with him. The merger did not succeed. Why not?

Their disagreements revolved around one issue. Luther believed that man was "...saved and justified by faith alone." The Brethren of the Law of Christ, like Hus, felt that for faith to be genuine, it must find expression through day-to-day Christian living. They said it was not a matter of faith or works, but of "faith that works," insisting that faith ought to be visible in the lives of those who profess it.

Ironically, more than a century later, when Count Zinzendorf the leader of the renewed church and John Wesley the founder of the Methodist movement discussed the same issue, Zinzendorf would sound as if he were defending the position of Luther, and Wesley that of the early Moravians! Wesley's reflection on that conversation would serve as good commentary about this and many other discussions between Christians of different outlooks. Wesley said, "Our quarrel is altogether about words."

Though the members of the Ancient Unity were unable to make alliance with Luther, by the time of the great Reformer's death, they had some 200 organized societies and congregations in Moravia, Bohemia, and Poland. Despite occasional periods of persecution, The Unitas Fratrum had grown large and tremendously influential.

Literacy & Education

Members of The Unity believed that all Christians had both the right and the duty to read and interpret the scriptures for themselves. Not surprisingly they were the first Protestant Church to publish a Bible translated from the original Hebrew and Greek languages into a native tongue. This significant work of scholarship was called the Kralitz Bible.

During the Counter-Reformation Catholic authorities in Moravia and Bohemia confiscated and burned all of these Bibles that they could find. However, thanks to the ingenuity of the Moravian women, quite a few were preserved. How did they do it? When the authorities came to call, housewives placed the scriptures in a baked loaf of bread! Bread for the table, used to preserve “the Bread of Life.” Several copies of the Kralitz Bible which were so preserved are periodically displayed in our American Archives.

Love of the scriptures carried an additional benefit for our ancestors. Since members of The Unity were eager for their own children to be able to read the Bible, they became educational pioneers, publishing many other books besides. During the years 1505-1510, the impressive number of sixty books were published in Bohemia. More impressive still, fifty of them came from presses owned by The Unity. Luther was not the only one to make use of Gutenberg’s invention!

The Hidden Seed

The Ancient Unity did not flourish for ever. During the bloody Thirty Year’s War, The Holy Roman Empire set itself the task of exterminating Protestantism in Bohemia. Farms, homes, churches, and villages of The Unity were again destroyed. In 1620, at the Battle of White Mountain, the Protestant forces were smashed and dispersed by the Roman forces. The years of 1620-1628 came to be known as the time of dispersion. When King Ferdinand came to power in Bohemia and the holocaust commenced, there were some three million Protestants in that land. When Ferdinand had completed his assault upon the Protestant churches, there were less than one million persons remaining. On one infamous Day of Blood, twenty-seven of the premier leaders of The Unity were publicly executed. Though old records maintain that, in order to escape the wrath of the Ferdinand, 36,000 families of The Brethren of the Law of Christ successfully fled from Bohemia to Moravia, Silesia, and Poland, we are left to reckon that the others---surely more than one million persons, were either dead or banished. In the history of humankind, few nations and no church have been so completely destroyed.

So ended an era in the history of our Moravian Church. By 1628 little remained of The Ancient Unity. Malice and force of arms had destroyed a people that, at one time, had been numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Never-the-less, the ideals of The Brethren of the Law of Christ survived in the heart of a few.

John Amos Comenius

John Amos Comenius became a bishop of The Unity during the last of those days when the Brethren were a great educational and religious force in Bohemia. He himself was an educator

and writer of international reputation. Consider these few accomplishments:

1. He has been described with justification as “The Father of Modern Education.”
2. One of his books, The Gate of Language Unlocked, has been translated into fifteen different languages.
3. There was a time when Comenius was offered the presidency of a new college in the Massachusetts colony named Harvard.
4. Today, the name of Comenius is inscribed with those of other great educators of the past on the outside walls of one of the buildings of the Teacher’s College of Columbia University.
5. Comenius, like Hus before him, was admired, not just as a religious leader, but as a Czech patriot. Indeed, the Communists themselves built a beautiful Comenius Museum near the place of his birth. It contains a wonderful collection of his writings, and other artifacts relating to his life and work. A huge statue of him stands in front of the museum. Statues of Comenius are to be seen in other historic places, too. In 1957, the Czech people observed the Three Hundredth Anniversary of the publication of his book, The Great Didactic. Though the Communists did not ignore the fact that Comenius was a church leader, they certainly did not emphasize it!
6. Time-Life selected "the discovery of childhood," by Comenius 55 on 100 top events in the millennium.

When Comenius was first consecrated a bishop, the Brethren’s Church ranked among the great religious forces of Central Europe. It had spread into Moravia, Silesia, and Poland. It was not to last. Comenius had the tragic experience of watching the once great church of which he was a bishop destroyed before his eyes. As his people melted away, fleeing from Bohemia, or remaining in their homes, to be forced back into the Roman Church, Comenius resolved to plant what he called the “hidden seed.” He urged his people to cherish their accustomed ways and pass them on, father to son, until the evil days were past. He wrote:

“We certainly ought to take care that ... the foundations of our Unity may not be so entirely ruined as to make it impossible for our posterity to find them.”

Comenius also worked to preserve the Apostolic line of succession of the bishops and ministers of The Unity. He arranged that others, among them his son-in-law, Peter Jablonsky, should become bishops. Although Comenius himself outlived Peter Jablonsky, the Episcopacy of the Unitas Fratrum did remain intact. Fittingly, one of the lines in the unbroken chain was Daniel Ernest Jablonsky, son of Peter Jablonsky and grandson of Comenius.

At last, having done all that he could for his church, Comenius himself was compelled to flee his native land. He fled first to Poland, then to England, where he sought aid for his church from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Finally Comenius journeyed to Holland. It was there he died, and it is there where his body is now enshrined in a lovely chapel.

Before moving on to the history of the Renewed Church, let me interject a personal note.

In 1957 four Moravian ministers from the United States made an official visit to Czechoslovakia on the occasion of our church’s 500th Anniversary. Official representatives from other countries where our church carries on work joined us there. Together we were taken by bus on a specially

conducted tour of historic Moravian churches and other sites of interest. The tour was comprehensive. Every courtesy was extended to us. We could not help but admire the many statues of Comenius, and we expressed the wish that a similar statue might stand on the campus of our Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Though it took some time, our wish was ultimately granted. Three years later a large statue of Comenius, the work of a well-known contemporary Czech sculptor, was received by Moravian College in Bethlehem. It was placed before the administration building, fittingly named Comenius Hall; and officially unveiled on March 28, 1960. Since that time the College has annually observed this date as Comenius Day. The statue was a gift from The Unity of the Brethren in Czechoslovakia, and the University of Prague, and stands as a dramatic symbol of our Unity and its world-wide fellowship.

The Renewed Moravian Church: The Carpenter and the Count

The hidden seed planted by Comenius sprouted to new life as the result of the interest and efforts of a wandering Moravian carpenter named Christian David. It is interesting how carpenters have had such a large place in Christian history. As I recall, it was The Carpenter of Nazareth who started it all! Well, as a follower of The Carpenter, this carpenter, Christian David, lived an astonishing history of his own. Born a Roman Catholic, he was unsure of his faith, and restless. He first sought peace of heart in the Lutheran Church, but was not satisfied. He then tried the army, thinking that activity might quiet his mind and heart; but he was restless still. Finally David found what he sought among the people of the Ancient Unity. Immediately, he became their spokesman and champion.

In May 1722, Christian David met a young Count named Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf. David told the Count of his yearning for a place of refuge where he and some of his friends might practice "...the heart religion of the primitive Christians." Zinzendorf, who had recently purchased an estate at Berthelsdorf in Upper Lusatia, expressed interest in David's dream. He said he would consider settling a few such families on his land.

That was enough for a man of action like David. While the Count was still considering what to do, David set into motion a chain of events that some say had the effect of making up the Count's mind for him. David hustled over into Moravia, and told some of his friends among the old Brethren families about the Count's offer. They liked the idea at once. So it was, that, on May 25, 1722, Christian David led a party of ten persons, out of Moravia, and over the mountains, to Berthelsdorf. Zinzendorf was absent from his estate at the time of their arrival. His steward, and his grandmother, who lived on an adjoining estate, were somewhat surprised at David's story. Never-the-less, they allowed these strange refugees to occupy some land on the estate. On June 17, 1722, David felled the first tree. When the Count returned home he found he had unexpected guests. The suddenness of David's action astonished him. In fact, the Count was just beginning to become acquainted with the unexpected ways of Christian David. Years later he would say of that curious man, "...there was only one." So it was, that, through this godly carpenter, Christian David, the hidden seed of Comenius came to life and flowered again.

Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf

From childhood Count Zinzendorf had experienced deep religious inclinations, and these were

cultivated by the piety of his family. Later in life, reflecting on his youth, he wrote, “At the age of five I was as sure of my faith in Jesus as I was that I had five fingers on my right hand.”

As a child of the nobility, Zinzendorf was given the benefits of a first-rate education. He studied at both the University of Halle and the University of Wittenberg. His studies served to reinforce his religious vocation. While still a student Zinzendorf established, a religious society called, The Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed. Members of the society whose members wore rings inscribed, “No man liveth unto himself.”

They pledged three things:

1. To be kind to all men.
2. To be true to Christ.
3. To send the Gospel to the world.

In 1719-1720, after Zinzendorf graduated from university, his family sent him on a---”Wanderjahr,” a grand tour of the continent, without which no young nobleman in Europe was considered fully educated. In the course of his travels he came to an art gallery in Düsseldorf where he saw a painting entitled *Ecce Homo* by an artist named Domenico Feti that had a profound effect upon him. It was a picture of the thorn crowned Christ. Underneath the picture, the artist had placed an inscription: “This I have suffered for you, but what have you done for me?” The memory of this question haunted Zinzendorf throughout his life. Ultimately he would say, “From that moment I was His, and His alone.”

It was Zinzendorf’s dedication to Christ that prepared him for his leadership of the Moravian refugees. Indeed, Zinzendorf remained true to the three pledges to which he had subscribed as a member of The Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed. The spirit of the first two caused him to allow the Moravian refugees to settle on his estate, and to build the town of Herrnhut. The third pledge resulted in the Moravian Church becoming “...the Mother of the Protestant Foreign Mission Movement.”

It has been often noted that Count Zinzendorf was a strange, sometimes contradictory man. To the end of his life he remained a Lutheran. At the same time he accepted consecration as a bishop of The Unity. His noble birth opened many doors for him, and he was never afraid to use his position, for even the privileges gained by nobility and position he had devoted wholly to Christ. Secular or sacred, Zinzendorf used whichever office suited his immediate need and circumstance. Of course, nobility and flexibility were not his only assets. His mind was quick, and he possessed an amazingly retentive memory. He was a gifted speaker and a talented writer, especially of poetry. Words poured into his mind faster than he could set them down on paper. Zinzendorf ranks as one of the most prolific of Protestant hymn writers. Finally, it must be observed that his warm heart, and intelligent mind, were augmented by his open, extended hand. Unlike many religious leaders, Zinzendorf respected the beliefs of other churches. One biographer rightly called him “The Ecumenical Pioneer.” It was Zinzendorf’s ecumenical bent that made him stubbornly refuse to encourage the *Unitas Fratrum* to become a separate church. To him, Moravians were members of a Christian society who practiced their way of life within the framework of the established churches---the Lutheran Church in Germany and areas of

German influence, the Anglican Church in Britain and areas of British influence. Never-the-less, his hand could be as firm as it was open; and it was that firmness that enabled Moravian's to be all we have been, and to do all we have done.

Zinzendorf Takes a Firm Hand

By 1727, there were about three hundred refugees in the new town of Herrnhut. They were a mixed lot. Their religious background ranged from Roman Catholic to Anabaptist. There were a number of Lutherans and Calvinist among them. Geographically, there were dissenters from Moravia, Bohemia, Poland, and Germany. Of course, they were not all so remarkable nor so dedicated to the Savior as Christian David. There were fanatics among them, and no small amount of bigotry. In this fledgling community, clash and friction were inevitable. It became necessary for Zinzendorf to take a firm hand over them; but this he was prepared to do.

On May 12, 1727, Zinzendorf called together his quarreling refugees, and reminded them that they were recipients of his hospitality. He told them that, as professing Christians, they must learn to live together in brotherly love. He called them to prayer, and he submitted to them a set of rules and regulations based upon the discipline of the ancient Bohemian Brethren, which he had recently discovered in the writings of Bishop Comenius. The refugees from Moravia rejoiced in this recognition by Zinzendorf of their ancient tradition. The others acquiesced. This Brotherly Agreement---known today as "*The Brotherly Agreement*," now known as "*The Covenant for Christian Living*," appealed to the all the villagers of Herrnhut. It emphasized day to day Christian living, covering everything from the use of strong drink, to the care and education of children, to the responsibility for the aged.

The Revival of August 13th, 1727

Those days following May 12th, 1727 were days of intensive prayer. Herrnhut became one great prayer meeting. Old differences were resolved, and new friendships formed. Finally on August 13, 1727, a communion was held in the Lutheran Church at Berthelsdorf, which was one mile from Herrnhut, and the central village of the Zinzendorf estate. A Lutheran pastor named Rothe presided. The service was later said to be a veritable Pentecost, for the Holy Spirit came upon all with great power, much like that first Pentecostal morning, out of which came the Christian Church. It must not be thought that this revival was shallow emotionalism. It was nothing less than an outpouring of Christian love which immediately replaced the distrust and dissension of the past. Those who had been at odds, made their peace. Not only so, but a mighty urge, again like the first Pentecost, came upon them to carry the Gospel out to those who had never heard it.

The Choir System

Zinzendorf was never more in his element than in the early days of the Moravian expansion. Mission was in the air, but before that mission could succeed, it needed a firm foundation. Thus Zinzendorf led in the organization of the entire community at Herrnhut for instruction, worship and work. He introduced a plan of Christian education much like the graded system of instruction in our church schools. It was called The Choir System. The classifications of this

system were:

- Little Boys
- Little Girls
- Older Boys
- Older Girls
- Single Brothers
- Single Sisters
- Married Couples
- Widowers
- Widows.

Each choir had its special meetings and times for instruction. Usually, the sexes were divided for instruction and worship. Although the married couples met together in the same service, they sat separately. They still do this in some of our old European centers, like Herrnhut.

Economic Development in the Settlements

With organization of the community accomplished, the Count turned his attention to the economic development of Herrnhut. The pattern established there would be used for the development of more than twenty Moravian settlements all around the world. The Elders of the church watched over every phase of life, secular as well as spiritual. The village itself operated on a communal basis in which every member contributed according to his ability and shared according to his need. There was no competition in business, and the congregation owned and controlled all the resources of the community. The industrial arts were carried on within the village, and many Moravians were noted artisans. Those who did not work as artisans often labored on the farms. They, too, lived in the village; but they went out each day to the adjoining fields.

Day by day, from birth until death, these early Moravians tried to make the Christian religion as much a part of life as breathing. Naturally, all who came to Herrnhut or one of the other communities to apply for membership were carefully screened. Many were refused. No converts were sought at Herrnhut, nor in any of the later Moravian centers. There was no home mission activity, nor has there been any of consequence until within the last fifty to seventy-five years. Rather, the congregation was divided into those who remained at home and worked and those who went out to carry the gospel to other lands. Bishop Spangenberg told those who lived in the settlements that they were the commissariat," or "the supply department," for those on active mission in far away lands. It was a good system. Each person contributed to the welfare of all, and each received according to his or her need; and "the first fruits" of each settlement's labors always went to further the mission endeavor.

The Moravian Mission

In 1732, the island of St. Thomas, West Indies, (now one of the U.S. Virgin Islands) was the first mission field entered by the Moravians. Other missionaries were there ahead of them, but they worked primarily among the planters and other Europeans. The Moravians went to the Blacks

who had been taken there against their wills, and kept as slaves. More than 13,000 of them became Christians before another Protestant Church established a mission there.

Early mission work was also carried on in Greenland. The Moravian mission to that icy land was first launched in 1733. The first converts were made among the Eskimos in 1739. An interesting story surrounds those early efforts. Moravian work in that frozen and inhospitable land did not meet with immediate success. Indeed, after more than a year on station, they were so discouraged by the total lack of reception that the Eskimos had given them, that one of their number could write:

Here toils a little group of men,
Endowed with scanty powers;
And day by day, in blank despair,
They count the dreary hours.

But the time came when the message of the missionaries to Greenland was received. Their first successes came immediately after they abandoned preaching abstract theological doctrine and adopted the picturesque narrative method. In his book, The History of the Moravian Missions, James Hutton describes this change of method and the results that it produced:

In the past they had discoursed about the Fall of Man and the Plan of Salvation; hence forward they gave the people the Passion Story in detail; and the Eskimos themselves soon noticed the difference. At the story of Adam and Eve they had merely wondered; at the story of the Crown of Thorns they wept; and, sometimes, at the baptismal service, their tears dripped into the font.

When informed of the success of the Greenland Mission, Count Zinzendorf said, "Henceforth, we shall preach nothing but the love of the slaughtered Lamb." From that time forward Moravian evangelists were schooled in telling the Passion Story---the story of Christ's death on the cross for humankind, as succinctly and as simply as possible.

The Moravians also went to Lapland. They tried to go to Siberia, but a suspicious Russian government blocked them. They went to Surinam, South America, where the largest Moravian congregation today is located in Paramaribo. They went to Labrador, Ceylon, South Africa, Cairo, Constantinople, Baghdad and Jerusalem (where they established a home for lepers). Later they went to Central America---to Nicaragua and Honduras, and to Alaska. In his book Alaska, James Mitchner paints a very sympathetic picture of the Moravian work there.

By 1735, the Moravians in Herrnhut had launched the most ambitious mission program the Protestant world had ever known. Missionaries had gone forth to the four winds, and individual brethren and small bands wandered over Europe spreading the word of their way of life.

The First Bishops of the Renewed Church

As The Renewed Unity launched their foreign missionary program, first in 1732, among the Negro slaves of the West Indies, and later in other parts of the world, they felt the need of a ministry of their own both in the mission fields and in America, in order to have standing and to

be able to perform baptisms, marriages, etc.

In 1735, two bishops of the ancient Brethren of Bohemia still lived, Bishop Jablonsky and Bishop Stikovius. On March 13, 1735, Bishop Jablonsky with the written approval of Bishop Stikovius consecrated David Nitschman, another godly carpenter, as the first bishop of the Renewed Church. In 1737, Zinzendorf, then an ordained Lutheran minister, was also consecrated a Moravian bishop.

The American Mission

In the 18th century, much of the world's movement was to the New World. It was quite natural that the Moravians should go there. Since, the American colonies were largely under the Church of England, Zinzendorf sought the approval of the British Parliament to start Moravian work there. Parliament responded favorably, and, in 1749, declared the Moravian Church to be, "An ancient Protestant Episcopal Church, most similar in doctrine to our own."

The Georgia Mission & John Wesley

It was during the winter of 1736, on a voyage from England to Georgia, that the Moravians first made contact with John Wesley. Wesley was going to the new world for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the Indians. The Moravians were going to begin a new life, and to establish new settlements, each of which would, in their own turn, send out missionaries to the Indian tribes.

Wesley's own Journal is a premier source of information about these early encounters.

Initially, Wesley was impressed by the humility and Christ-like character exhibited by the people whom he called "the Germans," but he was still more impressed by the courage displayed by their women and children in the midst of a terrible storm. Thankfully, in a journal entry dated Sunday, 25 January 1736, Wesley has recorded the story of this meeting in his own words. He said that it took place on a day of foul weather and intermittent storms. Wesley set the background for the incident when he wrote, "Every ten minutes came a shock (from the high seas) against the stern or side of the ship, which one would think should dash the planks to pieces." A bit later he continued:

At seven I went to the Germans. I had long before observed the great seriousness of their behavior. Of their humility they had given a continual proof, by performing those servile offices for the other passengers, which none of the English would undertake; for which they desired, and would receive no pay, saying, "it was good for their proud hearts," and "their loving Saviour had done more for them." And every day had given them occasion of showing a meekness which no injury could move. If they were pushed, struck, or thrown down, they rose again and went away; but no complaint was found in their mouth. There was now an opportunity of trying whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear, as well as from that of pride, anger, and revenge. In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the main-sail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on. I

asked one of them afterwards, "Were you not afraid?" He answered, "I thank God, no." I asked, "But were not your women and children afraid?" He replied, mildly, "No; our women and children are not afraid to die."

From them I went to their crying, trembling neighbors, and pointed out to them the difference in the hour of trial between him that feareth God, and him that feareth Him not. At twelve the wind fell. This was the most glorious day which I have hitherto seen.

Wesley quickly made common cause with the members of The Unity, using every opportunity to converse or worship with them. They accepted him; but not without reservation. At least some of their number thought him, at this point in his life, "a restless soul," not fully convinced of his own salvation. Wesley himself would later own that very evaluation. At any rate, events that followed proved that he was not yet equipped to handle the responsibility of serving his faith in America.

Indeed, after a year and one-half in Georgia, Wesley had had enough! Constantly criticized, he had several times been brought to court on charges trumped up by people who thought him tactless and overbearing. At last, under orders by the courts to the contrary, he took ship to return to England. His journal entry for 24 January 1738 records his state of mind after this failure was bleak, and his soul was indeed "restless." He summed it up when he asked, "I went to America to convert the Indians; but O! who shall convert me?"

Upon his return to England, Wesley again made common cause with the Moravians. He was particularly enamored with Peter Bohler. In journal entries dated 22nd and 23rd April, Wesley records that he confessed to Bohler that he was unsure of his faith, and that he had considered leaving off preaching. Bohler responded, "No; do not hide in the earth the talent God hath given you."

It was a turning point with Wesley. Increasingly, he would pour over the scriptures to see if the Moravian doctrine of "saving faith being given to the believer in an instant" could really be true. Though the battle continued for several weeks, the time came when Wesley accepted this doctrine not just because he found it in scripture, and not just because he had interviewed persons who claimed the experience, but because he himself shared the experience. In a journal entry dated May 14, 1738 he records that, as he sat in a meeting of The Society on Aldersgate Street, listening as one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans, at about quarter before nine, he felt:

"...my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

John Wesley, the spiritual father of the Methodist Church, came to know the Moravians well. At first enamored with them, he ultimately decided that he must follow Christ along a different path. If one carefully examines the record of the interchanges between Wesley and the Moravians, one cannot help but be reminded of the friendship between Paul and Barnabas. Friends and co-workers for years, they ultimately parted company over after disagreeing over John Mark. The

Acts 15:31-46 records that they were about to take another missionary journey.

“We’ll take John Mark,” said Barnabas.

“No we won’t,” responded Paul, “he quit on us last time.”

“If we don’t take him----we will go our separate paths,” Barnabas threatened.

And now we sing, “It was good for Paul and Silas, it was good for Paul and Silas...”

After their parting, both Paul and Barnabas continued to serve Christ, each in his own way. Who then can say which of them was right and which was wrong in the matter of John Mark? It may be that God willed the response of both men. Tradition says that, at a latter time, Mark was Peter’s companion in Rome, and the author of the 2nd gospel. Perhaps John Mark needed the second chance offered by Barnabas, and the stern rebuke offered by Paul to make him into the stalwart Christian witness he would become?

At any rate, we may certainly believe that God intended the Moravians and Methodists to go their separate ways, each denomination acting in its own way for God’s good purposes.

The Migration to Pennsylvania

From Georgia, the Moravians under Spangenberg went to Pennsylvania. Settlements were established at Bethlehem, and Lititz. They thrived, particularly the settlement at Bethlehem. Today it is the home of Moravian College and Moravian Theological Seminary. The National Geographic once featured Bethlehem as “The Christmas City.” It is said that Zinzendorf himself gave the settlement its biblical name. It was Christmas Eve, and a small band of settlers was confined by the weather to a tiny cabin with an attached barn. As was their custom, they held evening worship. It was made particularly special because of the day. As the Christmas Story was read, in a fit of inspiration, Zinzendorf moved the service into the attached barn. There, “in a lowly cattle shed,” Christmas Eve was celebrated, and a great city got its name.

An interesting experience befell Zinzendorf in Philadelphia. A group of Lutherans had organized a congregation in Germantown. They had requested a Lutheran minister, but none had been sent. Indeed, to this point no Lutheran ministers had been sent to the new world. In lieu of a minister of their own, they asked Zinzendorf to be their pastor, perhaps expecting to become Moravians. In accordance with his usual attitude about the Moravian ministry, Zinzendorf declined. Nevertheless, Lutherans in Europe heard about it, and soon dispatched ministers of their own to America. They were sore afraid that Zinzendorf would gain too much influence over Lutherans in the New World. Perhaps the Moravians missed yet another opportunity? I wonder what our church would be like to day if we had formed closer ties with the Wesleys and/or the Lutherans? Would many of their number now call themselves Moravians? It is as interesting thought!

Down to North Carolina

In 1753 Moravian established their first settlement in North Carolina. The settlement was built

on a part of a 100,000 acre tract secured from Lord Granville. There were 15 carefully selected men who went first, led by a Moravian minister, Bernhard Adam Grube. Congregation settlements were established in Bethabara in 1753, in Bethania in 1756, and in the central town of Salem (meaning Peace) in 1766. The Herrnhut plan was followed in these American settlements. Only Moravians lived within the settlement. There was first the Congregation House, then the Church, the Widows House, the Sisters House, and the Brothers House. Today these restored buildings can be seen in Old Salem.

Of course, though these buildings have been restored as to original form, they have not been restored to original use. Today, our Moravian Church is much like any other. While the Moravian Church owns its old buildings in these congregation settlements, every vestige of the old communal life is gone. The single men and single women no longer live in separate groups. The Widows House has become a church home for widows and unmarried women. The only remnant of the old community life is the fact that title to all Moravian Church property is held by central holding corporations chartered under the laws of the states of North Carolina, where Winston-Salem is the headquarters of the Southern Province, and Pennsylvania, where Bethlehem is the headquarters of the Northern Province.

Government

As we have noted, in 1749 the British Parliament recognized The Unitas Fratrum as, “An ancient Protestant Episcopal church most similar in doctrine to our own.” Our government is Episcopal in that we have bishops who are in the line of the Apostolic succession. Yet, our bishops are not ex-officio administrative officers. They may be elected to such office, and some are. Others may continue in the pastorate, as in my case. A bishop is expected to be “a pastor of the pastors;” and, as such, is their counselor. A bishop presides at church consecrations, ground-breakings, cornerstone layings, and other similar functions. A bishop alone has the power to ordain to the first two orders of the ministry, deacons and presbyters or priests, and to assist in the consecration of other bishops. At least three bishops are required for a service of Episcopal consecration. The office of bishop is also intercessory, and the bishop carries on his or her heart and in his or her prayers the whole church together with special intercessions. The bishop is also charged with promoting and leading the ministry of intercession in the churches.

Yet, though we have retained our bishops, the present form of government in the Moravian Church is not unlike that in the Presbyterian Church. Church legislation is enacted by Synods made up of representatives of the churches, both lay and clergy. Each Province has its own Synod. Once each ten years a Unity Synod is held in which representatives from all of our home and mission provinces assemble.

Each Provincial Synod elects an executive board to govern the church and carry out the enactment's of Synod during the Intersynodal period. It is called the Provincial Elders' Conference. In America it is composed of ministers and lay persons. In the other provinces, ministers only - usually three - compose the board. I served for six years as vice-president of the Southern Province Provincial Elders' Conference immediately prior to my election to the Moravian Episcopacy.

The Provincial Elders' Conference handles the call and placement of ministers, using the confessional plan. When a pulpit becomes vacant, the Provincial Elders' Conference lists the pastors whom they consider best suited for the position, and who could be moved without serious damage to the congregations they are now serving. They then hold a joint meeting with the governing boards of the church seeking a pastor and present this list to them.

The local church boards are not compelled to choose from this recommended list, but they are requested to do so. The qualifications of the ministers on the list are discussed. Often the church boards will bring up one or more names not on the list. Sometimes they pass over the names suggested by the Provincial Elders' Conference and request that another minister be called. The local church board cannot extend a call. If the local board insists, the Provincial Elders' Conference might accede and issue the call, but they have the right to refuse, and sometimes do, if they think harm will be done.

If a congregation has cause for complaint against their minister and if they cannot take care of it directly with him, they usually take the matter up with the President of the Provincial Elders' Conference who is a full time executive. If he sees fit he will bring the matter before the entire Board. A Moravian minister cannot be discharged either by his congregation or by the Provincial Elders' Conference. If a situation becomes intolerable, the Provincial Elders' Conference can call him to provincial supply and so remove him from his church, if he sees fit to accept. As a last resort, he can appeal to Synod, but I have never known a case to go that far. Our confessional system usually takes care of the needed change with the least hurt for all concerned. Usually the minister who cannot love and pray his problem out with his people is called to another church when a vacancy arises.

In our Southern Province, The Provincial Elders' Conference plus three lay persons elected by Synod compose what is known as the Finance Board. This board appoints a Provincial Treasurer who meets with them; and, as a full time employee of the church, carries out their vision for the financial responsibility of the province on a day-to-day basis. Working according to the recommendations of the most recent Provincial Synod, the Finance Board sets the amounts to be contributed by the various churches to the provincial budget. This budget includes:

- Foreign Missions
- Home Missions
- Church College contributions
- Christian Education
- Church Archives
- Moravian Music Foundation
- Provincial Administration
- Building and Expansion
- Unity and Inter-Denominational causes.

The Finance Board arranges loans for church construction and holds title to all church property in the Province, except where there is a smaller holding corporation within the province, as the case of Salem, N. C., and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Doctrine

The Moravian Church, in common with other evangelical Protestant Churches is Trinitarian in doctrine holding to:

1. The Inspiration of the Scriptures and their sufficiency as Guide-book of life;
2. Jesus Christ the only Savior of mankind; (*This is a reference to the extent of the atonement, not a comment on who gets into heaven and who does not. WNG*)
3. The necessity for individual salvation through Christ and Him Crucified;
4. The Headship of the Risen and Ascended Christ over His Church and His near presence through the power of the Holy Spirit in the individual heart and life of His true followers;
5. The responsibility of the Church and each individual believer to carry out the Great Commission, “Go ye into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”;
6. the right of every sincere believer to the use of the means of grace which God has provided;
7. the essential unity of all believers in Jesus Christ;
8. the Second Advent of our Lord [5]; the Resurrection of the dead; final judgment and Life Everlasting.

Though many have maintained that the Moravian Church is “theologically fuzzy,” the charge is not valid. Our beautiful hymns and comprehensive liturgies make an eloquent, complete and forceful statement of our beliefs; and, in most of our congregations, our members are exposed to them each and every time they worship! We believe that all true theology is a result of worship--whether that worship take the form of “adoration” or “service.”

Baptism

[Baptism](#) in all forms is recognized. Customarily the method of sprinkling or pouring is used. Through Infant Baptism children are received into the fellowship of the church. Young adults and children who were baptized on the basis of the faith of their parents and the church, and who have reached the years of discretion, are received into full membership after a period of instruction by the laying on of hands in a ritual known as Confirmation. Adult's who wish to become Moravians are received by Adult Baptism, by Reaffirmation of Faith, or by Letter of Transfer, whichever is most appropriate.

Holy Communion

The Holy Communion is administered within the framework of the Apostolic Succession. The sacred elements, having been blessed by the minister, are distributed by him only to each communicant. It must not be passed from one communicant to another, nor even by officers of the church. It is generally served to the communicants in the pews. In the case of those churches which have altars and communion rails, it is sometimes served at the altar, the communicants kneeling. It is always received in the un-gloved right hand. While the sacred elements are being distributed the congregation joins in singing hymns of love and fellowship. Moravians stand and partake together. The practice of standing to receive and partake of the Holy Communion, was begun in England when how one took communion was the fuel for controversy among

Protestants. Those who knelt were accused of “venerating the host,” like the Catholics; those who sat were accused of “having no respect for the Saviour.” It is typical of our church that we adopted the middle way of standing.

From the beginning the Moravian Church has refused to enter controversy concerning the mysteries of the Lord’s Supper. The Words of Institution are the words Jesus used when He gave the Bread and Cup to His disciples, omitting any human interpretation. The elements are received by each communicant. The Common Cup is no longer used in our congregations. Twice during the service at designated places during the singing of a hymn, each communicant extends the right hand of fellowship to the communicant on his right and on his left. In earlier days in Europe, when the sexes sat separately, the New Testament custom of giving the kiss of peace took the place of the present Right Hand of Love and Fellowship.

It is worth noting that communicant members of other denominations---including Catholics, are invited to partake of the Communion with us.

Vestments

In Moravian Churches the minister wears a long white surplice with white belt for the administration of the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, and for the rites of Confirmation, Matrimony, Ordination, and Consecration. At other services the use of vestments is optional. Often the black Geneva gown is used, sometimes with or without stoles.

Customs and Practices

We are a Liturgical Church, holding to many of the ancient prayers of the Bible and the Church. We follow the Church Year, commencing with Advent, continuing through Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost and the Trinity Season.

Hymns and Music

In the Moravian Church, special emphasis is laid upon music, both for its cultural value and as an aid and expression of worship. Moravian hymns are rich in poetic expressions of deep devotional character. The fine harmonies of the traditional chorales lend themselves to the dignified yet enthusiastic congregational singing of the distinctly Moravian service. The simplicity, dignity, and beauty of the Moravian liturgical service frequently receives favorable comment from visitors. Our church provides a full liturgy to cover the entire Church year, including separate and special liturgies for each season of the Church Year. A distinctive feature of the Moravian liturgical service is the interspersal of hymns or chorales between the prayers and affirmations. These are used rather than chants, although, in some congregations, a few of the latter are used. Whatever the fare, the emphasis is upon congregational participation. Frequently there is antiphonal singing between a soloist or the choir and the congregation. In some of our local church we use lay-readers who are good vocalists to conduct the liturgical services. Few Moravian congregations would feel complete without a band to play occasional preludes to services, or to accompany the singing during special services. Few realize it, but much of Europe’s great Baroque and Classical music was first performed in America not in New

York or Philadelphia, but in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania or Salem, North Carolina as Moravians celebrated God's great gift of music. Persons interested in the Moravian and early American musical heritage should contact the Moravian Music Foundation, under the able direction of Dr. Knola Knouse, which is located at 1000 Cascade Avenue, in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Prayer Life

While we are a liturgical church, we recognize and encourage voluntary and spontaneous prayer on the part of the clergy and laity. In this way we combine the scriptural forms of prayer with the greatest liberty to worship in spirit and truth. As a result of a prolonged prayer meeting and the changed atmosphere from May to August 1727, the Moravian Church was renewed. For many years an hourly intercession was practiced at Herrnhut and other Moravian centers. It was renewed in our 500th Year, 1957. Throughout that year, during every hour of each day and night, directed and spontaneous prayer was offered in some Moravian Church or home around the world.

The Lovefeast

The Moravian Church is one of the very few churches which has a service in its appointed services dedicated to the greatest of virtues, Christian Love. It is called the Lovefeast, after the practice of the Apostolic Church which often preceded the Lord's Supper with a common meal partaken in love and fellowship. These "love feast" are described in 2nd chapter of the Book of Acts.

In our Lovefeasts the common meal consists of a plain sweet bun and coffee, tea, or chocolate. It is served to the participants in the pews. After all have been served, the congregation joins in the Moravian table grace:

Come, Lord Jesus, Our Guest to be,
And bless these gifts, Bestowed by Thee.
Bless our dear ones everywhere,
Keep them in Thy loving care.
Amen

As they partake, the participants are asked to pray in love for one another, especially for those seated on either side of them. The organist plays softly during the meal. The Lovefeast is not a substitute for the Holy Communion. In the Holy Communion, the symbolism is that God shares with us, His children. In the Lovefeast, the symbolism is that the Christian shares with his or her fellow-Christians. Since love is the greatest power in the world, and Christian love is the greatest of virtues, I have often wondered why more branches of the Church do not adopt the Lovefeast as one of their appointed services.

Other than the common meal, the Lovefeast is a service largely of music, chiefly the singing of hymns of love and fellowship. Occasionally there is a brief address.

Christmas

The Moravian Church gives distinctive emphasis to Christmas. The Christmas Eve Lovefeast and Candle Service draws many visitors. Some churches are compelled to hold three and even four of these services on Christmas Eve. There are separate services for children and adults. At the children's service even the smallest child is at home. After the Lovefeast, lighted candles are distributed to each worshiper while the auditorium is darkened except for the large illuminated Moravian Christmas Star. This star has 26 points. Within is a lighted electric bulb. The candles are hand made of bees-wax and tallow. Around the bottom is a red non-flammable paper frill. Some say that the bees-wax and tallow symbolize the humanity of Christ; the lighted wick His divinity; and the red frill His atonement. Others say that it simply reminds us that Jesus said:

“I am the Light of the World.”

After the candles have been distributed and during the singing of the last stanza of the last hymn, usually, Joy to the World, worshipers are asked to hold their candles aloft in rededication to the call of Jesus:

“You are the light of the world.
Let your light so shine before men
that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven.”

In some congregations at the adult services the worshipers carry their lighted candles out into the dark world.

Holy Week & Easter

Moravians call the week preceding Easter, Holy Week. A special book has been prepared for this week, called The Holy Week Manual. It is a harmony of the Gospels, arranged according to the events of each particular day in this last week in the life of Jesus before His Death and Resurrection. The sections are headed: The Acts of Sunday, the Acts of Monday, the Acts of Tuesday, the Acts of Thursday, and the Acts of Friday. There are no readings for Wednesday, a day on which the synoptic gospels indicate Jesus was resting, nor for Saturday, “The Great Sabbath,” the day on which he rested in the tomb. The reading by the minister is interspersed with appropriate hymns sung by the congregation and choirs. At these services there are no addresses- only The Word of God speaks. On Maundy Thursday the Lord's Supper follows the reading. This is the most significant communion of the year, as it is observed on the very night when our Lord instituted this sacramental meal. On Good Friday there is a Crucifixion Service in the afternoon---often with a second communion, and a second service at night. On Great Sabbath the Easter Lovefeasts are held, often three or four.

Also, it is the custom on Saturday for gravestones in the church graveyard, called God's Acre, to be scrubbed clean, and flowers placed on the graves in preparation for the Easter Morning Service.

Easter

In the old Moravian Centers, at about 2 a.m. on Sunday morning, the Church Bands set forth. They play chorales at designated spots over the town, announcing the Resurrection. Just before dawn the congregation assembles in the church, or before the church if the number of worshipers is too great for the church itself, as at Salem, where the number of worshipers runs into the thousands. The minister opens the service with the historic words of the Easter Morning greeting of the Apostolic Church, "The Lord is Risen!" The Congregation responds, "The Lord is Risen Indeed." Then follows a hymn led by the church bands and choirs and a brief liturgical service. The congregation now moves to the graveyard, called God's Acre. One section of the Church Band precedes the congregation, another follows. They play antiphonally as the march progresses. When all have assembled on God's Acre, the minister leads in the concluding liturgical service, which is actually our Christian confession of faith. This service takes place at sunrise.

Education

Concerning the Christian education of youth, long before Robert Raikes established his Sunday School in Gloucester, England (1780), the Moravian were giving special education to their children, both secular and religious. Schools were an integral part of church life. Each congregation had its week-day schools in which the children were taught all subjects considered necessary for a good education, including the Bible and doctrines of the Christian faith, music and the hymns of the church.

The church schools were still flourishing in Salem when I was a boy there, and I attended them. It was during my boyhood that the Church School of Boys closed in favor of the North Carolina Public School System. This took place when the town of Winston, which had a good public school system, merged with the old town of Salem. The education of girls continued and flourished as Salem Academy and College grew and later separated into two institutions: Salem Academy, a preparatory school with separate campus, and Salem College, a four year accredited college.

The Daily Texts

In addition to Protestant foreign missions, the Moravian Church also pioneered in the field of daily devotional literature. Early in their life at Herrnhut the Moravian refugees felt the need for developing their personal devotional life. Their need was like ours. As there is need for physical food for the body, especially as the day commences, so there is need for mental and spiritual food.

So Zinzendorf selected a scripture verse to be used each day for guidance. These verses were carefully chosen and were called watchwords. As the congregation met each evening after work, the Count would give out the watchword for the next day. Soon they were printed, a year in advance. As long as Zinzendorf lived, he chose the Watchwords.

After the death of Count Zinzendorf a change was made. The Watchword was chosen from the

Old Testament by lot. Then a New Testament text was chosen to augment or complement it. One or more stanzas of a hymn were added following each text as further amplification of the thought. In 1959 a prayer was added for each day to assist the beginner in family and personal devotions.

This book is called in English speaking countries, Daily Texts. The old German name is Losungen. About the middle of the 19th century others outside the Moravian Church commenced to use the Losungen. Following World War I it enjoyed a tremendous growth in circulation. Today it is printed in 26 languages with a circulation running into more than a million.

In addition to the texts, hymn stanzas, and prayer for each day, there are two or more assigned scripture references to be read each day in family devotions, morning and evenings.

On Sundays the assigned lessons - epistle and gospel - are indicated by scripture references only. These are the old lessons used for hundreds of years by the liturgical churches and which cover in the course of the year the great gospel teachings, in the pattern of the Ecclesiastical or Church year. This is also followed by the Lutheran and Episcopal Churches. These lessons are read in the Sunday morning services.

As an appendix to the Text Book, a directory of Moravian bishops, ministers, churches, denominational boards, educational institutions, mission fields, and annual membership statistics appears.

The method of choosing the daily Watchword by lot is interesting. It is done once each year for the succeeding year at Herrnhut. A book of Old Testament texts suitable and appropriate for daily guidance was prepared many years ago. Each text is assigned a number. They are listed numerically. Single numbers corresponding to those in the book are printed on small cards about an inch square. They are placed in a large glass bowl and thoroughly mixed. When the time for the annual drawing comes, the Provincial Elders' Conference at Herrnhut gathers in a special room in the church office and joins in prayer. The first number drawn is for January 1st. The drawing continues until texts for the whole year have been drawn. Then the texts corresponding to the various numbers are listed. Next the Provincial Elders' Conference or some editor chooses a complementing New Testament text for each day in the year. These texts are then sent to the Provincial Elders' Conference in England, America, and other provinces which print and distribute the books for their constituency. Here in America an editor for the book is appointed by the joint Provincial Elders' Conferences. He selects the hymn stanzas, prepares the prayer and chooses the daily scripture readings in addition to the regularly assigned ones for Sundays. The Provincial Elders' Conference prepares and adds the appendix for the particular provinces in which the book appears.

It has been a long time since May 1728, when Count Zinzendorf pioneered in this form of daily devotions with a watchword. Now many Christian communions print daily devotional guides, usually in paper back form for one or two months at a time with suggested scripture readings, a watchword, a prepared meditation on it, prayer, and a thought for the day. But the Moravian persist in their two-century old custom of preparing the book for a year's use with only texts

from the Bible and hymns, thus encouraging the reader to prepare his own meditation.

Burial Customs

The Moravian burial ground was not called a cemetery, but, informally “a graveyard” and, formally, “God’s Acre.” In “God’s Acre” families are not buried together in plots. Rather, each body is laid under a flat white stone, in the “next open grave”. On this stone is inscribed the name of the deceased, along with the date of birth, the date of death, and an appropriate verse of scripture, or other comment selected by the family. The matching stones, and method of burial “in the next open grave”, emphasizes the equality of all the dead in Christ.

It was (and is) possible for Moravian’s to use the next open grave because a dividing walk runs through the graveyard. The men and boys are buried on one side of the walk, and the women and girls on the other. There are sections for married men, for unmarried men and boys, for married women, and for single women and girls. Thus, while no family is together in death, the body of one man’s wife never ends up next to the husband of another woman! This same plan of burial was followed in all of our congregation towns throughout the world, including the old town of Salem, N. C. and in the modern city of Winston-Salem. Of course, in locations where it is not possible for a church to a graveyard, the churches encourage their members to care for their dead in more conventional ways. Frequently members of our church buy family plots in commercial cemeteries, and many Moravians of today will opt for cremation.

Conclusion- The Size of the Moravian Church

In conclusion, I will attempt to answer a question so often asked: Why has not an old church of such antiquity, one of the oldest in Protestantism and with such a rich heritage not grown to impressive size and numbers? I can answer that question in one word - Zinzendorf.

The size and influence of the Moravian Church was largely determined by Zinzendorf. He became their wealthy patron, and he poured all of his wealth and that of some of his friends into it. The many large and impressive buildings in the old Moravian settlements bear witness to that. But from the day that he opened his estates to the Moravian refugees, he stubbornly held to the determination that they were not to be a separate church. He yielded to their urgent request that the old Moravian discipline and way of daily Christian living be re-established. He did this because in common with them and other Pietists groups in Europe, he believed in the use of the lot in determining important questions. This was not simply the flipping of a coin. In determining the answer to a question by lot there were most often three choices; “Yea”, “Nay”, and a blank. Care was taken in preparing a question for the lot. Only the church elders put the question to the lot and only after earnest prayer.

When put to the lot, the question as to whether the Ancient Bohemian Unity was to be re-established, the answer was in the affirmative. It was the same with the question of renewing the ancient Episcopacy.

Still Zinzendorf held to the idea of a religious society. He planted the idea into the early Moravian missionaries and diaspora workers. Because Zinzendorf believed that one day the

Moravian Brotherhood would be absorbed by other churches, the Moravian Missionaries made little effort to gain members for their church. In the West Indies, for example, Missionary Frederick Martin won 700 converts in 1736. Yet of these he baptized only 30. It was so in all the fields until recent years. In Europe today, the diaspora workers, home missionaries, go about holding meetings in the established churches, where they are welcome. They distribute the Moravian Daily Text Book - the numbers run into several million - take collections for Moravian Missions, but make no effort to win members to the Moravian Church. Actually the Moravian Church in Europe and England is chiefly a large Foreign Missionary Society.

It is only in the last fifty years in the United States that any serious effort has been undertaken to carry on a home mission program. Actually I am one of the pioneers in this field. Someone rather sorrowfully said, "It took the Moravian 167 years to get 80 miles out of Salem to Charlotte."

The late beloved Bishop Edward Rondthaler, putting his arm around me as he sent me to Charlotte in 1924, said, "Brother Herbert, remember the kingdom of God is far greater than the Moravian Church and you are first a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ to those who need you and then a minister of the Moravian Church." I have attempted to follow that advice but it has often been to the limitation of growth in our own church and denomination.

Sometimes I have wondered what the numerical size of our Moravian Church would be if we had taken into our membership all whom we have led to the Lord Jesus Christ and all who applied for membership, including John Wesley. Yet, I remain convinced that church membership is not the most important thing in a man's life. It is the personal and saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the joy of walking in daily fellowship and partnership with Him.

That is the ancient heritage of the Moravian Church which we still hold dear. This history is still being written; and, as I write, I have every confidence that the Moravian Church will long survive me. I pray God's blessing on her and her mission, may she ever stay the course which God has set for her.

Finis

Notes:

[1] Execution of John Hus: A "Romantic Account" from Foxe's Book of Martyrs

When Hus was brought before the Council, the articles exhibited against him were read: they were upwards of forty in number, and chiefly extracted from his writings.

John Hus' answer was this: "I did appeal unto the pope; who being dead, and the cause of my matter remaining undetermined, I appealed likewise unto his successor John XXIII: before whom when, by the space of two years, I could not be admitted by my advocates to defend my cause, I appealed unto the high judge Christ."

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These excellent sentences were esteemed as so many expressions of treason, and tended to inflame his adversaries. Accordingly, the bishops appointed by the Council stripped him of his priestly garments, degraded him, put a paper miter on his head, on which was painted devils, with this inscription, "A ring leader of heretics." Which when he saw, he said: "My Lord Jesus Christ, for my sake, did wear a crown of thorns; why should not I then, for His sake, again wear this light crown, be it ever so ignominious? Truly I will do it, and that willingly." When it was set upon his head, the bishop said: "Now we commit thy soul unto the devil." "But I," said John Hus, lifting his eyes towards the heaven, "do commend into thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ! my spirit which Thou has redeemed."

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Then, with great diligence, gathering the ashes together, they cast them into the river Rhine, that the least remnant of that man should not be left upon the earth, whose memory, notwithstanding, cannot be abolished out of the minds of the godly, neither by fire, neither by water, neither by any kind of torment.

[2] Articles of John Hus Condemned by the Council of Constance

1. There is only one holy universal church, which is the total number of those predestined to salvation. It therefore follows that the universal holy church is only one, inasmuch as there is

only one number of all those who are predestined to salvation.

2. Paul was never a member of the devil, even though he did certain acts which are similar to the acts of the church's enemies.

3. Those foreknown as damned are not parts of the church, for no part of the church can finally fall away from it, since the predestinating love that binds the church together does not fail.

4. The two natures, the divinity and the humanity, are one Christ.

5. A person foreknown to damnation is never part of the holy church, even if he is in a state of grace according to present justice; a person predestined to salvation always remains a member of the church, even though he may fall away for a time from adventitious grace, for he keeps the grace of predestination.

6. The church is an article of faith in the following sense: to regard it as the convocation of those predestined to salvation, whether or not it be in a state of grace according to present justice.

7. Peter neither was nor is the head of the holy catholic church.

8. Priests who live in vice in any way pollute the power of the priesthood, and like unfaithful sons are untrustworthy in their thinking about the church's seven sacraments, about the keys, offices, censures, customs, ceremonies and sacred things of the church, about the veneration of relics, and about indulgences and orders.

9. The papal dignity originated with the emperor, and the primacy and institution of the pope emanated from imperial power.

10. Nobody would reasonably assert of himself or of another, without revelation, that he was the head of a particular holy church; nor is the Roman pontiff the head of the Roman church.

11. It is not necessary to believe that any particular Roman pontiff is the head of any particular holy church, unless God has predestined him to salvation.

12. Nobody holds the place of Christ or of Peter unless he follows his way of life, since there is no other discipleship that is more appropriate nor is there another way to receive delegated power from God, since there is required for this office of vicar a similar way of life as well as the authority of the one instituting.

13. The pope is not the manifest and true successor of the prince of the apostles, Peter, if he lives in a way contrary to Peter's. If he seeks avarice, he is the vicar of Judas Iscariot. Likewise, cardinals are not the manifest and true successors of the college of Christ's other apostles unless they live after the manner of the apostles, keeping the commandments and counsels of our lord Jesus Christ.

14. Doctors who state that anybody subjected to ecclesiastical censure, if he refuses to be

corrected, should be handed over to the judgment of the secular authority, are undoubtedly following in this the chief priests, the scribes and the pharisees who handed over to the secular authority Christ himself, since he was unwilling to obey them in all things, saying, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death; these gave him to the civil judge, so that such men are even greater murderers than Pilate.

15. Ecclesiastical obedience was invented by the church's priests, without the express authority of scripture.

16. The immediate division of human actions is between those that are virtuous and those that are wicked. Therefore, if a man is wicked and does something, he acts wickedly; if he is virtuous and does something, he acts virtuously. For just as wickedness, which is called crime or mortal sin, infects all the acts of a wicked man, so virtue gives life to all the acts of a virtuous man.

17. A priest of Christ who lives according to his law, knows scripture and has a desire to edify the people, ought to preach, notwithstanding a pretended excommunication. And further on: if the pope or any superior orders a priest so disposed not to preach, the subordinate ought not to obey.

18. Whoever enters the priesthood receives a binding duty to preach; and this mandate ought to be carried out, notwithstanding a pretended excommunication.

19. By the church's censures of excommunication, suspension and interdict the clergy subdue the laity, for the sake of their own exaltation, multiply avarice protect wickedness and prepare the way for antichrist. The clear sign of this is the fact that these censures come from antichrist. In the legal proceedings of the clergy they are called fulminations, which are the principal means whereby the clergy proceed against those who uncover antichrist's wickedness, which the clergy has for the most part usurped for itself.

20. If the pope is wicked, and especially if he is foreknown to damnation, then he is a devil like Judas the apostle, a thief and a son of perdition and is not the head of the holy church militant since he is not even a member of it.

21. The grace of predestination is the bond whereby the body of the church and each of its members is indissolubly joined with the head.

22. The pope or a prelate who is wicked and foreknown to damnation is a pastor only in an equivocal sense, and truly is a thief and a robber.

23. The pope ought not to be called "most holy" even by reason of his office, for otherwise even a king ought to be called "most holy" by reason of his office and executioners and heralds ought to be called "holy", indeed even the devil would be called "holy" since he is an official of God.

24. If a pope lives contrary to Christ, even if he has risen through a right and legitimate election according to the established human constitution, he would have risen by a way other than through Christ, even granted that he entered upon office by an election that had been made

principally by God. For, Judas Iscariot was rightly and legitimately elected to be an apostle by Jesus Christ who is God, yet he climbed into the sheepfold by another way.

25. The condemnation of the forty-five articles of John Wyclif, decreed by the doctors, is irrational and unjust and badly done and the reason alleged by them is feigned, namely that none of them is catholic but each one is either heretical or erroneous or scandalous.

26. The viva voce agreement upon some person, made according to human custom by the electors or by the greater part of them, does not mean by itself that the person has been legitimately elected or that by this very fact he is the true and manifest successor or vicar of the apostle Peter or of another apostle in an ecclesiastical office. For, it is to the works of the one elected that we should look irrespective of whether the manner of the election was good or bad. For, the more plentifully a person acts meritoriously towards building up the church, the more copiously does he thereby have power from God for this.

27. There is not the least proof that there must be one head ruling the church in spiritual matters who always lives with the church militant.

28. Christ would govern his church better by his true disciples scattered throughout the world, without these monstrous heads.

29. The apostles and faithful priests of the Lord strenuously governed the church in matters necessary for salvation before the office of pope was introduced, and they would continue to do this until the day of judgment if--which is very possible--there is no pope.

30. Nobody is a civil lord, a prelate or a bishop while he is in mortal sin.

[3] The Council of Constance

The Council of Constance was summoned by John XXIII, the Pisan pope, with the support of Emperor Sigismund. It began on November 5, 1414 in the cathedral of Constance, with many bishops from all parts of Europe in attendance. Business in the council was transacted in a way that was largely new for an ecumenical council, namely votes were cast not by individual persons but by nations.

The council proposed to deal with the three matters of great importance:

1. It proposed to bring unity back to the church. Specifically, to make an end to the Great Schism which had divided the church since 1378. A Council held at Pisa in 1409 had not healed this division, but aggravated by electing Alexander V as a third pope. When the council of Constance opened, Christians owed obedience to three different popes: some owed obedience to Gregory XII of the Roman party, others to Benedict XIII of the Avignon party, and others to John XXIII, who had been elected after the death of Alexander V. John XXIII and Benedict XIII were deposed by the council, Gregory XII voluntarily resigned. Martin V was elected pope on November 11, 1417. He was regarded as the legitimate pontiff by the church as a whole, and the schism was healed.

2. It proposed to eradicate “heresies”, especially those spread by John Wyclif in Britain and by John Hus and Jerome of Prague in Bohemia.
3. It proposed to reform the corrupt morals of the church.

Naturally, there is much disagreement over whether or not the Council succeeded in accomplishing these last two goals!

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[5] With most Christian we believe that the Christ who appeared for the first time on the plane of human history in humility and hiddness, visible only to the eyes of faith, must of necessity, appear a second time in power and in glory, visible to faith and unbelief alike. (see Philippians 2:5f).