The Spirit of the Moravian Church

2011 Preface

One of the most frequent requests to the Moravian Archives has been for a reprint of Clarence Shawe’s delightful little booklet, *The Spirit of the Moravian Church*. This e-book edition reproduces that booklet in its original form. In addition, the observations of two other bishops are provided for the insight they give, spanning the centuries, on the Moravian spirit.

Bishop Clarence H. Shawe wrote *The Spirit of the Moravian Church* for the great celebration of our church’s 500th anniversary in 1957. He prepared it in the context of the British Province, and his writing reflects the style of a more gracious age when he was growing up there in the late 19th century. Some of the details and expressions may therefore sound unfamiliar to many American ears of the 21st century. That being said, this is a very solid, enjoyable, and informative work which truly captures the spirit of our worldwide Moravian Church. In doing so it clearly expounds and explores several key characteristics which have shaped our Church for more than 500 years and continue to define it today. As such, it is well worth the reading in this or any other century.

Bishop D. Wayne Burkette presented his message of “A Gifted Church, a Giving Church” to the 2008 Insynodal Conference of the Southern Province. As president at the time of the Province’s Provincial Elders Conference and formerly headmaster of Salem Academy, Bishop Burkette offers a distinctly 21st-century view of the gifts of the Moravian Church. Not surprisingly, he finds those gifts amply defined by Bishop Shawe.

Finally and from the aspect of late 19th and early 20th centuries, Bishop Edward Rondthaler, pastor of Salem Congregation for more than 50 years, offers a summary of Moravian faith, echoed by Bishops Shawe and Burkette, that Christ and Him Crucified is “all in all.”

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THE SPIRIT
of the
MORAVIAN CHURCH

BY

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FOREWORD

This study booklet on The Spirit of the Moravian Church was prepared originally as a series of lectures, given by Bishop C. H. Shawe of the British Province of the Moravian Church. There was, at the time, no thought of their being used in other sections of the Church. His purpose, however, was one that is of general interest; for, in these lectures, he provides a brief outline of the distinctive contribution the Moravian Church has made — and, we hope, continues to make — to the life of the Church Universal.

As the reader will soon discover, Bishop Shawe is here dealing with traditional aspects of the life of our Church which are rooted in our own history. To some American Moravians this will be quite new — and perhaps seem a bit strange — for in most communities in the United States and Canada our Moravian churches have long since taken their places as Protestant churches among other Protestant churches and we hardly think of ourselves as being "distinctive." Yet, just as each individual person has his own distinctive characteristics which, properly used, can help enrich the life of the whole community, so our Moravian Church has its own individuality and much that we especially value in the life of our Church is rooted in the concepts that Bishop Shawe discusses in these pages.

For many years the world-wide Moravian Church (which is usually referred to as "the Unity") maintained an extremely close organic relationship, with the control being centered in the Continental Province (with headquarters in Germany). Consequently, the idea developed by Zinzendorf that the unique function of the Moravian Church was to function as a "society" within the context of the European State Church had profound effects on Moravian work everywhere, even here in America where the conditions were so vastly different. It was only in the middle of the 19th century that the American provinces were granted an appreciable degree of independence from the "mother province" in Europe. The establishing of The Moravian in 1856 as the official journal of the Northern Province of the American Moravian Church was an evidence of the determination of the American provinces to organize their own work on a basis that was more in keeping with the needs of this country. But even then the foreign mission work of the Church was governed by an international mission board, with headquarters in Germany, until World War I made a change in this system necessary.

While we recognize, therefore, that it would not be profitable — or even possible — to attempt to duplicate the institutional patterns developed by the Moravian Church in its period of such great creativity during the 18th century it is nevertheless helpful to us to become better acquainted with the ideas that produced these patterns. After we have become acquainted with them we will need to go on to ask to
what extent these concepts are still valid for our day and how we can best incorporate them into the present life of the Church.

This booklet is issued for use both as a study guide and for individual reading.

For added background the reader is referred to Chapter II, "The Story of Our Church," in the manual for church members, "Becoming a Member of the Moravian Church." The section beginning on page 18, "A Church or a Society," is especially pertinent to an understanding of the ways the various branches of the Moravian Church developed because of the different circumstances faced by the Church in Continental Europe, in England and in America.

Additional suggestions for supplementary reading are found as footnotes in various sections of this booklet and on page 1 of the Leader's Guide in the back of the booklet.

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About the Author

Bishop C. H. Shawe served for many years as the chairman of the executive board of the British Province of the Moravian Church and during the difficult days of World War II he was probably more influential than any other single person in holding the Unity together. The fact that our missions in Africa and Palestine, although so largely controlled and staffed by the Continental Province (with headquarters in Germany) were able to continue their work without serious set-backs is due in larger measure to his statesmanship. All during the war he kept in touch with the German, Dutch, Danish and Czech branches of the Church by forwarding correspondence through Switzerland and when hostilities were over he took the lead in establishing direct communication and renewed fellowship.

Bishop Shawe studied in both England and Germany and for a time taught in our Moravian school in French Switzerland. He is therefore thoroughly at home in both the British and Continental provinces of our Church. As these pages will indicate, Bishop Shawe combines the insights of both the scholar and the practical administrator to give us all a better understanding of the Spirit of the Moravian Church.

1957

John S. Groenfeldt
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THE SPIRIT OF THE MORAVIAN CHURCH

Introduction

The subject is enticing and seems of vital importance for those who love the Church, and especially for those who seek to serve the Church. What is the quality, the "character" of the Moravian Church? What is the peculiarity (though some do not like that word) of the Moravian Church? Are there, in fact, any features which give to the Moravian Church a character of its own and an individuality worth preserving? What makes a man a Moravian; and if you have made him one, what is he worth?

To answer such questions it is essential to discern the spirit of the Moravian Church; to find that is to find the Church itself, the real Church beyond its mere external features and stripped of accidental accretions. Certainly for those who are directly in the service of the Church no subject can seem of greater importance than this.

This is not to say that one cannot be a good Moravian without knowing exactly how to define Moravianism. It is possible to be a genuine characteristic Englishman without being able to say what is the characteristic English spirit (many foreigners have tried to do this for us, greatly to our enjoyment and also amusement). It is possible even to be a good Christian without being able to define what Christianity is. So one may be a good Moravian, have the true spirit of our Church and even serve it well, and yet not be able to give a clear account of it; indeed, such a one, a "simple brother", may in fact serve the Church better than another who is fully acquainted with the spirit of the Church but is in practice a feeble exponent of that spirit. Happy is he, at any rate, who has the spirit, whether he knows it or not. He will be able to judge, by his reactions to the following chapters, whether what is there written is a true or false statement of what the Moravian Church stands for.

How and where are we to discern the Spirit of the Church? Therein lies a difficulty. For we can never see the spirit and can therefore never bring an irrefutable proof of our statements. We can only judge from externals. There is not a feature peculiar to our topic, let it be observed. Every spirit is discernible only in so far as it is embodied, i.e., is displayed in some concrete form. We may speak of the abstracts, such as truth and falsehood, beauty and ugliness, humor and dullness; but we only know them through some embodiment; an honest man or a liar, a correct statement or a false one, a beautiful scene or an ugly one, an amusing speech or a boring talker. Words and deeds are embodiments of every kind of spirit, manifestations of what is invisible and abstract. And so we judge the Church's spirit from her words and deeds.

When we speak of the Church's words and deeds it may sound a little vague. But the Church does sometimes speak and act as a corporate body. Synodal Resolutions are words and deeds of the Church; so is the Book of Order with its statements of the constitution and organization approved by the Synod. Here most decidedly a spirit expresses itself. From time to time people have spoken in derision of synodal resolutions and have ridiculed the Church Book of Order. To talk that way is a foolish mistake. Of course, any Synod or Book of Order may deserve criticism and call for rectification; but, such as it is, it is an expression of the Church's
mind. If the outcome of Synodal discussion is ridiculous it just reveals the spiritual poverty of the Church.

Then again, the Church speaks as a corporate body through its Liturgies and Hymnbooks which beyond question are expressions of a spirit. And with these would naturally be linked the common usages of our Congregations, especially those associated with the Church's worship or social life.

Further, we must claim to find the embodiment of the Church's spirit in the words and deed of the Church's great men, the formative characters, men whose ideas and ideals have been expressed in the most pregnant form, whose minds have fertilized the Church's mind so that she has accepted their ideals as her own. The embodiment of the Church's spirit in such men is always more vivid and interesting than in any Church Order or Liturgy; but it is, of course, more individualistic and one is therefore less sure how far it really represents the spirit of the Church. Nevertheless, the position these men hold in the Church's esteem as leaders shows at any rate that they must be accounted as representatives of the Church. After all, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also; what you like, you will become like. The men the Church reveres show what the Church would like to be.

One other point should be mentioned in this introduction. It should be made clear that in this paper we are speaking of the Moravian Church in particular, not of the Christian Church in general.

St. Paul on more than one occasion describes the fruits of the Christian spirit. Thus he enumerates, for instance: love, joy, peace, righteousness, longsuffering, temperance. Well, every church can show some or all of these qualities, and must strive to show them; indeed, every Christian is called to do this. Therefore there is not, and certainly should not be, the slightest difference in this respect between the Moravian and any other church. But it may happen in one church, (as it might happen in one individual), that on one or other of such Christian virtues such emphasis is laid, or that in the embodiment of one or other such virtues such outstanding effect is achieved, that it can be said: "that is the special feature of this church (or individual)". It will, I think, be found that in this respect the spirit of the Moravian Church has its own individuality.

And then again, apart from those general and, we might say, indispensable virtues mentioned in the Apostle's list, there are other qualities helpful and valuable, contributing to the manifestation of the Christian spirit and giving to this manifestation a distinct character. This also will be illustrated in the description to be given of the spiritual character of the Moravian Church.
Chapter I

SIMPLICITY

It is among the qualities not mentioned by St. Paul as general and indispensable to the Christian life that we find what must be regarded as the primary feature of the Moravian Spirit: Simplicity. See II Cor. 11:3

The word "simplicity" is unfortunately used in more than one sense. It may indicate a quality that has no moral value and is indeed negative rather than positive. It may describe one who avoids, or who has not the gift to perceive, the subtle and complicated relations of things; one who is too indolent or stupid to see beyond the obvious, too childish to penetrate below appearances. In short, the simple person may be only a simpleton, a fool.

But there is another kind of simplicity which stands for the gift of stripping a thing of irrelevances and getting to the point; and, having found the point, not bothering about other aspects. A simple mind sees the subtle and complicated relations of things, but sees them as aspects of some single, and therefore simple fact; and the simple mind holds on to the simple fact. That is the simplicity which is associated with genius and is the most puzzling and at the same time attractive feature of what we call "originality" of character.

With simplicity, thus understood, go two other qualities: Genuine­ness and Practicality. These are corollaries, not separate qualities. The simple person is genuine (or sincere) because he immediately detects the substance as distinct from outward forms or conventions. And, being genuine, he cannot endure a life in which there is a contradiction between profession and practice, between the spirit that is in him and the things he says and does. Faith and works go together with such a person, which means that he is always intent on giving practical expression to the faith that is within him. But as these qualities of genuineness and practicality appear to be corollaries of the quality of simplicity rather than separate qualities we may regard the word simplicity as covering them all.

I think it is the outcome of this quality of simplicity that our Church has never had an interest in doctrinal discussions. Of course it has had an interest in "sound doctrine" in the plain sense of these terms; it would be absurd for any Church to be indifferent to the Church's teaching. But the subtleties of theological thought, the varieties and niceties of theological interpretation, and the precision of theological definition, which have formed the subject of so many and often acrimonious disputes — these things have not been of interest, much less of importance to us. Christianity has been to us a Way of Life; and though there have been times, chiefly in the history of the Bohemian Brethren, when we were drawn into the business of creed-making; it was more because we were drawn, indeed forced, into it by the conflicts of the Reformation period than because we were inclined to it. And the Confessions of Faith then drawn up have had no influence on the inner life of the Church.

Look at the founders of our Church, the group of men who gathered under the leadership of Brother Gregory in Kunwald in 1457. They were
simple men, not ignorant of course, but mostly unlearned. They turned away from the religious disputations and the civil wars of their day with a conviction that Christian life meant essentially a good life, a loving life, a life after the example of the Lord Jesus. If they had found that in the Roman Church they would not have broken away. They hunted high and low till they found a priest from whom they could conscientiously receive the Communion; not because they had any novel or special theory about the priesthood, but because they felt that, whatever else a priest might be, he should obviously be a good man - simply a Christian.

The way they set about getting Episcopal Orders was characteristic. They did not start with some theory about orders; they did not question the history of Episcopacy nor the propriety of an episcopal office. Their attitude was quite different from that of the early English Independents; Brownists, Presbyterians who argued with terrifying scrupulosity, and also frequently with bitterness, about the precise form of church organization used in the primitive church of the New Testament, and, because so used, regarded as prescribed by God's will for all times. Bohemia could furnish disputants of a similar temper as is shown by the wars over the question of the Communion "in both kinds". Brother Gregory and his friends took no part in the strife. The problem of the Communion was, as far as they were concerned, settled before they formed their fellowship. It was a Hussite teaching that the Cup should be given, as well as the Bread, to the laity; the Brethren's Church simply took it over without further discussion, and though one cannot say that Episcopacy similarly passed over "without discussion" into our Church organization, what discussion there was, concerned entirely the problem of finding a practical way to get the right man (a good man) for the office and the right way of appointing him to his office. The way they chose to solve that problem was again a token of their simplicity; they used the Lot. We may say that this method was undesirable; we may even say it was wrong (though such a statement is hard to justify, still harder to prove) but at any rate it is a method that for many generations of simple Christians was in common use.

Our forefathers believed that the Christian life means fellowship and service, and they organized their congregations on that basis, calling one another "brethren". And they resisted for long the introduction of theological training, fearing that they might lose their simplicity of life and teaching. This was a justifiable fear, not obscurantism. After all, education and study are not without danger. It is significant that, again and again in history, movements arise and groups are formed amongst highly intelligent and well-educated people to cultivate the simple life to "return to Nature"; it may be like Tolstoi, back to the peasant's dress and habits of life, like Gandhi, back to the spinning wheel; or like other groups back to the land. It is always a protest in favor of the practical attitude as against theorizing, and our Church had that attitude in its origins - getting back to the simple, practical Christian life, the Brotherhood.

It is true that when finally the advocates of education had won the day our Church became particularly active in schoolwork and famous for its achievements; and it managed at the same time to retain its character as a Brotherhood. For education was not made the privilege of a select company of ministers, clergy separated from the laity; it was shared among the whole community to the utmost possible extent. Certainly the
Church seemed to have learned the lesson that one cannot achieve the simple life by avoiding education. The simple-life advocates are always in danger of seeking safety by taking flight from knowledge, whereas the real aim must be to be in the world and gaining all knowledge of the world, and yet not of it. Be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves"; be as learned as a Rabbi, yet as simple as a child, it is hard to achieve. As Goethe strove to attain "through Art of Nature" so we have to seek through study and discipline to a clearer realization of the things that matter, to the Truth that makes us free from the bondage to the accidental, the unimportant. That is Simplicity.

It looks as if Comenius, the last and perhaps the greatest of the early Moravians, came as near to accomplishing this as mortal man may do. His conception of the Christian life was as practical as that of the founders of our Church; he was free from bigotry, fanaticism, scrupulosity. "All of you, (he wrote) pray, be of Christ and for Christ, not for yourselves; call together all your disciples and lead them along the easy road of God, which is called the holy, and entangle them not in controversies from which ye do not know how to disentangle yourselves." And with all his "pansophy" he had a sure feeling for the elementary simplicity of a child's mind, so that he was able to lay the foundations of a genuine and practical education, foundations on which successive generations have continued to build to this day. *

When we come to the Renewed Brethren's Church founded in Herrnhut under Zinzendorf's leadership, we again find simplicity to be the keyword, and in this period the word itself is frequently and deliberately used and emphasized. In German it is the world "Einheit."

But it is simplicity in a different setting and with a new emphasis. In those days there were fewer churches than today, but they were mightier more mutually exclusive than today, each of them disputatious and insistent that the other was wrong. There was the Lutheran Church, the Reformed Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, the Orthodox Church and others. These were all, or virtually all, State Churches in the various lands in which they were established. They occupied a place far greater in the national life of the people than they do today. Apart from them there were a number of sects, contemptuously so-called. They occupied a far smaller place in public life than today; Baptists and Congregationalists were not numerous, Methodists had not even come into existence. But the sects were there, all fiercely opposed to, and fiercely denounced by, the great Churches, and all engaged in disputation with each other. Into this scene of contention, often as thoroughly conscientious as bitter, and sometimes intensified to the pitch of actual persecution, Zinzendorf stepped forward with the question: Why? What is the pother about? Is not Christianity a simple thing? Where true Christian life exists, is it not just based on the one main experience: the sinner redeemed by the merit of Jesus and enabled as a redeemed person to live a good life by the Holy Spirit. Each Church or sect may foster that good life in various ways, may worship with different rites, may explain its faith in different phrases expressive of differing philosophical interest, but they all build on the same facts: that is the root of the matter; that is what counts; the sinner redeemed by Christ. "Very well," said Zinzendorf, "that is the practical point, the essential point,

*(cf. Herben, J. Huss and his Followers, pp. 163 ff)*
about our faith." Of course, Zinzendorf realized how many subtle questions may be raised by theologians—his own mind was agile, adventurous, inclined even to fancifulness but he always returned to the central simplicities: the sinner and Jesus.

It might therefore be said that Zinzendorf taught the Moravian Church the virtue of tolerance, but it must be added that 'tolerance' is far from adequate to describe Zinzendorf's thought. That word suggests that we allow the different opinions of others and endure them, even though we think them wrong, as long as they don't interfere with our liberty. But Zinzendorf did not regard the varying ecclesiastical opinions and usages as wrong. Though he did not share them he had a positive and even appreciative attitude toward them. He saw in the diversity of the Churches and sects the evidence of "the condescending love of the Saviour" who "adapts himself" to every race and nation, and even to every temperament in order to bring to all men the supreme fact of his redeeming love. Even the Lord himself, like his Apostle Paul, becomes all things to all men that he might by all means save some. The variety of ecclesiastical practices and teachings which caused so many people to argue and quarrel aroused in Zinzendorf a thankful amazement at the grace of God who condescends to use all kinds of framework to display the simple facts of his saving grace.

"The great truth that the Creator became man and out of love died for us—that is all", so Zinzendorf wrote, and then added—"and that appeals directly to the heart." And so he came to coin the phrase "The Religion of the Heart" to describe the content of simple faith. It was a characteristic phrase. It became almost a slogan of Moravianism in the 18th century. It was not meant to imply any contempt of the brain, the mind, the head; or any neglect of Christian doctrine or philosophy. But it did imply that such matters were not the primary or central fixtures of Christian life. The redemption of the sinner through Christ is the primary experience; thought and doctrine follow on as extensions of this experience. "Christianity depends on a very few things, and they can be written down on a half-sheet of note-paper," said Zinzendorf. And he continues, "The Apostles say: 'We believe we have salvation through the grace of Jesus Christ.... If I can only teach a person that catechism I have made him a divinity scholar for all time, and when he arrives in Heaven he will not need to learn a new catechism. As to ecclesiastical ceremonies, modes and order, they are all subject to change."

Spangenberg, Zinzendorf's successor, a man of first-class mind, a trained theologian and gifted with all-around competence, found satisfaction in the same simplicity and sang its praises in a hymn, "Heli'ge Einfalt, Gnadenwunder" (Blessed simplicity, wonder of Grace). Some verses, translated by Gambold are found in Hymn 354 of the British Moravian Hymn Book.1-

A holy blest simplicity,
  God's wondrous gift of grace,
Is deepest wisdom, truest strength
  In all the heavenly race;

1 (quoted in Uttendorfer, Zinzendorf's Weltbetrachtung, p. 52)
2 (ibid. p.91)
But the present version of the hymn is an abridgment, and omits one really vital verse of the original, which may be rendered thus:

Simplicity flows from the wounds
With the dear blood of God
And he who fails to find it there
Will miss this precious good.

The last quotation invites at least one comment on the "Blood and Wounds Theology" which was specially prominent in the 18th and early 19th centuries and which has been so severely criticized since. The Moravian Church certainly exceeded the bounds of propriety in this matter, but the question should be asked: Why? The reason was probably this, that the discovery of the simplicity of the Christian faith was to these people and in the circumstances of this day, such a happy surprise, such a mental release that they couldn't say too much about it. They talked of it, sang of it, praised it, embroidered it with adoring metaphors, expanded it with ecstatic similes until in the end they landed themselves into fantastical modes of speech. This aspect will be touched on in a later section of this paper, but the excesses of their emotional rhetoric must not prevent our recognizing that the background of it was gratitude for the "holy, blest simplicity, God's wondrous gift of grace."

Spangenberg's hymn itself is unexceptionable from a stylistic point of view. Other hymns might be quoted, e.g.: "Tis the most blest and needful part" or the hymns of Cennick and Gambold.

I think it may be said that the Moravian tunes have tended to display the same characteristic of simplicity. By that I mean the tunes composed by Moravians. It is interesting that the only tune borrowed from us by other Churches of England is "Herrnhut", not by any means the finest we have produced, but the very embodiment of child-like simplicity. Another of similar type is the tune "Weil die Worte", set to: "Jesus Makes My Heart Rejoice." The subject of hymns and tunes of Moravian origin is worthy of further study.

The Litanies also bear witness in their worship of Christ, to the fact for this generation the Christian religion was entirely Christ-centered.

Simplicity is by no means to be identified with monotony. Certainly there was nothing monotonous about the life of our Church in the 18th century. Students of our history find it difficult to follow the rapid changes in the constitution, organization and worship of the Church. Here certainly was not external simplicity: any number of offices and titles, conferences, committees and boards, meetings with special liturgies, and the offices of one year were all changed in the next; the liturgies of one year abolished in the next— one cannot keep pace with the frequent variations. This was chiefly due to Zinzendorf's activity; but the Church digested it all and flourished on it, and it was not due to a mere restlessness of temperament or love of novelty. It was rather due to a conviction that Christianity is a life in the Spirit. Every feature of a Church constitution of worship or organization partakes of that spirit. If the form ceases to embody that spirit and serve that

(Another and full translation may be found in the Hymn Book 1754, Part 2, No. 63)
life, then its value is gone. And, seeing that we grow habituated to certain forms and their significance becomes dulled through habit we may break the forms for the sake of giving new outlets to the spirit.

It is recorded somewhere that visitors in Zinzendorf's house were at one time surprised that he said no grace before meals. He had done so previously, but found it had become a habit, so he abolished it. It may be that when he had made this change, he later returned to the practice when it had regained its significance.

Zinzendorf made an interesting, indeed profound comment on the letters of Schumann, the pioneer missionary in Surinam. This brother had peace and joy in the Moravian Church during the so-called Sifting Period, and in his letters from the Mission still used the fanciful expressions which at that time had become habitual. Zinzendorf administered gentle reproof. This kind of talk, he writes, may be all right for Schumann himself, nevertheless it should only be regarded as the style of a period and has been discarded by the Church; and he goes on—"a forty-fold change of metaphor (or verbal picture) may indicate a forty year growth of the Church, and may show that no slackness or dryness is to be apprehended as may be the case with a fixed phraseology; in the latter case a thousand beauties may never enter one's heart, far less be exhausted." The point of this is that new ways of expressing Christian experience, new metaphors showing the saving work of Christ are to be welcomed. Christian life, like all life, is many-sided; it cannot be fully expressed in one or two phrases. But however many-sided the varieties of speech may be, they can only (or should only) be concerned to express the inexhaustible riches of God in Christ; in other words, they are only varieties of the fundamental simplicity.

With the 19th century there came a diminution of spiritual vigor and a corresponding settling down to stable forms of organization and of worship. Conservatism took the place of adventure. But the old centrality of the preaching of the Cross remained embedded in the consciousness of the Church. It was in the middle of the century that a new challenge arose out of the biblical criticism of the theologians and the theory of evolution brought forward by the scientists. Gradually "modernism" began to spread and of course our Church was affected by this movement. The General (International) Synods from 1857 to 1914 gave repeated consideration to the new situation and sought to keep the Church in the true tradition.

On the whole, the Synods succeeded. Each one of them emphasized the fundamental doctrine of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and His death for our redemption which "we promise to preach in all simplicity." But the Synods recognized the right, and indeed the naturalness of a "diversity of views" as "the outcome of a genuinely evangelical and conscientious study of the Bible." (see Results of Gen. Syn. 1909 to 1914). Behind these two statements stands the general clause; the Holy Scriptures are our only rule of life and faith.

While this brief summary of the General Synod's attitude holds good for them all, the Synods gave way to an inconsistency. The Synods of 1869 & 1879 added to their statement of the above lines an enumeration of eight separate points of doctrine held to be "essential to salvation", beginning with the Total Depravity and ending with the Second Coming.
This is nothing other than a short form of Creed. It has remained unchanged in the general Church Order to this day, and many have pointed out that, though one may not dissent from any of the creedal points enumerated, it is out of harmony with the rest of the synodal pronouncement to have any creedal statement at all. My own recollection of the "doctrinal debates" at the General Synods of 1909 and 1914 is that these creedal statements played no part at all in the discussions; there was no wish to impose undue binding of conscience, but there was insistence that our Church could only live if it adhered to "the one thing needful" the original simplicity.

On this basis it has been given to our Church to avoid all theological disputes; the harmony of our Church fellowship has not been appreciably disturbed and the tradition of the Church has been maintained.

The critic may say that though our tradition has been maintained our present day experience of Jesus as Saviour is more superficial than in earlier days and our witness to it feebler. That may be, and indeed is true, but to discuss that is outside the limits of our present subject. What certainly can be said is that it belongs to the spirit of our Church to seek and cultivate Simplicity, and thus live up to the maxim which Comenius imprinted on our Church; "in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity (love)."

* * * * * *

CHAPTER 2

HAPPINESS

The second characteristic of the Moravian spirit is Happiness. Perhaps some might prefer the word Joyfulness. There is not much difference between the two words, but Happiness directs the attention towards the outlook and demeanor of a person while Joy points rather towards the source of Happiness.

It was said by an observer in 1876 that "there is a warmth and geniality about the Moravians, from their minister down to their pew-opener, which is sadly rare." The writer was an Anglican clergyman, Dr. C. M. Davies, who published in a book called "Orthodox London" a series of reports on the various leading churches and preachers in London. He writes with some knowledge and has an observant eye, but of course one cannot be sure that he has more acquaintance with our Church than that of a well-trained clerical journalist. One would not therefore attach too much importance to what was, after all, a passing remark of his. One would hope that he was correct, and there are reasons for thinking so.

The story that is told of Bishop Spangenberg (Hutton's History of the Moravian Church p. 425) seems to me to be characteristic. The editor of the "German Times" had an interview with Spangenberg in reference to his American experiences. The face of the Bishop was aglow; the editor was struck with amazement and at length burst forth: "Happy man! tell me your secret! What makes you so strong and calm? What light is it that illumines your soul? What power is this that makes you so content? Tell me, and make me happy forever."
"For this" replied the simple Spangenberg, "I must thank my Saviour."

The portrait of Spangenberg is undoubtedly that of a perfectly happy man. No wonder that an enthusiastic beholder said to Lavater, "Look here, Lavater, that is what a Christian looks like." And the remark will be the more appreciated when one remembers that Lavater had made a special study of physiognomy and published various books with illustrations to show how character is expressed by the face.

That Spangenberg was a representative of the real spirit of the Church - in this, and indeed in every respect cannot be doubted. Happiness was a mark of it and Zinzendorf laid stress on it. He once said a penetrating word when speaking of the difference between a Pietist and a Moravian. Now the Pietists, it should be remembered, were the salt of the Lutheran Church, serious, meticulously conscientious Christians, Zinzendorf had been brought up in Pietist circles and had many friends among them. He said: "There is a difference between a genuine Pietist and a genuine Moravian. The Pietist has his sin in the forefront and looks at the wounds of Jesus; the Moravian has the wounds in the forefront and looks from them upon his sin. The Pietist in his timidity is comforted by the wounds; the Moravian in his happiness (Seligkeit) is shamed by his sin."

Zinzendorf does not claim that a Moravian is a better man than the Pietist. He expressly recognizes, in further remarks, that both attitudes are ways to God. It is God's condescension that he uses different ways to enable men according to their different mentalities to find their way to salvation. But the Moravian way seems to Zinzendorf the happier way. "A Pietist is a man who cannot be converted in so cavalier a manner as we, but needs to make more ado about it" and again, "We are the Savior's Court Poets (or Troubadors, in German "Hofpoeten"); the Pietists are prose-writers or grammarians."

The phrase "a happy sinner" has sometimes been used. Whether it is of Moravian origin or not, I cannot say, but it certainly sounds like it, and it was used by the Moravians. It has been denounced and derided by people who have not taken the trouble to understand it. It has been assumed to express the attitude of people who are happy to commit sin and "continue in sin, that grace may abound." Nothing of the sort! The phrase stands for the person who knows he has sinned and is still a sinner, but is made happy by the forgiveness of the Savior and the daily help of the Holy Spirit; he is happy because he is blessed. The two words "happy sinner" are precisely the words that should be applicable to every Christian; they sum up the whole issue of Redemption.

It is from this point of view that the so-called "Sifting Time" (see footnote at bottom of page 14) must be considered, a period which hardly seems to have received just treatment from either friends or foes. Too often has it been the custom to hold up for derision its absurdities and lack of taste, its silly hymns about "Cross-air bird", its deplorable

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1 May 14, 1747, see Uttendorfer, p. 85

2 The German word "Seligkeit" conveys the meaning of the two English words "happiness" and "blessedness" or "bliss."
metaphors exulting in the "Blood and Wounds theology". Apart from Gerald Heard (in his book "The Social Substance of Religion") whose comments, though appreciative, are odd rather than illuminating, few seem to have found some positive values in this extravagant period of our Church, or to have examined the question why there was this lapse from sobriety and why it happened just to the Moravians. W. Bettermann has corrected this deficiency by his detailed and penetrative analysis in his book "Theologie und Sprache bei Zinzendorf", published in 1935.

The background of it all was the excess of their happiness. Like G. K. Chesterton, they believed that Christianity was so good a thing that it made you want to throw up your hat and shout "Hurrah". It may well have been difficult to express, at that period, exuberant happiness without falling into bad taste. It was the age of reason and enlightenment; excess in eating and drinking was allowed, but in the field of Reason dry rationalism set the tone, wit rather than emotion was admired, form and propriety held sway. In the Church, God was the Supreme Being, the Great Original, rather than the living, loving Redeemer. The claim to be a happy sinner might itself alone be considered in those days to be bad taste. Certainly the offence was aggravated by the form it took, giving the appearance of playing with religion; it was perhaps overdoing the role of "Court poets of the Savior" and suppressing for the time being the more steady and sober elements which Zinzendorf called the prose and grammar of the Christian faith. If, however, the Moravians erred in this respect it must be recognized that the Rationalists erred in another. The defect of the latter has been neatly hit off in the saying "Unfortunately, men were trying to be more reasonable than it is reasonable to try to be."

That this ebullient period of the "Sifting Time" really had a positive and solid value is shown by the experience of Solomon Schumann who became the "Apostle to the Indians" of Surinam. He was 24 years of age, a follower of the Pietists who had finished his course in theology and over scrupulous to the point of morbidity, a prey to melancholy for fear of being "a lost soul." He was well on the way to becoming a failure in life. And then he came into touch with the Moravians at Herrnhag where he received the "joy of the Lord." He became a changed man. In 1747 he accepted a call as missionary to Berbice and there he definitely saved a desperate situation and built up a flourishing mission field. He was a product of the "Sifting Time."

The Sifting Time, covering most of the 1740's, was a distortion of a basically sound emphasis upon the atoning death of Christ. With the impact of a conversion experience, insight into the significance of the Savior's death had come to Zinzendorf before his ordination in the year 1734. Thereafter the preaching of "Christ and him crucified" was the core of his message. In the hands of enthusiasts, such as the Brethren were, it was as dangerous as it was effective. If one were to name a precise date for the actual outbreak of the Sifting Time, one might well pick the time of Zinzendorf's return from America in 1743. It centered largely in the Wetteravian settlements of Herrnhag and Marienborn, though its influence affected the entire denomination. It came to an end about the year 1750. However, the disrepute it brought upon the Moravians continued much longer.
A similar example on a smaller scale is found in the brief autobiographical record (in Fulneck Cong. Archives) written by Sister Margaret Lloyd, the first Single Sisters' Laboress of Yorkshire in 1742. She had been drawn first to Wesley's preaching, but she found him filled with the terrors of the law and the agonies of penitential struggle; it was a relief to her to meet the Moravians and to discover that religion is a happy thing that fills the heart with joy.

It need not be an effervescent, demonstrative joy. I do not think it was, apart from the Sifting Time. It was a quiet joy. I think Margaret Lloyd hit on a characteristic difference between Methodism (the Methodism of that period) and Moravianism; for Methodism was akin to Pietism, and I suspect that when Wesley quarreled with the Moravians of Fetter Lane on the score of the "quietism" of Molther, the minister, the root of the difference between them lay in the happiness, the quiet restfulness of the Moravians which Wesley did not understand and regarded as unfitting to the seriousness of the Christian demands.

(The relations of Wesley to the Moravians need to be further studied. If the picture of him presented by Marie Conway Oemler in "The Holy Lovett", 1927, is anything like fair, Wesley was far from being a happy Christian at this time of his life.)

Reference should also be made in this chapter to the prominence in Moravian worship of the Passion of our Lord. The Passion Week readings are unique; and the meetings we now have are only a remnant of a very full series of readings, liturgies and singing meetings which formerly marked this season of the year. To the Moravians, Lent and Good Friday were not meant to be a sorrowful time, not a fast, but a feast, or at any rate a festival season. It has been pointed out by W. Bettermann that Zinzendorf often declared it a mistake to turn the sufferings of Jesus into a tragedy presented to us for a few weeks each year, re-enacted before our mental eye in order to move us to tears and compassion. Certainly our emotions should be stirred, but not so much with pity for one evil-entreated as rather with a sense of gratitude for the suffering endured purely on our behalf and for the astonishing love of God who became man in order thus to suffer, and with a sense of the enormity of human sin. The records of the 18th century are full of statements about hearts being melted and tears being shed; the cause of these was, so far as the Passion was concerned, the incomprehensible magnificence of God's self-giving and the shame of our hard indifference. An unpoetical stanza of Zinzendorf's expresses the thought this way:

Unto this day
Had ne'er been seen
Such a way
Lost men to redeem

(In German: Solche Arten - Ein Verlor'nes Menschenkind
Su erlösen - Sind noch nicht gewesen)

During the Sifting Time, Good Friday was celebrated as Christmas was, with illuminations and "transparencies" in the Church. That was an excess, but it shows the point of view. Passiontide was not a time of mourning but of rejoicing in a great salvation and of dedication to that Savior who has done so much for us.
That any rate is what is meant to be. Some of the Passion hymns in our present British Hymnbook fail to give sufficient prominence to this point of view. But Cennick's verses express the thought:-

Go, follow the Saviour,  
Consider his travail  
Adore Him forever  
Ye sinners and marvel,  
It is for you — he suffers so.

But the verse set in our present Good Friday Liturgy to be sung after the reading of the Agony in Gethsemane, has by mischance just missed this point:-

Most awful sight my heart doth break  
Oh, it can ne'er my mind forsake,  
How thou hast wept and prayed.

The third line was originally: How thou for me has wept and prayed. When it was found necessary to adapt the verse to a more familiar tune, two syllables had to be cut out. It happened that they were just the characteristic words.

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CHAPTER 3

UNINTRUSIVENESS

I put down Unintrusiveness as a third feature of the Moravian Spirit, though I hesitate to use it because it is a negative word and a negative cannot satisfactorily describe a spirit. And yet I think this negative has (in common use) a certain flavor about it of a positive kind. It suggests the quality of a friend who is ready and anxious to help but will not cause embarrassment by officiousness; he will not push himself on anyone, but will rather await the right moment when his help will be gladly received; he knows that love must be sympathetic and understanding and is spoilt by being forced on unwilling recipients. To be unintrusive is to be respectful of others, of their rights and feelings.

There has always been that quality about Moravianism. Though Christianity has been to them essentially a simple thing, they have never fallen into the habit (so easy with those who think things simple) of despising those who think otherwise, to whom faith is full of complications; they have not been drawn to pulling other people's clever theologies to pieces, to belittling other Churches, to pushing forward their own.

Zinzendorf's belief was that there are good reasons for the variety of Churches; it was God's will that the world displays a variety of characters, and different characters have different ways of apprehending Christ. Denominational differences are not to be fought against; they need not be smoothed out; they are to recognized and respected. That was his fundamental conception.
From this it followed that it was fundamentally wrong to proselytize, or to "push" the Moravian Church, and quite truly Zinzendorf remarked that often "some selfish motives intervened" when people set out to convert others. He remarked on one occasion that there are people of whom one must say they are by nature made to be friends of our Church rather than members, "step-brothers" rather than "brothers". If one approaches such a one unreasonably and preaches at him till he becomes a member, one confuses him and causes him to take a step to which he is not called. Even the most insignificant of creatures is happiest if he does well according to his innate character. The rose prefers to be red and other flowers prefer to be as they are; leave them so; otherwise one may produce freak roses and freak tulips and similar monstrosities that only please extravagant people. We should hold to our election by grace in all humility. Anyone who is conscious of it in his heart, doesn't need to have it demonstrated. He who needs arguments and proofs, plainly does not belong to our persuasion." (Uttendörfer, p.47).

It seems to me that even in the early days of the Bohemian Brethren there was something of this unaggressive spirit, this tolerance and respect for the mind of others. It is surely notable that in those days when Protestants and Roman Catholics fought each other bitterly and whichever got the upper hand persecuted the other, our forefathers abstained from any such tendency. Proselytizing was not done; the Church spread without it.

All this really brings out what is implicit in the very name of our Church. From the beginning it has been called a "Brotherhood," a "Unitas Fratrum." How can the brotherly spirit be anything else than kindly, gentle, unintrusive? Anything that savors of aggressiveness, intolerance, domineering, is repugnant to it. It is sufficient to refer to I Corinthians 13:1-7: "Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own." Our Church, in spite of many failings has really known something of this love.

This attitude prevailed in all the relations of the Moravian Church with other denominations in the 18th century, quite particularly in our relations with the State Churches: Lutheran or Reformed on the Continent, Anglican in England; and it persisted long into the 19th century. We not only eschewed "sheep-stealing," we not only avoided intruding ourselves into the parishes of the State Church; we were so careful that we perhaps often actually discouraged people from joining our membership. If our Church opened new centers of work with a group of people who by contact with visiting members or preachers had been stirred to new spiritual life, then these centers were regarded as "societies" and not as "settled congregations." The societies were analogous to the old Vestry Societies which had been formed before we ever came to England, and were never intended to be more than devotional groups within the framework of the normal parish. They were "ecclesiolae in esslesia." This is the way the Moravians commonly regarded their "extension work," as we should call it today. They did not want to poach on the parish clergyman's preserves; they wanted only to help him, to cooperate with him, to share with his parishioners the joy of the fellowship with Christ and with one another which had been granted to them. If it happened, as indeed it often did, that the members of such groups could not find satisfaction for their spirit in the services of the Parish Church, or in their personal relations
with the Parish clergyman; and if they then begged to be admitted as full members of the Moravian Church and to have their "society" recognized as a "settled congregation," it was regarded by our leaders as a very serious thing, only to be allowed if it was quite clear that refusal would do definite harm to their spiritual life, and if one could be assured it was the Lord's will. For the settlement of the latter question the custom was to use the Lot.

It is now clear to us that by such an attitude and such a practice the extension of the Moravian Church was gravely restricted. It has again and again been said that our fore-fathers "missed their chances" in the 18th century (which chances were boldly taken by the Methodists) and condemned our Church to perpetual smallness. It may be that some of the strictures passed on our ancestors are justified; some of the actions they took were ill-judged. It may also have happened that sometimes the virtue of unintrusiveness changed into the vice of timidity, and there appear to be signs of this in the early 19th century and perhaps earlier.

Before, however, one makes any criticism at all of our Church's policy in those days, one ought to bear in mind a widely prevailing view, not only in Moravian circles, but amongst Christians generally in all Protestant countries of Europe concerning the position of the State Churches. The view was that the State Church, the established Church of each land, had a unique claim to veneration, indeed, one might say with little exaggeration, a "Divine Right" not only to exist in that land but to hold exclusive claim to the allegiance of all subjects of that State. One must remember that in those days the Free Churches had scarcely made more than a start on their career. They were then minority groups, splinter-parties, sects, commonly (and sometimes rightly) considered to be addicted to fanaticism and pedantry. To many minds it appeared not only dubious and risky and fractious to desert the National Church, it appeared even contrary to God's will. The Toleration Act of 1689 indicated an only limited degree of toleration and certainly only indicated, as its name implies, toleration of something that unfortunately could not be got rid of. Dissenters were generally under suspicion and their disabilities for public office and even freedom of worship continued for generations. It is well known that John Wesley declared himself to the end of his life a faithful son of the Church of England; and when, before he died, he decided to ordain Dr. Cooke for the Ministry in America, his brother Charles implored him to desist from so fateful a step which implied setting up a new Church.

The same scruples moved in the minds of several of the members of the Fetter Lane Society at the time steps were taken to change this Society into a recognized congregation of the Moravian Church. They feared to lose their rights as members of the Established Church and to be classed with Dissenters, "a probability they regarded with horror." Rather than do that, they left our fellowship altogether. And this action should not be attributed to timidity but to conscientious conviction.

We may add that on the Continent of Europe up to the end of World War II, at least, the position and esteem of the Established Churches, though somewhat weakened by the growth of Free Churches in the last century, are still substantially as they were in England in the 18th century. This applies to Germany, Switzerland and Denmark, where, although our Church enjoys recognition as a Church, so large a portion of our work is
carried on amongst "Societies" or "Diaspora" groups composed of people who belong to the State Church, but get their spiritual care from Moravians. In America on the other hand there has never been a State Church; the problems that confronted us did not exist there. Nevertheless, for many years the attitude induced by the traditional European conditions discouraged unnecessarily any tendency towards Church extension work in America.

But the question must be asked whether the quality of unintrusiveness which we have designated as a feature of the Moravian Church — and a good and essential feature of a Church that exalts brotherhood — has not in fact (and perhaps encouraged by that exaggerated respect for the State Church at the one important period described above) led to a lack of evangelistic zeal. I think the answer to that must be both Yes and No. There has been abundant evangelistic zeal in the Foreign Missions; in the Home Lands there has all too often been lack of it; there has been forgetfulness of the calling to evangelize, and it has even been said "we have not the gift for it."

But in the formative periods of our Church the unintrusive, brotherly, sirenic spirit was quite consistent with a vigorous activity of evangelization, whether at home or abroad. Zinzendorf was an evangelist from the beginning to end. In his boyhood his mind was already set on it; in his years at school and the University he kept founding or planning one society after another to influence his companions and to prepare for bigger efforts which he hoped to carry out in the future; in his manhood he never ceased to seek opportunities for himself and others to "win souls for the Lamb," to use the phrase frequently on his lips. Herrnhut, his first and beloved community, was not meant merely as a place of refuge and peace for unfortunate men who could not worship freely elsewhere, it was meant to be a training ground for "warriors of the Lamb," and by the score such men went out to varied and distant places of the world to give their "testimony to the Lamb." Every settlement that was founded had a similar purpose; a center from which workers should be sent out to itinerate in the district and further afield (from Fulneck men went out to N. Wales) and to which they should return to refresh themselves in body and spirit for further work and to stimulate the stay-at-homes by their reports of the "triumphs of the Lamb."

When Zinzendorf was banished from Herrnhut in 1736 his mind was soon made up. "I shall not," he wrote, "in any case return to Herrnhut to reside for the next ten years, for now we must gather the Pilgrim Congregation and preach the Saviour to the world." With the Pilgrim Congregation, the name given to the group of leading workers he had with him, he travelled from place to place, from Livonia and Esthonia to England. Wherever he stayed he preached; and from time to time he detached members of his group to go out on evangelistic work. He made no difference in principle between preaching the gospel amongst Europeans in the Christian countries or amongst the heathen overseas, though the latter work had for him a special appeal. Everywhere the message was the same; salvation through Christ, and secondly fellowship through Christ with the brethren. This was the kind of work many shared with Zinzendorf:—Boehler, Spangenberg, Toltschig, to name three.

There seems to be no difference in evangelistic zeal between Zinzendorf and the Moravians on the one hand, and Wesley and the Methodists on the
other. The real difference between them lies in the mode of their working. Both claimed the world as their parish, though in fact, Wesley’s labors were virtually restricted to England, and Zinzendorf ranged further afield. Thus Wesley’s mighty efforts were concentrated in a smaller space, his peregrinations really covered the ground with thoroughness, and his societies were strengthened in cohesion by local contact — and there is another difference; Wesley felt the call to compel men to come into the Kingdom of God and by the power of his personality he imposed upon them virtually the way he himself had come, by penitence, wrestling, agony, to the assurance of faith, he put them through the same spiritual experience as he had had. Thus he drove men in multitudes to their everlast­ing benefit. The Moravians never drove any. They invited. They went all over Europe and beyond and delivered their message with joy, wherever they found open doors; but they did not, like Wesley, force the doors open. They were unintrusive; Wesley was intrusive. They depended upon the sheer appeal of their simplicity and joy; if that appeal failed with some people, very well, the Lord had other ways with such.

In the early days of Foreign Missionary work we find the same kind of attitude expressed. Zinzendorf believed there were open doors amongst many peoples; there were hearts already prepared by the Holy Spirit to receive the Gospel. Our business was to find them and to give to them the message they needed. But there should be no pushing or nagging. He used the metaphor of the sun "Our warfare is like the sun," whose beneficent rays shine forth for all to see. And missionaries are to go forth shining "like the sun of righteousness in all its power." In other words: — "Let your light so shine before men that they see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

It is clear then, that the quality of unintrusiveness, unaggressiveness, is quite compatible with great zeal and bold enterprise for evangelization; and further, our history shows that this quality can be both attractive and effective. But it is also certain that to be attractive it must be supple­mented by those other qualities of simplicity and joyfulness which must shine (as has just been said) like the "sun of righteousness in all its power." When, with the passing of the years, the splendid tide of these qualities receded, then unintrusiveness ceased to be effective; its positive content was displaced by the negative and by a natural psycholog­ical development it turned into reserve and timidity towards the outside world which again led to exclusiveness. Our Church retired, in England at any rate, into its shell.

It would be a complete mistake to suppose that the smallness of our Church hinders evangelistic activity. Our past history, prohibits any such notion. It was when our Church was small — much smaller than today — that it was most enterprising.
CHAPTER 4

FELLOWSHIP

It is, perhaps, the most obvious thing that one should expect to find our Church's spirit marked by a sense of fellowship or brotherhood. Many would have put this first in describing our Church, for it has given us our name "Unitas Fratrum," the name that has persisted in official use but has unhappily been displaced in common use in England and America by the name "Moravians."

In Czechoslovakia the original title in the vernacular is still used and treasured; nobody need trouble with the Latinized form "Unitas Fratrum." In Germany a good word has been found in the vernacular: Brüdergemeine or Brüderkirche. Only in English have we failed, and it seems irreparably, to find a suitable title. "United Brethren" was tried in the 18th Century and persisted to the end of the 19th century, though somewhat precariously. "The Brethren's Church" was also tried, but these titles were seized by the Plymouth Brethren with whom we did not wish to be confounded. In the end the British Provincial Synod of 1908 formally discarded all other titles than the "Moravian Church."

From its earliest days our Church has sought to present to the world a brotherhood, to embody the spirit of Christian fellowship. It would be quite a mistake to suppose that this is a re-discovery of the uplift which comes from the group-spirit, as Gerald Heard does in his woolly theorizings about the origin of religion. The fellowship in our Church did not arise out of the natural endowments of men; it was derivative, not original; it was given to our forefathers, not made or discovered by them. It was a gift of Christ, their Lord and Master. It was the issue of their Christian faith, and in particular of their surrender to the power of the central and joyous simplicities of the Christian faith. This fellowship was so little in harmony with the natural inclinations of our fore-fathers in Herrnhut that it had to make its way against mutual divergencies and antagonisms so strong that Herrnhut was in danger of becoming a hot-bed of strife. The birthday of the Renewed Church has always been dated August 13, 1727, because on that day our fore-fathers experienced the equivalent of a conversion; "on that day," they said, "we learned to love."

A well known hymn sings of the "fellowship of kindred minds," but one must ask what is meant by "kindred minds." Too often the stress is laid on the thinking mind. Churches have based themselves on the formulated creed, a statement of doctrine, and have gathered together into one fellowship those who accept this creed; in other words, those who think alike theologically. But it is well known that to think alike on any or on many subjects is not the same as having fellowship with one another; men may think alike, yet be without love. The Moravian ideal has been to gather together kindred hearts, and by the word "heart" is designated the center of a man's personality, the innermost core of personality, the point where a man's attitude to his fellow-men is fundamentally decided and from which his practical treatment of his fellow men is controlled. Where there are "Christian hearts in love united," there fellowship is possible in spite of differences of intellect and intelligence, of thought, opinion, taste and outlook.
This must not be interpreted to mean that, as Moravians, we are indifferent to theology, that we can with universal benevolence tolerate any and every type of theological thought. It means rather that we embrace, and concentrate upon, those fundamental simplicities of the faith referred to in an earlier chapter. Those we regard as essentials; they are the "articuli stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae." He who can say Jesus is the Son of God and is the Savior of sinners has the root of everything in him that pertains to Christian life, faith and fellowship. But this root, at any rate, must be there. Without it fellowship is not what we understand by that word. As the hymn puts it:-

Christian hearts in love united
Seek alone in Jesus rest
Has he not your love excited?
Then let love inspire each breast.
Members - on our Head depending,
Lights - reflecting him our Son,
Brethren - his commands attending,
We in him, our Lord, are one.

We might quote here the summary of a sermon by Johannes de Watteville given in the London Congregation Diary of April 11, 1753. The text was from The Song of Songs 6:13: "What will ye see in Shulamith?" - to our minds an impossible text, but not so for those days when the Song of Songs was interpreted as an allegory depicting the love of Christ for his Church. Watteville treated the subject of the Church with a sweet fervor, plainness and irresistible force; he said that she was properly invisible, none but our Savior knowing all the members belonging thereto, since he has a deeper discernment of the Hearts than we, and bring many to Salvation by very slender and seemingly weak means of Grace (for which reason all denominations, retaining the fundamentals of Christianity, are precious to us) but she must also in part be visible, for the Text speaks of seeing her comeliness and our Lord has instituted her to be a city on a hill. The mark whereby to know whether a flock be a visible Church of Christ, i.e., have many, yea mostly, members of the invisible Church in it, is its tender, living connection with the Bridegrooms and keeping to the Doctrine of his Sufferings, by which mark the Brethren's Church, though not pretending to be complete in all respects, cannot be denied that character."

It was the lasting desire of Zinzendorf to whom all denominations were (as Watteville says) "precious" to promote a more wide spread fellowship than that enjoyed in the limited circle of the Moravian Church. The Moravians indeed had received this marvellous gift of fellowship, so he conceived, in order to share it with other Churches; they should show how the resting in those simple and joyful experiences of fellowship in Christ could overcome the creedal divisions which separated the Churches from one another. Zinzendorf said to himself that if he were to be credited with any special gift it should be this: - "that amongst people who talked half a dozen or half a score of theological languages, he could understand them all and had in experiences of all sorts recognized and proved the reality of the Shibboleth or Sibboleth."

Fellowship meant not only a bridging of theological differences but also of social differences; the artisan and aristocrat were brought together as brothers and sat as equal members on the same committee; the carpenter or the potter might occupy the highest positions as Chief Elder
or Bishop. And this happened, let it be noticed, although outwardly, in
the ordinary marks of social standing especially observed in the 18th
century, such as title or dress, nothing was changed. The aristocrat, the
man of rank, still retained his marks of rank. There was no social revol-
umtion, but a religious brotherhood.

And Fellowship bridged even temperamental differences, which is perhaps
hardest of all. No more searching experiment in fellowship has ever been
made than in the marriages arranged in the 18th century. Everybody pours
scorn nowadays on the method frequently adopted of having one's future wife
not only approved by the Elder's Conference, but actually selected. Pre-
sumably this did not appear in those days to be so unreasonable. I think
Dr. Johnson expressed the opinion that marriages, if arranged by the Lord
Chancellor, would be just as successful as any others. Be that as it may,
I think one must regard with amazement and respect the fact that we read
so little of failures in married life. In the world today, when every one
can choose his mate with perfect freedom, one reads much about failures.
Such may have occurred amongst Moravians married on those strange old
lines, but I can only recall one single case, that of Matthew Stach, the
pioneer missionary in Greenland. The general result of these arranged
marriages must have been happy. And why? Because married life was ruled
by the spirit of fellowship which overcame temperamental differences and
forgave temperamental faults.

It may be asked whether fellowship and brotherhood cannot be based
on natural grounds apart from the Christian basis. The answer is:— No.
It is true that in the last century many social reformers, philosophers
and idealists have hoped for such a Brotherhood of Man. They have
pointed to the fact that not only mankind but even animals show marked
instinct of cooperation; that society is cemented by community of tradi-
tion and interest; that within society there are innumerable associations
of joint interest and effort; that the family itself, the basis of society,
forms a natural fellowship; that the attractions of natural "affinity" are
potent; that all men have equal rights; that the whole world, through
modern organizations of science, industry, communications, etc. is becom-
ing one—and so forth, and so forth. All these things may be welcomed
as serviceable to brotherhood; but do they of themselves either singly or
together create it? I have heard England's National Insurance Act hailed
as a "great experiment in brotherhood." It is in fact a mutual insurance
scheme just like any other, and is compulsory by Act of Parliament. Can
that be called "brotherhood?" It used to be said that men could not be
made good by Act of Parliament. Can they be made brothers?

To the Christian the meaning of Brotherhood only shines forth in
Christ, and fellowship can only exist in the full sense when based on
devotion to our one Lord. And that devotion implies and conveys a sense
of obligation to him. Love is inseparable from a sense of obligation.
"The tie that binds our hearts in Christian love," is not a mere emotional
attraction; it is a tie, it binds us so that we cannot (and do not wish
to) throw it off. "Take my yoke upon you," says Christ, and though he
adds "my yoke is easy," it is none the less a yoke. All the points brought
forward by the idealists in support of brotherhood in general may be quite
correct, but they are all summed up in the statement, there are many links
of affinity and of mutual interest amongst men. The crucial point about
them is the lack of definite obligation to any higher power. They say to
us "You have, as men and women, so many things in common, you should be-
have as brothers and sisters." They cannot say, as the Christian has heard in his heart: "One is your Master, all ye are brethren." And in practice it appears that where this sense of obligation, of loyalty, of love to the one Master fails, fellowship peters out.

Someone has said that Zinzendorf added to the two Sacraments of the Protestant Church a third—Fellowship. There is truth in this remark. For the Moravian, Fellowship is a signal means of grace, as necessary as any Sacrament, and the practical cultivation of fellowship is an outward and visible act accompanied by an inner spiritual meaning.

As far as the Sacrament of the Holy Communion is concerned its significance as an act of fellowship has been marked by the "right hand of fellowship" (originally the "brother kiss") at the close of the service. In the American Provinces this act takes place twice, at the beginning and at the close. This "right hand of fellowship" is a unique feature in the history of Christian rites. Undoubtedly the Communion is regarded in other Churches too as a "corporate act" symbolized by the sharing of the bread and wine of fellowship; but one would think that this would signify for most people the fellowship of the worshipper with his Lord. The fellowship with one's brethren and sisters is given a special and visible symbol only in our Church, so far as I know.

The extraordinary richness and variety of organization in each congregation in the 18th century was a testimony to the reality of their fellowship. The Moravians believed in using the natural ties of social relationships and of affinity for cultivating fellowship. The lovefeasts sprang from this; the varied liturgies and singing meetings displayed it. The choir system was a further example; the members were grouped and cared for according to age, sex, and family circumstance, for widows and widowers down to little children. The Choir Houses afforded exceptional opportunities for fellowship, and the desire to share this corporate life led to keen competition to enter these houses, so much so that some of them became very large establishments and yet, with all their extensions, were not able to accommodate all applicants—this was especially so with the Sisters' Houses. To maintain these places there had to be an "Economy" or "Diacony," i.e., an economic organization embracing trades, handicrafts and farming, and joint housekeeping. One must not imagine that these aspects arose out of any socialist theories, still less communist theories. It is true that at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, there was at the outset under Spangenberg virtual "communism," but that appears to have been due to the exigencies of the peculiar and primitive conditions at the founding of the settlement and it was discarded as soon as circumstances allowed. In general it should be said that while our settlements showed highly interesting features of social policy, they must not be regarded as "experiments in social organization;" they were experiments in the organization of Christian fellowship which, since this fellowship affected both the worship and the daily work of the members, had the consequence of producing new forms of social and economic life.

As economic conditions changed with the coming of the industrial age, the Choir Houses and other features of the settlement life ceased to be practicable. Such Choir Houses as remain have ceased to have their old significance and use. Nothing has quite taken their place, nor could it in modern conditions. But there is a call for cultivation of fellowship today too; the question is how to embody. Perhaps there are possibilities
stirring in the Youth Movement (Fellowship), where there is and should be opportunity for open and unashamed sharing of religious thought and Christian experience. Both in Germany and America there seems to be far more effective movements in this direction than in the British Province. Perhaps, too, there is the possibility of further cultivation of fellowship in the international realm; the experiences of the post-war years have given a marked impetus in this direction. The position of the minister in the Moravian Church is decided by the idea of brotherhood. The minister is never more than "primus inter pares." For convenience he may wear the clerical collar, and by courtesy and in accordance with general custom may be styled "the Rev.", but he is never more than a Brother. When he presides at the Communion it is not as the priest but as the elder brother. The fact that the ordained minister alone is permitted to administer the Sacraments is a rule which our Church has taken over from the long tradition of the past centuries; but the acceptance of this rule in our brotherhood is only justified by the feeling that the Sacraments should not be entrusted just to anyone who might be put forward by the congregation and should not be exposed to the whims and fancies of casually-chosen persons. The Sacraments should be administered on behalf of the Church as a whole and by representatives of the Church as a whole, and it is for his purpose that the minister is ordained; he is a guardian of the order of the Church.

Anything like a clerical caste is out of harmony with the spirit of our Church. One hears from time to time of the introduction of robes or vestments when presiding at the service. Perhaps this may be harmless; and if their purpose is solely to make the service more dignified and impressive to the congregation, then they might be considered as justifiable as the surplice which has always been used for the Sacraments. But if they were intended to mark out the minister as the "holy man" distinct from the laity, they would denote a breach of the spirit. It comes to this: in our Church there should be in theory no distinction between ministry and laity; there is only in practice a distinction in so far as the minister is appointed by the Church to act as its representative in certain functions.

CHAPTER 5

THE IDEAL OF SERVICE

As the fifth and last element of our Church's spirit, I would name the "ideal of service."

For this I wish we had an exact English equivalent for the German word "Dienersinn" which expresses the point in a more personal and almost concrete way. It means to feel oneself to be a servant, to have the mind or attitude of a servant; it describes a living character rather than a quality, a type of person whose mind is dominated by the will to serve. We may use the English phrases of "having the idea of service" or "the spirit of service" to mean just that kind of person; but often such words mean a good deal less, for they are more abstract, they point to a quality, an acknowledged spiritual "value," but do not necessarily connote the whole-hearted personal and life-long committal to it. One thinks of St. Paul's words in Philippians 2:5-7: "Have this mind in you which was also in Jesus Christ, who, being in the form of God... emptied himself, taking the form of a servant." The Apostle would not have been satisfied by
saying that Christ displayed the spirit of service or was inspired by the ideal of service, true though such words would be. And so our Church has sought to bring forth men who would always bear the servant character, have the mind of a servant, the attitude and outlook of a servant.

It may be said, of course, that where a Church emphasizes Fellowship as we do, it follows that it must emphasize service, since mutual service is an inevitable ingredient of fellowship. But it might easily have happened that we had become a Church composed of people united in a happy fellowship with much mutual service limited to the membership of that fellowship; a body of people set on self-preservation and mutual edification, saving themselves and one another from a wicked world. One is familiar with the criticism of the Churches in our day that they are infected with the narrow idea of "saving one's own soul." The criticism is certainly greatly overdone, but it does at any rate remind us that Christians are saved to serve, to serve one another, and also to serve the world by the extension of the Kingdom of God, through the proclamation of the Gospel.

There will presumably always be a certain tension between the two main fields of service of a Church: mutual service within the Church and service to those outside the fellowship. Natural instincts and local contacts will help to foster the former, whilst the character of the gospel itself will urge the extension to wider circles.

In the Ancient Brethren's Church the intense stress on Brotherhood made certain that mutual service within the Church should distinguish the daily life of the congregations. The "Ratio Disciplinae" of Comenius describes the constitution of the Church and the rules of congregation life. Their presupposition is the responsibility of each one - minister or layman for the others in the community, each one to serve in his place. Comenius does not discuss the call of the Church to spread the gospel further afield, but that is no doubt due to the proper limits imposed by the title of his book. But that in fact the Church was not forgetful of its duty to wider circles outside is shown by the expansion of the Church to all parts of Bohemia and Moravia, an expansion all the more remarkable since the repeated and cruel persecutions including even the risk of martyrdom might have been expected to lead to the cult of extreme quietism.

In the Renewed Church under Zinzendorf both aspects of service were very clearly envisaged. None could give themselves more freely to the spread of the gospel than those Moravian emigrants who, by settling in Herrnhut, had gained release from suppression and persecution. Their zeal for evangelistic service led them not only to adventurous and risky enterprises in Europe, Asia, Egypt, and missionary work in America, Greenland, the West Indies, Africa, but even to venturing back to the country from which they had just escaped, though they knew that in so doing they were facing imprisonment. It was of such men that Zinzendorf exclaimed-"gens aeterna, these Moravians."

The whole Church at that time was regarded as an army of Church work. The home congregations were the barracks and training ground. Anybody might expect a call anywhere at any time. In particular, the young men and women, organized in Brethrens' and Sisters' Houses were specifically regarded as Church workers; even the artisans, engaged in the branches of the "Choir Economy" worked for the Church so that the Church might work for Christ. There is today a general store in Paramaribo, the largest
business in the town (Kersten & Co.) which had its origin in the tailoring business started in the 1740's by C. Kersten, who was sent out to support by the proceeds of his handiwork as a missionary colleague laboring in the busy of Surinam.

It has already been pointed out that our Settlements were experiments in Christian fellowship; to this must be added now that they were remarkable experiments in the realm of Christian service—perhaps the most remarkable on record; a Church with its social life organized for Christian work.

Gradually this feature of our Church passed away, though traces of it remained for a long time. I myself came across an old brother in my early ministry who told me that in his youth he was "called" by the Elder's Conference as carpenter from Ockbrook to Fairfield Brethren's House, but the changes in the industrial life of the country put an end to the early organizations of the congregations. Over and above, there was a dwindling of the early ideals and enthusiasm, and there came a timidity into our system, a negative quietism, perhaps even a fear of evangelistic work in the home country, so that the Settlements ceased to be training grounds for "warriors of the Lamb."

Only one great branch of Church service remained; Foreign Missions; and this has remained until today. It is no small matter that the Church as a whole carried on the Missions. It is not the work of a Mission Society composed of enthusiasts within the Church; it is the responsibility of the whole body. It will be remembered that the first pioneer missionary, Leonard Dober, seeking Divine approval for his offer for his service "thumbed" his Text Book and had this verse given him:—"It is no vain thing for thee, for it is thy life." Unconsciously Dober thumbed his book for the whole Church. Foreign Mission work has saved our Church from much self-centeredness, from narrowness and even sloth; it has been no vain thing for us; it has proved life-giving.

And of course it is known that (in a metaphorical sense) we "live," as regards our reputation in England, by our Foreign Missions. That is the feature by which we are known, and our example of service is held up for imitation far more than we feel we deserve.

Turning now to more limited aspects of our Church's work represented by the ministry we can say that our tradition of service still exercises its influence. It has given us our system of ministerial appointments, our "calls" which are different from the call as exercised in the Free Churches and from the "gift to a living" as found in the Church of England. In our calls the service of the Church as a whole is still the decisive point. In the American Provinces there have been considerable departures from this rule and efforts have recently been made to restore the primacy of the Church as a whole in the making of appointments and to reassert the authority of the Provincial Board as against the choice of the individual minister, or the preference of individual (and perhaps powerful) congregations. In other Provinces this awkward conflict has played little or no part. Certainly the Moravian tradition is for the P.E.C. to give the call on behalf of the Church as a whole; and acceptance of the call, whether one likes it or not, is "the thing." Only if there are really grave reasons should a refusal be considered. What are called "cushy jobs" or "plums" (if either of these varieties exist in our Church) have on the whole neither been sought by ministers nor found for them by the
Board. The process of "wangling a call" is so rare, certainly in recent years, that I can scarcely recall an instance; such an action is not regarded as respectable; it is against the Spirit.

The spirit of Church service which happily still lives today is very perfectly illustrated by a sentence taken from a letter written home by a missionary who was unable to reach the destined and desired appointment because of the necessity of filling a gap elsewhere. To be a stop-gap is often and strangely regarded as an indignity instead of an honor; and in this case the gap continued without certainty of any time limit. The superintendent of the field wrote to ask whether the missionary "would mind" remaining still longer to meet this need. The answer was willing consent, and the letter reporting home this little incident continued: "It was touching that the Superintendent should have inquired how I felt about it, and his action surprised me, for in the Moravian Church one goes where one is sent, even if it should be hard."

The relations of the Provincial Boards to this conception of Church service should also be mentioned. In a small Church such as ours, with so many personal contacts and family inter-relationships, there might easily be a danger of favoritism on the part of the Board. How easy to button hole a member of P.E.C. and put in a plea for one's brother, one's nephew, or even oneself! That such things have never happened is of course impossible to assert. I can say, however, that I have never heard of them. It is not only expected but taken for granted that the Board will act from the point of view of the Church as a whole and not by personal preferences. H. A. Kruger, the son of a Moravian minister in Germany and author of two excellent novels depicting school life at the Moravian school in Niesky, tells in his autobiography of his impression that it was actually a disadvantage to him to have an uncle as a member of the Provincial Board. The uncle, far from turning an indulgent eye on the nephew, was so intent on avoiding any temptation to nepotism that he seemed to be markedly stony-hearted towards the young man.

The traditional Moravian conception of ministerial salaries corresponds to the ideal of service. It is not a salary in the sense of being the equivalent to a man's talents, or distinction, or work done, or competitive value in the professional market; it is simply the provision for needful living. And in theory it is equal salary for all, for the same reason. Though the theory has suffered some deviations, mostly unavoidable, a rough equality still prevails. One gathers that in the American Provinces it has been less possible to maintain this principle of equality; but it is not lost sight of, and some brethren would much desire to see it more fully re-established in spite of the fact that it is not the rule in other American Churches.

It has been occasionally suggested that in this respect we are going on wrong lines, that it would be better if there were some "plums" in our Church; that we should make more appeal to ambition. We should learn from the business world where every man knows he has a chance of bettering himself and "getting to the top of the tree." An argument can of course be made out of these grounds for ambition, but it is doubtful whether it is a Christian argument. The New Testament can certainly not be quoted in support. And, further, ordinary experience shows that even in the realm of secular employment ambition is far from being such a universal spur to activity as is often supposed. The offices and factories of our
country are not crowded with people content to jog along, hoping certainly to better themselves, but not visibly straining to achieve this by intense personal efforts.

As far as Church service is concerned we can seek to rise to higher standards of work and positions of more responsibility either by the inspiration of personal ambition, or by deeper devotion to the ideal of service. We have to choose between the two. We cannot mingle them; any effort to do so savors too much of trying to serve God and Mammon. Our Church has chosen the ideal of service, if that fails to call forth our best efforts, it is not due to any defect in the ideal, but to the feebleness of our flesh.

From another angle a secular point of view might cloud the vision of the ideal of service. The word "democracy" is on every one’s lips today; to organize life on democratic principles is the object of political action. It seems everywhere accepted that the chief principle is the recognition of the right of the individual; the first purpose of the State is to secure for each individual such right or rights as are agreed. These theories are not of Christian origin; they are derived in ancient times from non-Christian philosophers and in more modern times from rationalist and liberal thinkers. But they have been largely adopted by Christian leaders and lately the World Council of Churches has taken a cooperative interest in the framing of a Charter of Human Rights to be put forward for adoption by the governments of all countries. It may perhaps be true that in the present state of the world this is a necessary step, if so, it demonstrates how far the world is from recognizing the standard of Christ. For, however much may be urged in favor of insisting on rights, it cannot be denied that the very good word "rights" emphasizes that which the individual can — and indeed according to the advocates of this theory, ought to — claim for himself. However often one may seek to moderate this emphasis by adding "of course the claims to rights implies the acceptance of duties," the fact remains that the claim to rights stands first and prominently in the sequence of thought, while the acceptance of duties comes second and consequently takes a lower subordinate place in men's minds, if indeed it finds any place at all.

We in the Moravian Church have been given a different standard of life. For we, as a Church, aim at a Fellowship. Though our organization is as democratic as possible in its outward forms, Fellowship not "democracy" is our true character. We must therefore reject the secular standards of democracy for our Church and withstand the intrusion of the conception of "claiming our rights" into our ideal of service. Our business is to follow the Master, whom we recognize as the Chief Elder and Head, who said — "The Son of Man is come, not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) The words may be underlined: to give his life; not to claim anything, not even to claim that most elementary right called the Right to Live.

Such is the ideal committed to us: to live with the mind of a servant. However often we have fallen below this standard, it is one given to our Church, and indeed must be regarded as one of God's greatest gifts to be kept and cherished and handed on to later generations; and it may serve to demonstrate to the world how Christian faith and love are applied to the practical problems of life.
Concluding Reflections on the Spirit and the Body

After discoursing with joy and gratitude on the Spirit of our Church, the question is likely to be asked: Why, if the Spirit is so great, is the Moravian Church so small? Why, if the qualities our Church has displayed and still upholds are so good, are there so few who wish to identify themselves with us? These are questions which again and again have been asked, and it must be admitted that not infrequently we have been discouraged by the smallness of our membership; so great a Spirit and so small a Body.

This does not trouble our brethren on the Continent nearly as much as it troubles us in America and England. As has been pointed out in an earlier chapter the recognition of the dominant position of the State Church still largely prevails on the Continent; following this it is still accepted that the Moravian Church can only be an "ecclesiola in ecclesia" or even only a religious "Society" within the one great national Church. The Germans can even gain an emotional satisfaction out of our smallness; they can speak of "unser Kirchlein" (Our Little Church) in tones which suggest using the diminutive as a mark of affection, almost a pet name, suggesting the little but specially loved ewe lamb. This must not be regarded as merely sentimental or "inferiority complex." It may and I think generally does, represent a feeling that after all it is quality not quantity that counts, that the purity of the Spirit is more important than the size of the membership, and if one has that pure Spirit even in a small embodiment it is of infinite value.

This idea has been reflected in a petition in our Church Litany that was much discussed in England a generation ago. In the original German wording it ran: "Vor unseligem Grosswerden behut uns, lieber Herre Gott." The phrase contains that word "seelig" already referred to with its double meaning of "happy" and "blessed." The petition goes back to Zinzendorfian days and means: "From becoming a great Church without an accompanying sense of inward happiness and of blessing, preserve us, gracious Lord." A very sensible petition indeed, both for a Church and any individual person! But the English translation was not successful. In the 1754 Hymnbook it ran: "From unhappily becoming great." Later it was altered: "From the unhappy desire of becoming great," and was attacked by critics who said it discouraged the idea of Church Extension. So finally it was rendered in our present Hymnbook: "From the unhallowed ambition," which, though perhaps as good a brief translation as is possible, and very appropriate into the bargain as a general petition is not quite the same as the original.

To what extent the critics were right cannot be stated, but it must be granted that the wording of the petition was open to misunderstanding

*Note: In order to understand the emphasis made here it must be remembered that the British Province has lost members for a number of consecutive years and now numbers less than five thousand, total membership. The Continental Province also faces a serious situation since so large a proportion of its settlement congregations were destroyed during the war or were almost totally disrupted by the Soviet occupation. Only in American have the "home provinces" of the Unity had a steady, strong record of growth in recent years.
and even to abuse as a pretext for quiescence and doing nothing to extend the work of the Church. It may therefore have had some influence in the background of the minds of the leaders of our Church in England and America. In these countries the conception of an "ecclesiola in ecclesia" should have had no place; conditions were quite different from those in Germany; at least they soon became quite different with the rise of the Free Churches. But the bearing of these circumstances does not appear to have been perceived in the Unity's Board in Herrnhut where the control of our Church lay through the 18th century and into the 19th, and in England itself the "ecclesiola" idea was represented by important men like Benjamin La Trobe. Possibly Richard Viney who was excluded from the Church as a rebel in 1744 may have understood the situation better; at any rate he criticised the excessive use of the lot which proved to be one of the most effective means of restricting the membership of the Church, though its real purpose was not restriction but merely the wish to be assured that any additions to membership were according to the Lord's will; in other words that extension of the Church take place only so far as it was certain that it was not "unhappy or unblessed." (Incidentally, it should be remembered that the use of the Lot, or - what amounts to the same thing - "thumbing" the Bible was a common practice in many Christian circles in those days.)

But there were other causes which helped to induce a timid and quietist attitude in the latter half of the 18th century. There were financial obligations of a formidable nature to be met in the form of repayments of the debts incurred by the great enterprizes of the Zinzendorfian era. In spite of the dedication by Zinzendorf of the whole of his property to the work of the Church the costs of that work exceeded by far the income available. After his death bankruptcy was imminent. In a noble joint effort of all parts of the Church the next generation succeeded in meeting those debts, but the drain on the available resources was so great that it was difficult to carry on existing work, let alone contemplate further extensions.

Certainly there were spiritual hindrances also to progressive evangelism, probably in all Provinces, but unquestionably in England. The Minutes of the English Provincial Conferences around 1800 repeatedly deplore the loss of spiritual energy and of self-denying dedication to the service of the Lord; they longed for a renewal of the zeal and fire of the former generation.

The English speaking branches have, further, been hampered by the foreign name "Moravian"; in addition to which is the fact that the foremost representatives of the Moravian spirit—Comenius, Zinzendorf, Spangenberg—have been non-English. It is not easy to find a reason why in the British and American Provinces we have not produced men of equal commanding influence, nor men who have presented the Moravian spirit and ideals in writing which, by their form or content, have secured a place in the religious literature of our countries. It is this latter fact, much more than the name "Moravian," which has helped to keep our Church unknown, apart from its Foreign Missions, in England.

The worst of the hindrances or defects we have to meet is, however, the general decline of Christian faith that marks the progress of the 19th and 20th centuries. This we share with all other Churches of our day. Rationalism with its child and co-partner Liberalism have no doubt furnished the world with some good things, but they have proved to be rotten in the
core. They are now challenged by thinkers both in the secular and the theological realm; they are already obsolete. But their legacy remains: confusion, uncertainty in politics and in the Christian faith. They have succeeded in almost eliminating from the mind of the general public the conception of God and of any responsibility to God; and they have weakened and watered down the faith of the Churches, the sense of sin, and the need of salvation. It is certain that unless we can meet this menacing situation with the presentation of a positive and strong faith our small Church (in the British Province, at least) will dwindle away to nothing. Every other defect or disadvantage we may discern and deplore in our past history is of little importance compared with this.

This brings us to the real root of the whole problem of smallness. Let us suppose, for a moment, that no mistakes of policy had occurred, no lack of spiritual energy had ever supervened; assuming then the best of conditions in our Church, could it ever be expected that our Church would become a large Church, a popular Church?

Dean Inge has said: "Christianity is a leaven; it can never be more. Our Lord made that absolutely plain and he never expected to have the majority on his side. Our Lord never gave any reason to suppose that the Church would ever be successful in winning the masses as such. He never gave us any reason to think there would ever be an inconvenient crowd gathered around the narrow gate." What Dean Inge said of the Church in general, Zinzendorf believed in our Church in particular.

"Surely the spirit of our Church is very beautiful, truly Christian and attractive." That may be so, but it is a lofty exacting, strenuous ideal. We may say: "It is joyful." Yes, but it makes great demands, so much so, that even supposing we all lived up to its requirements, we should not have the crowds willing or able to join with us.

The idea has, it is true, been frequently entertained that we can expect that, in due time, every person will be converted, that all men "must needs love the Highest" when they see it. That is one of the hopes stimulated by the belief of Liberalism that the innate goodness of the human reason can be relied on to lead men to accept and follow truth. But neither experience nor the Bible support this view. Our missionary command is to "make disciples of all the nations," and for this purpose we seek to plant the Christian Church in every nation. But in each case the Church will be a "leaven" and a "light."

"Christianity is a leaven; it can never be more" Zinzendorf said: "Christ moves about among the Churches and lights his candle, now here, now there." He believed Christ had raised up our Church to be a candlestick in a dark world. We will probably say: "It can never be done."

If only we could say: it is never less than that, we should have reason to be happy. Our object should be to make sure that our Church's Spirit is true, and pure, and vital; an active leaven, a shining light. We ought to measure ourselves, not by numbers or size, but by the eternal values, as we shall assuredly be judged by them. Let our service be as widespread as possible among every class of people; but let it be a truly spiritual service. The problem of numbers will settle itself; we shall leave it in God's hands.
I know that the problem of numbers has often worried us. I am not an advocate of self-satisfaction or of taking refuge in a "don't care" attitude. I feel the pressure of the problem too much myself but when I do feel it, I become conscious of being judged by that very feeling. I know that our forefathers in their best periods were not worried by it. They were a far smaller body than we are today, but they did not care a straw for it, because they were sure in the faith and big in spirit. And everybody knows that is the vital thing. Whether Dean Inge and Zinzendorf were right or wrong in their conception of a small Church, we all believe that true Christian greatness is "being filled with the Spirit."

IN MEMORIAM

As this study booklet goes to press word has reached the American Moravian Church that Bishop C. H. Shawe died on February 1 in London, England. The fact that American Moravians are using his lectures as a basis for a serious study of the heritage that comes down to us in the history of our Church is the kind of memorial that Bishop Shawe would value far beyond the most elaborate monument that could be erected in his memory.

MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS OF THE WORLD-WIDE MORAVIAN CHURCH

For the latest statistics on Moravian Church membership throughout the world see the tables included in the pages of the Appendix to the Daily Text Book. These figures help explain the emphasis made by Bishop Shawe in his concluding reflections.
In my former life in independent school education I found it to be a common experience for parents to overestimate the abilities and giftedness of their children. Whether the giftedness that parents believed their child possessed was in music and the arts, academics or athletics, frequently parents esteemed their child to be advanced in both demonstrated ability and potential. That’s not necessarily a bad thing. Although it’s good for parents to hold a more realistic appraisal of their child’s abilities and potential, it’s also good for the child’s self-image to know that other family members believe in him or her and have confidence in his or her potential for achievement. Every child needs some personal cheerleaders.

I mention that experience this evening because of the contrast of that prior experience with my more recent experience over the past couple of years in my PEC role. What I have frequently encountered over that time is the propensity of folks outside the Moravian family to have a higher opinion of us and our witness than we tend to have of ourselves. Call it Moravian modesty or low self-esteem or whatever you want to call it, we Moravians have a tendency to be overly self-critical and sometimes unappreciative of the gifts with which God has blessed us. The result is that we end up underestimating our potential for service to Christ and to the world. That result seems even more likely in times like these when the church generally faces all kinds of threats and challenges, from growing secularism to internal fragmentation.

Some of you may remember a story that Tom Are told years ago about a herd of donkeys he called the “wild asses of Mexico.” It seems that when these wild asses were threatened by a predator of some kind, they would form a circle, all facing inward, so that all could kick outward when the predator attacked. Tom Are concluded his story with the commentary that unfortunately when the church is attacked our tendency is to circle around facing outward and kick each other’s backsides. Well, those aren’t Tom’s words exactly, but your imagination can fill in the blank!

Having said all that about our tendency to be overly self-critical, and at the same time without thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, I
want us to consider some of the gifts that God has given us Moravians. I want us to recognize, claim, and celebrate those gifts. Why? For one reason only — so that we can share those gifts with others.

We are a gifted church. There is a multitude of gifts we could name and celebrate, but I want us to consider some intangible gifts that we mostly take for granted. There are five of them that I want to highlight, and let me quickly add that identifying them is not original with me. I give credit to the late Bishop Clarence Shawe of the British Province. Bishop Shawe, who died more than 50 years ago first named these gifts in a little study booklet published in 1957 under the title, *The Spirit of the Moravian Church*, for the 500th anniversary of the Moravian Church. I believe that these five characteristics of the spirit of our church then and now are at the heart of our giftedness as part of the Body of Christ.

The first gift is that of simplicity, which Shawe names as “the primary feature of the Moravian Church” (p. 6). Our church has been blessed with the gift of simplicity in the sense that Bishop Spangenberg used it in the 18th century when he wrote,

> When simplicity we cherish,  
> Then the soul is full of light.  
> But that light will quickly vanish  
> When of Jesus we lose sight.

The gift of simplicity is the ability and will to keep our church’s focus on Jesus Christ. We sometimes call ourselves Christocentric, which I understand to mean that Jesus Christ is the lens through which we look in order to know, understand, and experience the reality of God in our lives and in the world. We read and understand Scripture through the eyes and mind of Christ. We know God to be a God of love, grace, and compassion through the life of Jesus. We experience the peace of God through the blood of Christ, shed for us on Calvary. We Moravians have found special meaning in the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. . . . Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. . . .” (John 14:9,11).

This gift of focus on the main thing — the person and work of Jesus Christ — has been the foremost factor in delivering our church from schism and division. It has been the reason, I believe, that we have sought balance rather than embracing extremes. It has enabled us often to be a “both/and” church living in an “either/or” world. The principalities and powers of the world always seek to label and divide — liberal and conservative, traditional and
contemporary, red states and blue states, black and white. While we may have
different deeply held convictions about various matters of theology, doctrine,
and social issues, we Moravians can rejoice in a simplicity of belief and practice
that for generations has professed, “Christ and Him Crucified remain our
confession of faith.” One of my greatest sorrows today is that there are so many
Christians who cannot sit down together to discuss their differences on various
theological and social issues without regressing into ideological quarrels that
sound more like The McLaughlin Hour on PBS than disciples of Jesus searching
for the Lord’s leading. I give thanks that God has blessed our church with the
gift of simplicity. It is a gift sorely needed in our day.

The second gift is happiness, or if you prefer, joy. Jesus promised his
disciples, again in the Gospel of John, “I have said these things to you so that
my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11). Over
the generations, under conditions that most of us today would find intolerable,
Moravians have manifested a spirit and attitude of joy for God’s grace and joy for
God’s call. Bishop Shawe quotes an Anglican clergyman who wrote in 1876 some
of his observations concerning various religious groups active in London in the
19th century: “There is a warmth and geniality about the Moravians, from their
minister down to their pew-opener, which is sadly rare” (p. 12). Ours is not the
smug happiness of a triumphal Christianity that holds itself above others or
gloats in a divine promise of health, wealth, and happiness for all true believers.
Far from it. Ours has been the happiness of knowing the grace of our Lord and
feeling his friendship and fellowship with us daily. For us, the practice of our
faith has not been seen as a burden to be carried out with grim determination,
but a joyful privilege that brings peace and comfort to the soul. Bishop Shawe
quotes Zinzendorf on this subject as Zinzendorf compared the Moravians of the
18th century with the rigid Pietists of his day who insisted that conversion to
Christ had to be accompanied by struggle and deep-felt sorrow for one’s
unworthiness: “A Pietist is a man who cannot be converted in so cavalier a
manner as we, but needs to make more ado about it.” And again: “We are the
Savior’s Court Poets (or Troubadours); the Pietists are prose-writers or
grammarians” (p. 13). Mind you, we Moravians don’t stand in judgment of those
who see the way to Christ to be fraught with prolonged struggles of the soul with
one’s sin, but I believe that our gift is the desire in our happiness/joy to woo
people into heaven rather than scare them out of hell. I am reminded that in
New Testament Greek, the words for grace, gift, and joy all come from the same
root. It is to say that God’s grace bestows upon us gifts which produce joy in one’s heart. God has surely blessed our church with the gift of happiness.

The third gift is what Bishop Shawe calls unintrusiveness. What a strange word to name a gift of God! Perhaps the best way to understand this gift is to say that Moravians historically have chosen not to impose themselves upon others in our witness and service for Christ, but rather to seek opportunities to share our faith in ways and times it can best be received and appreciated. I prefer to think of this gift as the gift of respect — respect for those with whom we differ, whether in matters of faith and belief or matters of policy and practice. Our respect for the spiritual journeys of others has enabled us to play a significant role in worldwide ecumenical efforts over the years. We remember that some have called Zinzendorf the ecumenical pioneer, and even when ecumenical involvement has placed us in a minority position of dissent, we have stuck with it. Why? Well, I think it is because we take seriously the prayer of Jesus, again from the Gospel of John: “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one” (John 17:20-21).

Perhaps a word of qualification is in order - we dare not think that unintrusiveness or respect for other beliefs means timidity or lack of zeal for sharing the Gospel. Rather, it informs the way we share, and the spirit that underlies our testimony.

I give thanks to God for the gift of unintrusiveness — respect for those with whom we differ.

The fourth gift is fellowship. There’s an old Kenyan proverb that says: “If you want to travel fast, you travel alone; but if you want to travel far, you must travel together.” We have been able to travel as far as 550 years in large part, I believe, because God has helped us understand the need to travel together. Our historical emphasis upon community is evidence enough of how important we have understood Christian fellowship to be. But fellowship can be misunderstood. The gift of fellowship is not the mere camaraderie of folks who think alike or who share a common ideology, interest, or cause. Too much of what passes for that kind of fellowship in our day is little more than a variation on cliquishness.

The gift of Christian fellowship is not something we create. We are invited into it by our Lord. Remember that love for each other, even the “other” who is very different from us, is not an option for a Christian. The only one of Jesus’ teachings which he called “a new commandment” was the command “that you
love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34). Think about it. Just as Jesus loved, so are we to love. Were there exceptions to Jesus’ love? Was Jesus’ love only for those he liked or those who liked him? Was it only for those whose beliefs coincided with his own? The gift of fellowship is not only God-given; it is, moreover, God-created and modeled by Jesus Himself. We are called into that kind of fellowship in the church.

You know, sometimes a gift can also create a challenge — like the time my wife gave me my first cell phone. I felt compelled to use it, but I never did master the challenge of retrieving a message from the voicemail (and still haven’t, so please don’t leave me one). I think that the challenge presented to us by the gift of fellowship these days is the struggle to find a common language.

I sincerely believe that among Moravians today, especially here in the Southern Province, there is truly a common ground of belief, a common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a sincere desire to be His disciples. I believe we possess that singularity of focus that we earlier named simplicity. But when we begin to talk with each other about our faith, we struggle sometimes to find a common language. That is especially true of us clergy when we try to share differing theological perspectives with each other. The result, of course, is that we never really hear each other, and we jump to conclusions about each other based on assumptions that are either false or distorted.

We need to claim and celebrate our gift of fellowship, because if we claim it and use it for the upbuilding of the whole body as Ephesians 4:12 says we should, then we will discover a common language. It will be language of agape — Christian love.

We are given this gift of fellowship not just so we can share good feeling with each other. That’s a wonderful thing to be enjoyed, but that’s not the sole aim of fellowship. The aim of fellowship is larger and far more crucial. In John 13:35 Jesus says: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” The aim of our fellowship is to show Christ to the world.

I give thanks that God had enough confidence in our church to entrust to us the gift of fellowship.

The fifth and final gift that Bishop Shawe named more than 50 years ago and which still is our reason for being today is the gift of the ideal of service. I like to think of it as the gift of mission. It goes without saying that God doesn’t bestow gifts on us or any other church in order for us to bask and glory in our giftedness. Ephesians makes it clear that God’s gifts are given “...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12).
Bishop Shawe points out that the ideal of service is best expressed in the German word, “Dienersinn,” from which we get our name today for the folks who serve lovefeast. Shawe says about this German word: “It means to feel oneself to be a servant, to have the mind or attitude of a servant; it describes a living character rather than a quality, a type of person whose mind is dominated by the will to serve” (p. 25). We Moravians have expressed and continue to express that will to serve in many ways, from mission work among the least and forgotten peoples of the world to outreach into neighborhoods within sight of our church buildings. We have built schools and medical clinics and shelters and food distribution services and crisis centers, habitat houses and camp cabins. We have given everything from time to talent to treasure, from blood to beeswax, all because we know that service is part of who we are and who we are called to be. And we have done all this without asking for or expecting anything in return, save the knowledge that we have been the hands of Christ stretched out to a needy world.

Actually, I fear I have misspoken. We haven’t done anything, but God has done wonders through us and through our service.

I thank God that God has made us a church of mission, for mission, and in mission. I thank God for the gift of the ideal of service.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we have a rare opportunity these next two days. We have the opportunity to share with each other our giftedness as the Moravian Church and to celebrate together the goodness of the Giver. Simplicity, Happiness, Unintrusiveness, Fellowship, and Service — what more could we ask for other than the Grace to use these gifts for building up the body of Christ?

To that end may we be richly blessed. Amen.

The Rt. Rev. D. Wayne Burkette
April 10, 2008
Christ — Our All in All

The Moravian belief is a point of view, rather than a strictly formulated creed. This point of view is Christ and Him crucified.

Our second founder, Count Zinzendorf, said of Christ: “I have but one passion and that is Christ, and He only.” By his glowing influence, in hymns, sermons, conversations, and self-sacrifices, he very largely led our Church into its Christ-centered views. Every doctrine and every practice is considered by the Moravians in its bearing upon the atonement, the love, the living presence of the Christ of God. Owing to this peculiar emphasis upon the present Christ, Moravians of very different opinions can form one harmonious people. Some of them are more Calvinistic in view, others more Arminian, some love the Episcopal forms, others are more drawn by a Methodistic heartiness, but with the atoning Christ at the center, they can readily fraternize with each other on the circumference. The motto of the Evangelical Alliance, “In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity,” has long been the polestar of the Unity.

The Christ-centered Moravian view does not only give the Church large liberty in doctrine, but likewise in ritual. The Moravians have ample liturgies based partly on the confessions of the early Christian Church, and partly on their own historical experiences of Christ; but they also give full opportunity for extempore prayer, so that the visitor may, at the time of presence in worship, find either practice in full use. The Apostolic lovefeast is very dear in many Moravian congregations. In others, it may seldom or never be found. In some congregations the members are divided into “choirs” or “classes”; in others it has not been found convenient so to do. In towns and villages where Moravians live together in large numbers there are beautiful customs attaching themselves especially to the Easter and Christmas time. In other lands or localities, and especially in great cities, these customs may not be found. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” and no one can understand the Moravian life unless he bears this fact in mind. He should look for the essentials of the Moravian view in the preaching and in the practice and in the fellowship, and he will find them — but in nonessentials he may not recognize the customs of one church in those of another only a few miles away.

It has often been asked why this Church is so small in America, though according to the general belief of evangelical Christians it combines so many strong points of doctrine and practice. It is doubtless small because, until very recent years, its members did not want it to be anything else. Most of the old leaders believed that as a
small Church, seated at a few local centers, they could do the work for Christ better than if they were a large Church. Then, too, the long missionary training through which the Church has passed — to go only where they were expressly called to go — has greatly prevented them, amid the sharp competition of denominations, from seeking out new fields for themselves.

This view, or if we may so choose to call it, this prejudice of the fathers, has in late years yielded to the conviction that for the good of our fellow-men, we had better spread abroad and not always wait until they find us and call for us. The results of this changed policy are already showing themselves, especially in the United States, where, within a few years, there have come to be more members than in all the rest of the home Unity, taken together. Now that we have really, under God, resolved to grow, our percentage of annual increase compares very favorably with the general growth of the Church of Christ.

The chief historian of our Moravian Church in recent years, the greatly honored Bishop Edmund de Schweinitz, was accustomed to say that he believed the “Unitas Fratrum,” the Moravian Church, was being reserved for some great future need of the Christian Church at large. Anyone who has, to any extent, studied the strange vicissitudes of this Church, has seen it prosper widely, then be almost utterly crushed, then wonderfully revived, to dwindle again in various places and in succeeding generations, and yet after its well-nigh five centuries still to live on, and ever and anon strike fresh root — such a student can scarcely fail to come to de Schweinitz’s view: “The Moravian Church is reserved of God for some special future.” It may be for that time when all lesser distinctions in creed and form will fade into the one clear light of the central Christ; when there will be no more denominational distinctions but Christ will be all in all; and then, practically, if not in name, it will be the Moravian view which will have prevailed at last.

The Rt. Rev. Edward Rondthaler

_A Brief History of the Moravian Church_

(Winston-Salem, 1909), 95-97.