

Moravian Theological Seminary Bethlehem, Pa. 18018

von Arthur Freeman, Bethlehem/USA

Moravian Theological Seminary was born in 1807 as a cooperative venture of American Moravians, North and South, with the approval and guidance of European Moravians, to provide pastors and teachers for the American Church. Among the first of the seminaries founded on the North American continent, Moravian Seminary is now approaching its 175th year of service to the *Unitas Fratrum*. This is an occasion which deserves serious reflection, not merely with regard to the Seminary's history, but more importantly with a view to its role within the life of the American Provinces and the international Unity. The potentials of such a role can only be understood when all involved enter into significant dialogue and together determine the future course of this institution. This article is intended to describe the present development and directions of the Seminary so that we may all participate in its future.

It is probably true that the continuance of the Moravian Church, as that of any other church, is dependent on the lines of communication within it and the institutions by which it preserves the traditions out of which it lives. Traditions are in a sense preserved by each Pastor and congregation, but there needs to be places where our biblical, doctrinal, pastoral, and historical traditions are researched, examined for their truth and relevance to our day, and perpetuated in contemporary dress so that the Gospel may be preached, that persons may understand and experience the dynamics of the presence of God, and that Christ may be obeyed in the complexities of our world. Though this may be done by gifted individuals struggling with the burden of other responsibilities, there needs to be an institution dedicated to this. Such an institution can never exist apart from the life of the church or churches that it serves, for its responsibility is not merely an academic or historical one: describing beliefs, practices and religious institutions. Its responsibility is to speak to the church faithful words which identify and facilitate its life with God, in Christ. It must be seriously academic, without academic pride, without turning religion into something for the intellectual elite. Zinzendorf has taught us this. The intellectual seeks to speak faithful words about religion, but has no special claim on the "essentials" of religion which is God's gift to all, the heart relationship with the Saviour. Moravians indeed are the inheritors of a particular philosophy of theological education which sees "essentials" served by "ministerials", which is where theological education would be classed, and refuses to confuse the two. This is true of both the Ancient and Renewed Moravian Churches.

Moravian Theological Seminary, begun in Nazareth, Pa., in 1807, was housed first in the Nazareth Hall Academy. After wanderings between Nazareth, Bethlehem and Philadelphia, in 1858 it was relocated in Bethlehem as Moravian College and Theological Seminary. In 1954 it merged

with Moravian Seminary and College for Women, an institution tracing its origin to 1742, founded by Benigna von Zinzendorf as the first private girl's school in the thirteen American colonies. Now the Seminary is technically a graduate/professional department of religion within the corporation Moravian College. With its own new building, Bahnsen Center, providing offices and class rooms and with its own dormitories, it still shares the use of many College buildings, including a jointly supported Library. In the context of a college of 1300 students it has available numerous resources beyond its own.

Following the practices of American theological education, Moravian Seminary offers several graduate and professional programs which assume a four year college or university degree. The three year Master of Divinity program prepares a student for professional ministry. This is a new name for what used to be called a Bachelor of Divinity degree. The two year Master of Arts in Theological Studies provides a student with the traditional theological disciplines without the professional courses. The two year Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling provides one year of theological training and one year of clinical experience in a local Pastoral Institute. The Master of Arts in Religious Education is a three year program offered in cooperation with the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia. The two year Doctor of Divinity program, offered in cooperation with Drew University School of Theology, Madison, New Jersey, provides advanced training in professional ministry beyond the Master of Divinity program.

The Seminary is staffed by six full-time faculty, the Dean and a number of part-time instructors, each academic discipline being represented by at least one full-time professor. Among the 102 students registered this year, the largest number in the Seminary's history, 44 are Moravian and 12 other religious denominations are represented. Thirty-two of the 102 are women, representing the increase of women preparing for ministry characteristic of most American seminaries. This, together with the raising of consciousness brought about by the feminist movements and liberation theology, has caused the Seminary to look seriously at how our responsibility to women and our women students affects the teaching of traditional disciplines and the professional training provided. The average age of students has also been increasing with an influx of older students who have determined to study for the ministry after pursuing another career or who wish to engage in part-time ministry while earning a living otherwise.

The Seminary, through its faculty and other resources, has intentionally sought to develop its ministry both to the Moravian Church in America and to the non-Moravian denominations of the area in which the Seminary resides. Most striking as an aspect of its ministry to Moravians is the "Mobile Seminary" which takes faculty each year to areas of the Church away from Bethlehem: to the central, southern and western states, to Alaska, to Canada, and to the Carribean. Its ecumenical service to its home area includes not only a large number of non-Moravian students, but also continuing education programs for clergy and laity, library resources, and representation of other denominations on the Board of Trustees and various advisory committees. Leaders of other denominations have come to regard the Seminary as an important resource and these denominations contribute financially to some of its programs.

The nature of the program and curricula at Moravian Seminary has been shaped in dialogue, with the needs of the churches, the insights of its faculty and administration, and the trends of theological education on

the North American continent. For a summary of the latter one may turn to the last several issues of *Theological Education*, Spring and Autumn 1981, the journal of the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada. This has resulted in curricula and auxiliary programs which include the following concerns:

1) Since the 1950s there has been a decided development of what was called the Practical Department and is now called the Department of Pastoral Theology, while still seeking to retain and affirm the significance of the traditional fields of biblical studies, historical studies and doctrine. This parallels what has been happening in most American seminaries. This includes not only a serious attempt to correlate the human studies of psychology and sociology with theological and biblical insight, but a strong concern for *praxis* as application of theological insight, as a way of developing professional capability, and as also foundational for theological reflection. (It is frequently only in the context of practice that one understands). Thus a course in Liturgies would involve supervised and evaluated conduct of worship in a local congregation, a course in ministry to the physically ill would occur in the context of a hospital. As one of the professors of Pastoral Theology has commented, "It is impossible to prepare for ministry apart from ministry." Moreover, traditional academic courses, such as a course in Psalms, without sacrificing academic concerns, could deal with the construction of contemporary psalms and liturgies, a course on Job could facilitate reflection on suffering and pastoral care, and a study of Galatians could be approached from Paul's autobiographical discussion of his spiritual and theological development which might help the student gain insight into his/her own process. Frequently students will take a year internship in a congregation and all Master of Divinity students are required to take a several month program in a mental or general hospital (Clinical Pastoral Education) which facilitates both professional competency and personal growth. This wedding of the practice of ministry with the traditional disciplines seeks to produce a person academically, professionally and personally prepared for the practice of ministry.

2) From a number of quarters in American church life one now hears discussion of lay ministry or the mutual ministry of clergy and laity. This has a two-fold focus. First, there is concern for lay persons sharing the ministry that occurs among Christians within the congregation: preaching, teaching, reading Scripture, pastoral care, hospital calling, etc.. To some extent this is related to the present inability of many small congregations to afford a pastor or larger congregations to afford multiple staff. Thus some lay persons are being trained to assume responsibilities of ministry, sometimes receiving licensing or occasionally ordination. Moravian Seminary in recent years has trained a number of non-stipendiary priests for the local diocese of the Episcopal Church who serve small congregations or assist in larger ones with the equivalent of about one year of theological education, usually supporting themselves by another vocation. Second, there is the need to train laity for their ministry within the world. The Lay Academy, which Moravian Seminary helped found and which is housed by the Seminary, conducts regular programs in areas within a ten mile radius of Bethlehem for Protestant and Catholic laity.

3) Continuing Education in most of the professions has become a requirement for maintaining one's credentials. This is also true for clergy. Some denominations require a certain number of hours of continuing

education each year, while others make it quite clear that advancement and placement depend on keeping current. The Seminary now houses the Ecumenical Committee for Continuing Education, chaired by a faculty member, to which belong six Protestant denominations, two Seminaries (one Roman Catholic), and several other educational institutions or departments which are concerned with continuing education for clergy. This Ecumenical Committee publishes a newsletter of educational events in the area, acts as a resource for local clergy, coordinates the planning of its member organizations, makes available to all clergy programs offered by a single denomination, and supplements what is available with its own programming. Many denominations have developed a process for planning continuing education which involves the interests and needs of the clergy person, the needs of the congregation and its ministry, and the needs of the denomination. Agencies are available which help clergy to plan their long-range professional development.

4) The Association of Theological Schools has developed in the last decade a "Readiness for Ministry" testing instrument. Along with other testing instruments this is utilized when a student enters Seminary and in the last year of Seminary when the student is preparing for graduation. This instrument was developed by trying to determine the criteria by which the North American churches evaluate a person's readiness for ministry. Students with special needs are referred to a center for personal and professional guidance or receive recommendations in their academic programming.

5) Within the 1970s "Spiritual Formation" has been developing as a significant concern in American theological education. A term long familiar to Roman Catholics who state it as their primary focus in theological education, it represents a concern for spiritual and personal development as well as academic and professional development. It borrows from Christian mysticism, modern psychology (particularly Jungian), and our biblical and theological traditions, to help persons understand the nature of legitimate spiritual experience, the process of personal and spiritual growth, the ways in which life may be understood with a spiritual or transcendent dimension, how one may act and live as a Christian, and the disciplines by which the Christian life may be maintained. It is related to the more familiar topics of sanctification and prayer, and represents a realization that in our secular and pluralistic society the reality of religion is often sustained only by one's personal experience and appropriation of it. For two years the Seminary has had a course in Spiritual Formation and the Dean this fall conducted an experimental program in which older students acted as spiritual friends to new students. This is all very much in tune with the Moravian experiment of the 18th century under Zinzendorf.

6) The Seminary is continuing to develop its capabilities in Moravian studies. Presently two semesters of Moravian history and theology are required of all Moravian students, a course on the Theology of Zinzendorf is taught, and the professor of church history is presently on sabbatical researching the history of the American Moravian Church. With the Archives of the Northern Province only a few meters away, there are rich resources for research by interested students. It is the hope of the Seminary that at some point an Institute for Moravian Studies may be established, focusing not only on the Renewed Moravian Church, but the ancient Unitas Fratrum. The Seminary presently educates many of the clergy of the Czech Brethren's Church in Texas, who share with us an interest in our common heritage from the ancient Unitas.

7) The Seminary has served and been served by the international Moravian Church in a number of ways. Students have attended the Seminary from Europe, England, Africa, India and the Carribean. Some have come for only a year of Moravian or specialized studies. Others have come because of the value of a Master's degree which is not offered by their local theological institutions. The relationship of the Seminary with the College and other educational institutions in the area makes it possible to design a program with the special needs of the student in mind, providing courses not offered specifically at the Seminary.

In 1976 the Seminary arranged for a tour of West European Moravians in the United States. In 1973 Moravians in West Germany, East Germany and Czechoslovakia helped a group of Seminary faculty, students and a few laity study European Church life. Frequently Moravians from other countries offer lectures at the Seminary while visiting Bethlehem for other purposes. Whenever these contacts take place, we are mutually enriched, for the wealth of God's gifts are never fully found in any one segment of the Church. The Seminary's developing use of audio and video tape makes possible the sharing of lectures and resources around the world.

This is Moravian Theological Seminary in its 175th year, seeking directions for the future from its Lord, from the international Moravian Church, and from the churches of its geographical area. It is not only helpful but necessary that we dialogue about these directions.

(written 1982)

Zusammenfassung

Im Jahre 1807 wurde in Nazareth/USA das erste amerikanische Brüderseminar begründet und 1858 endgültig nach Bethlehem verlegt. Schon seit 1742 bestand die von Benigna von Zinzendorf errichtete Mädchenschule, die 1954 mit dem Seminar verbunden wurde. Das heutige Seminar mit seinen ca. 100 Studenten und 6 hauptamtlichen Lehrkräften ist ein Teil des größeren Moravian College (mit ca. 1.300 Studenten) und bildet sowohl zum Pfarrer- wie zum Lehrerberuf aus, ja in Verbindung mit der Drew University School of Theology in Madison bietet es den Doctor of Divinity an. Um den gegenwärtigen Aufgaben gerecht zu werden, müssen vielfach neue Wege beschritten werden. Ein solcher Versuch ist das sog. "Mobile Seminar", der Unterricht von Fakultätsmitgliedern in Alaska, Kanada und auf den Karibischen Inseln und wo immer der Unterricht im einzelnen für wichtig erachtet wird. Das Seminar legt das Schwergewicht auf die Praktische oder Pastoraltheologie und das heißt auf die Anwendung des Gelernten in der Gemeindesituation. Eine besondere Aufgabe ist die Ausbildung von Laien zu speziellen pfarramtlichen Diensten bzw. auch für den Dienst in der Welt. So war das Seminar Mitbegründer der "Laien Akademie" im Gebäude des Seminars, einer Einrichtung für katholische und evangelische Christen. Es beherbergt ferner das "ökumenische Komitee für Fortbildung", dem 6 evangelische Denominationen und andere pädagogische Einrichtungen angehören. In den 70er Jahren ist ein Programm der "Geistlichen Bildung" (spiritual formation) entwickelt worden, um den Menschen einer säkularen, pluralistischen Gesellschaft mit Möglichkeiten christlicher Erfahrung, mit der Realität von Gebet und Heiligung vertraut zu machen und ihn sowohl an die Tradition christlicher Mystik als moderner Psychologien heranzuführen. Natürlich weiß sich das Seminar auch der Brüdergeschichte verpflichtet, ja, will sogar ein entsprechendes Institut begründen.