

Notes from the Editor

The *Ground of the Unity* states “that our Lord has redeemed us with the whole of humanity by His death and His resurrection; and that there is no salvation apart from Him.” There has been a bitter controversy in the Southern Province over the meaning of this phrase since the 2002 Synod. Some of the controversy concerns church governance and personal relationships more than theology, but there are substantive questions about what the Moravian Church should teach about salvation. It is the mission of *The Hinge* to discuss controversial issues in a way that leads us to greater understanding and unity through reasoned conversation. As Phillip Melacnthon remarked before the Leipzig Disputation, “Truth is best served at a lower temperature.”

Since Moravians maintain that all doctrinal statements reflect our understandings of Scripture, it seems wise to draw upon the knowledge and wisdom of the Dean of Moravian Theological Seminary, the Rev. Dr. Frank Crouch, who is a scholar of the New Testament. In this issue, Br. Crouch proposes a distinctively Moravian approach to scriptural interpretation and doctrinal discussion. He also carefully examines two of the most important biblical statements that are the basis of the understanding that Jesus is the only way to salvation: John 14:6 and Acts 4:12. What do these verses mean within the biblical narrative? Br. Crouch shows that the answer is not as simple as it first appears. Do these two verses unambiguously endorse the claim that “there is no salvation apart from” Christ? Do they rule out the possibility that God may choose to save some who either do not or cannot profess faith in Jesus as the Christ?

This is not just an academic matter. Our understanding of salvation cuts to the heart of our life and mission as a Church. Were Zinzendorf, Spangenberg, and other Moravian leaders wrong, for example, to teach that infants who die before professing faith are treated graciously by God? If some may be saved by Christ without professing faith in Christ, does this mean that all are saved? If a profession of faith is necessary for salvation, then are we truly saved by grace without works? Since we proclaim our faith in Jesus as our savior and the savior of the world, is there any truth in other religions? Does salvation depend on Christ or on our doctrine of Christ? Can we be Christocentric and pluralistic? What is a genuinely Moravian approach to such questions?

Responding to Br. Crouch are five Moravian pastors from the Northern and Southern Provinces and Europe who are at various stages in their careers. Not only do they address different aspects of Br. Crouch’s article; they each raise different questions about salvation. Taken together their work offers the promise for much common ground as Moravians continue to define and refine our understanding of salvation in the light of Scripture and faith in Jesus Christ as the savior of the world. In this issue we also have book reviews, an essay, several letters to the editor and a sermon on the centrality of Christ.