

Letters to the Editor

To the editor:

The subject of the summer 2009 issue, “Moravian Theology Today,” has evoked responses from students about what it ought to be. It seems to me that any serious effort to redefine a church’s theology should begin by defining the current historical context appropriate to that theological revision. The Lutheran Reformation and the British church reformation of the 16th century found the Bible to be the agent in activating the widespread desire for redefining authority. The heart religion of the 18th century Moravians both energized the church community and initiated a missionary response to the Zeitgeist of a wider world to be conquered.

Today’s historical context has a different direction. It appears that mainstream Protestant churches, including the Moravian Church, are in the early stages of consolidation. Whereas in earlier times issues relating to baptism, the Lord’s Supper, church governance, and the interpretation of the Bible were cause for separation, today these are minor compared to some more recently emergent issues of race, gender, homosexuality, and abortion. Indeed, the issue of homosexuality may be dividing the Episcopal Church, and is unsettling in other denominations. In other respects these denominations share much in common. We all have the same Gospel. Mainline seminaries teach, basically, the same material, based on the same scholarship. The faculty at Moravian Theological Seminary represents several denominations. The student body is ecumenical. One could venture to say that there are more differences within the denominations than between them.

Our society is in the midst of cultural reorganization and redefinition. In the 18th century being a Christian was defined in theological terms that distinguished denominations from each other. Today, being a Christian arouses the consciousness of not being a Jew, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Buddhist, or a non-believer. The divinity school of our country’s oldest university, which was founded for the training of Christian ministers, recently revised its curriculum on the principle of “de-centering,” stating that it offers to prepare professional practitioners for all the major religious faiths.

Biblical faith leads me to ask the question: What is God doing in the world today? Searching our past is helpful in finding our roots, but unless we utilize it for defining the present and the future it will not get us very far.

—Howard Cox

Letters to the Editor (continued)

To the editor:

The comments in the summer 2009 issue of *The Hinge* inspired me to pull a hymn text out of the past, polish it up for the present and offer it as a gift for others to use and share as the Spirit moves them during this season.

The original hymn, entitled “Help Us Return,” was written in 1997 and sung by the Home Church Men’s Chorus at a Singstunde in 1999. It lay dormant until the hopes and concerns student seminarians expressed for the Moravian Church in *The Hinge* sparked it back to life with quite a few new words and a whole new name.

“Let Us Live Now” (Phil. 3:16)

Tune: Truro

Text: Kathryn Woestendiek Scepanski, Aug. 10, 1997, revised July 24, 2009

Help us return to you this day!
Now hear our heart-based plea, we pray.
We move still in your Unity;
From backward vision set us free.

Help us to hold your presence near.
Preserve our past, which we hold dear.
Let us live now what we’ve attained;
Our Holy Spirit has remained.

In gratitude for fields we’ve trod,
We vow to break both bread and clod;
For your good seed needs fresh plowed ground.
Let sun, fresh air, and rain abound.

Help us reveal a message clear.
Protect us from the throes of fear.
Your Spirit beams, when we agree
To strive to live in Unity.

Blessings to all, wherever you may find them,

—Kathryn Woestendiek Scepanski