

can't begin to know what love is! Without the whole of the Bible to show us God's love, his working out our salvation through Christ and Christ's love us as our Savior, we would be lost! Just look at the corruption of love and its meaning we see in the world around us. I love poorly but am saved by Christ's love for me. Without the Bible and faith in Christ, there is no way I could even begin to deal with love "in all things." So it seems that essential to following the whole motto is knowledge of the Scripture with our heads, so that we can love with our hearts.

I can see no way to accomplish the ideas of both Hus and Zinzendorf without the Bible. From the quotes I have read, I believe Count Zinzendorf would say that the Bible was an "essential" without hesitation, and perhaps he might wonder why such a question would need to be asked. (I know "The Bible" would easily fit on his "half sheet of paper.")

Christians have a unique blessing in that we have the Bible which God's, given to us for

our salvation (2 Pet. 1:16-21). No other religion can make this claim. They all have books written by men and they can add to or change them at will. They can make them relevant to whatever ideas men think are right at any point in history. When Christians try the same thing or try to interpret Scripture to suit what the world is doing they do so at the peril of losing the gospel and love of Christ. We have the example of the Hebrews and the disasters they got themselves into when they forgot God's word to them. We must be very careful not to make the mistake ourselves. God is love but He is also righteous and holy and demands that we do not continue in sin. He is forgiving but we need to be careful not to try his loving patience too far!

We need to affirm the Holy Scripture as the essential way to salvation through Jesus Christ as taught by the Moravian Church.

-- Elder Lew Parks, Canadensis, Pa.

## Ten-Year Retrospective: 1990-2000

Craig D. Atwood

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Time, as Einstein reminds us, is relative. *The Hinge* has been in publication for ten years, which is a blip in the five-hundred-year history of the Moravian Church, and yet it is a long time for independent Moravian journals. Several have been attempted through the years, including *The*

*Saal* which was the immediate predecessor of *The Hinge*, but few survived more than a few years. Often they have been the work of a single dedicated individual and were unable to continue under a new leader. *The Hinge*, however, now has its third editor and a new editorial board and is

making plans for years to come. Therefore it seems appropriate to celebrate the tenth anniversary of this publication by reviewing its unique contribution to Moravian faith and life while looking toward the future.

This journal was the brainchild of Truman Dunn, currently the pastor of Messiah Moravian Church, who wanted a serious forum to discuss issues of contemporary importance within the American Moravian Church. The unusual name comes from a rather obscure moment in Moravian history. In Bethlehem in 1742 the community experimented with a number of church offices, the most intriguing of which was the “hinge” who was to be a “go-between” that could resolve differences before they became destructive of the community or individuals. The hinge opened the door of communication. Dr. Dunn and the original editorial board envisioned a journal dedicated toward a similar goal in the Moravian Church. It would serve as forum for the discussion of “troublesome factors that may be an obstacle to our mutual accord” (*The Hinge*, vol. 1, num. 1, p. 2).

Unlike the old church office, however, *The Hinge* did not seek to bring all things into accord privately. Rather it offered an opportunity for Moravians to discuss differences in a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner so that genuine and faithful dialog could occur. The format has been consistent through the years. There is a lead article on a specific topic that affects the life of the church followed by several responses from a variety of perspectives in the Moravian community. Then the auth-

or(s) of the lead article responds to the respondents.

This has allowed many voices to join in this discussion. Included in this issue is an index of the first ten years. There have been twenty-eight different authors of lead articles, with the PECs providing one document for discussion. Over a hundred people have written responses to the articles. For a church our size, that represents an amazing number of different perspectives. Included among the authors and respondents are lay persons, professors, pastors, specialized ministers, church administrators, former Moravians, and outside experts.

David Fischler, currently the pastor of First Moravian Church in Greensboro, took over as editor of *The Hinge* in 1996. He brought to the journal a different editorial voice and insured that this journal would continue beyond the work of its originator. Rev. Fischler also brought a new look to the journal itself and a slight revision to its self-description. Rather than being “A Quarterly Moravian Journal of Christian Thought,” *The Hinge* is now described as “A Journal of Christian Thought for the Moravian Church.” This places more emphasis on *The Hinge* as a forum for critical reflection within a Christian context. While *The Hinge* is primarily a journal by and for Moravians, many of the questions raised are common to all Christian traditions. David also began the practice of including book reviews in *The Hinge*, a practice that will continue.

Having reviewed the first thirty issues of *The Hinge*, I am impressed with the

quality and seriousness of these articles and responses. Not only has *The Hinge* provided a necessary forum for Moravian theological and pastoral discussion, it has provided a useful historical record of the Moravian Church at the end of one century and beginning of another. Here are just a few of the topics addressed: racism, sexuality, euthanasia, evangelicalism, pacifism, spirituality, and social violence. Rather than give a summary of each issue of *The Hinge*, I invite readers to review past issues. In fact, past issues are available for \$7.00 to cover photocopying and shipping costs.

Many of the issues discussed in *The Hinge*, most notably the ordination of homosexuals, remain highly controversial and unresolved in the church, but *The Hinge* serves as a model for Moravian dialog. Although political forces in our culture encourage polarization into rival camps (e.g. conservative vs. liberal), *The Hinge* has shown that there is a range of understanding on even the most divisive issues. By encouraging dialog instead of debate, we see that brothers and sisters in Christ approach certain things from differing and yet faithful perspectives. Rather than a “winner take all” attitude, *The Hinge* has shown that we can grow in understanding together.

*The Hinge* has also demonstrated that labels such as “conservative” or “liberal” are useless in describing the complexity of ideas and attitudes in the church. Writers and readers alike have been challenged to go beyond labeling and posturing to discover the underlying theological issues

in the hope of reaching clarity. To quote from my predecessor, “It is usually the case that even when we totally disagree with a brother or sister in Christ, they [*sic*] are starting from some sound theological principle and the desire to serve God and His Church the best they can with the light they have” (David Fischler, *The Hinge*, vol. 8, num. 1, p. 3). *The Hinge*, I would assert, is in the wisdom tradition of old Israel.

The new editorial board is eager to continue and even revitalize the life of *The Hinge*. For now, it will remain located in the Southern Province merely for the sake of convenience, but it is intended to be journal for the whole Moravian Church, especially in North America. We are exploring ways that the distance learning facilities and the Center for Moravian Studies at Moravian Theological Seminary can increase the Northern Province perspective

One theme does stand out as a continual refrain over the past ten years, from the first issue to the most recent. What is our Moravian identity? More than one author referred to an “identity crisis” in the Moravian Church that profoundly affects our approach to burning social and pastoral issues such as homosexuality and racism as well as our ability to engage in local and world-wide missions. This “identity crisis” figures in the concerns over pastoral authority, denominational and local leadership, potential for renewal and growth in the church, and our ability to resolve or manage conflict within the church.

An identity crisis is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, identity is one of the crises that all individuals experience in life. It is the key crisis of late-adolescence as each person confronts the psychological task of differentiation that is necessary for maturity. Identity crises may also come at mid-life as a person becomes aware that there is limited time to live a meaningful life. Such a crisis may be wasted by foolishly grasping for a second adolescence (or even infancy) or it may lead to a deepening of the self and renewed commitment to living a truly human and humane life. Many of our pastors and lay leaders found their path to ministry through such a mid-life identity crisis.

An identity crisis may also happen at the end of one's life when the reality of mortality raises the issue of whether one lived a worthwhile existence. Of the various identity crises, that is the most difficult because there is little time to change one's life and leave a legacy. It is the crisis of what could have been rather than what will be.

Speaking more theologically, the gospel itself creates a crisis of identity

when individuals and communities are challenged by the questions: to whom do you belong and for what do you stand? The crisis of identity may be caused by an encounter with the living God in whom we each find our true self behind the mask we and the world have created.

I will not speculate on what type of identity crisis the Moravian Church finds itself in. I hope it is not one leading to death, but I do think that serious self-examination as a community of faith is called for at this juncture in our history. An identity crisis means that familiar ways of defining our existence have been called into question and we need to look deep within to see who we truly are. My hope is that this forum can assist us in that quest. Synods, committees, and programs will be of little help in defining who we are. Rather, our work in those governing structures must be informed by our self-understanding. For ten years, *The Hinge* has been assisting in that task by asking difficult questions and welcoming controversial answers.