

Letters

As I read the debate, starting with the “Notes from the Editor,” and considering the coming death of the Moravian Church that Bro. Dunn propounded, I experienced many reactions. Each of the Responders had something to say that stirred thoughts in my mind. I have been concerned that there seems to be a vast lacking in commitment. By that I mean the response of our membership to the covenant that God offers is inconsistent and often does not comple [sic] with what I have come to believe God asks of us.

Bro. Steve brought into the debate, “existence as a faith community,” and, indeed, if we are to exist in the world we must remember that we are not of the world and, as Steve notes, must understand the culture, engage it, and correct it. [a side note: there appears to be a great need for correction in today’s culture]

Thank you, Bro. Peter Vogt. Not having read the Bequest of Comenius Bro. Dunn’s words worried me. Yes the battle of White Mountain was a turning point but a remnant came to Herrnhut to pick-up the legacy and move forward. Where did this lead but to the eventual declaration of Jesus that He is the Chief Elder of the Moravian Church (or whatever name we call ourselves).

Ergo I ask why all the intellectual debate when we have a Chief Elder to consult about present and future? Well, we do need to know and understand the problem in order to seek guidance, don’t we?

H. William Mitchell.

Book Review

The Transformation of American Religion: The Story of a Late Twentieth-Century Awakening by Amanda Porterfield (Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 231 pages plus notes and index.

It has often been noted in this journal that religion in the United States has changed dramatically since the 1950s. Some have viewed the increasing pluralism of American society with dismay while others have celebrated it. However, one evaluates the breakdown of the old Protestant hegemony in American life, it is important that all of us, particularly religious leaders, understand the situation and how we got here. While Diana Eck and her colleagues at Harvard have been gathering the hard data

to document the reality of religious pluralism throughout the United States (a Sikh temple in Raleigh, N.C. for instance), Amanda Porterfield pursued the cultural and intellectual history that created a climate for the most creative period of American religious history.

This is an important book because it helps to make sense of the chaos of the modern American religious landscape. Rather than getting bogged down in the details of the hun-