

## **MORAVIAN MOMENT #29...**

### **MORAVIAN BELIEF-BAPTISM**

The question of baptism has caused much debate and confusion in the life of the Moravian Church world wide. There has always been the question as to when persons ought to be baptized and by what mode, whether sprinkling, pouring or immersion. What then is the Moravian understanding of baptism? According to the Moravian Hymn Book EWI, it is stated thus: "Baptism sets forth the saving work of Christ, wherein we are washed from our sins, and raised into newness of life; and in this sacrament we make confession of faith in him." It is indeed, the saving work of Christ, and not any work on our part, for it is by His Grace and His Grace alone that we are saved.

The following problems have plagued the Moravian Church:

- ❖ Persons baptized as infants seeking a second baptism, because they determine that they need to make a decision on their own behalf, rather than what was done for them by their parents;
- ❖ Secondly, persons seeking baptism who have no record of a possible previous baptism;
- ❖ Thirdly, there are persons coming to the Moravian Church from SECTS which may have an inadequate understanding of baptism.

Numbers two and three are easy to deal with, but the Moravian Church has been shackled by number one for far too long.

For the Moravian Church, all children are called of God to the fullness of life within His kingdom. Those born to Christian parents, share in that Covenant relationship between God and His people, the expression of which is the Church on earth. Their visible incorporation into the Church, the body of Christ, is made in the Sacrament of Baptism. The Moravian Church affirms the legitimacy and propriety of the three forms of baptism: Sprinkling, Pouring and Immersion; allowing any of the three, according to the wishes of the individual in the case of an adult or the practices of a particular Province, if the other forms are not denied. The form of the baptism is not the all important thing, but the significance and meaning of it.

The congregation, in whose presence a child is baptized, ought, by its participation in the act, practically to show that, along with the parents, it undertakes the duty of bringing up the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Adults who have not been baptized as children are, at their request, and after thorough instruction in the truths of salvation, to be baptized, and are received by their baptism into the Christian Church as communicant members.

It is clear then that the Moravian Church baptize persons by Sprinkling, Pouring or Immersion. Baptism can be done at the sea, the river, in the Sanctuary or where ever, but must be done in the context of public worship. Do Moravians baptize? The answer is certainly yes.

While the Moravian Church strongly believes in baptism, it is stuck at the point of rebaptism. The Church expresses appreciation for those who desire rebaptism as a way of experiencing the meaning of baptism, but believes that the theological implications of such rebaptism, makes it unacceptable and suggests that such desire be expressed in a Rite for the Reaffirmation of Baptism.