

ZINZENDORF AND THE EARLY MORAVIAN MISSION MOVEMENT

By

Robert L. Gallagher

A Faith and Learning Paper Presented to the
Director of the Faith and Learning Program and the Provost

WHEATON COLLEGE

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Promotion and Tenure

© September 21, 2005

Introduction

It was Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a Lutheran Pietist, who in 1722 founded the Moravian missionary movement at Herrnhut (the Lord's Watch), near Dresden in Saxony. He offered a part of his estate as a refuge for a group of persecuted believers from Bohemia and Moravia. From these Brethren came the first organized Protestant mission. By the time Zinzendorf died in 1760, after twenty-eight years of cross-cultural mission, the Moravians had sent out 226 missionaries and entered ten different countries. Mission stations had been established in Danish St. Thomas, in the West Indies (1732); Greenland (1733); Georgia, North America (1734); Lapland (1735); Surinam, or Dutch Guiana, on the north coast of South America (1735); Cape Town, South Africa (1737); Elmina, Dutch headquarters in the Gold Coast (1737); Demarara, now known as Guyana, South America (1738); and to the British colonial island of Jamaica (1754), and Antigua (1756). In 1760 there were forty-nine men and seventeen women serving in thirteen stations around the world ministering to over six thousand people. Further missions would be established in northern India (1764); Barbados (1765); Labrador (1771); Nicaragua (1849); Palestine (1867); Alaska (1885); and Tanzania (1891) (Hutton 1922, 55, 58; Latourette 1975, 893, 897, 951, 956; Neill 1990, 201-202; Tucker 2004, 99-105).

The purpose of this paper is to explore the historical background that shaped the mission vision of Zinzendorf and the Herrnhut Brethren in conjunction with the characteristics of their mission theology that influenced the early Moravian mission praxis. The case study will then analyze the strengths and weaknesses of that mission movement and the insights it might offer to the church today.

In attempting to achieve this objective the paper will discuss the wider European historic context in the early eighteenth century before investigating the historical background of the early Moravian mission movement that includes the early influences in the formation of Zinzendorf's missionary impulse, the focusing of this zeal in his later teen years, and the subsequent shaping of the mission vision of the Herrnhut community. Second, it will consider the characteristics of the mission theology of the early Moravian church that affected their mission practice, such as the centrality of the suffering and death of the Savior, the work of the Holy Spirit in mission, the concept of "first fruits," and the unity of all Christians in Christ. Third, it will examine the mission practice of the church coming from these theological distinctives whereby they sought guidance through prayer and the casting of lots, sacrificially committed themselves to the cause of Christ and his gospel, preached Christ and his salvation, worked with the marginalized in gentle evangelism, and practiced the love of Christ in cultural humility. At the end of the paper is the conclusion with a study of the positives and negatives of the movement with implications for present-day mission.

Historical Background of the Early Moravian Mission Movement

In the early eighteenth century, European colonialism was reaching the height of its global political power. In contrast, the influence of Protestantism outside Europe was minimal. From within Lutheran scholasticism with its tendency towards a concern for structure and theological polemics emerged the spiritual renewal of Pietism led by Philipp Jakob Spener and August Hermann Francke that emphasized the emotional and mystical aspects of the Christian faith. The early Moravians were formed from German Lutheran Pietism together with the Moravian and Bohemian Brethren. The suppressed Unity of the Brethren (*Unitas Fratrum*) came from the followers of Jan Hus who were widely persecuted by both Catholics and

Protestants in Bohemia and Moravia during the Thirty Years' War (1618-48). The outcome of the war was devastating in terms of the economic burden on the common people and the number of lives lost. The Bohemian population had declined from three million to eight hundred thousand because of death and exile (Hutton 1909, 160). From the ashes of the war arose a longing for true godliness that led to the Pietist movement in the German Lutheran church, and a composite organization formed from German Pietism with some of the victimized Brethren that produced the early Moravian missionaries.

Influences in the Formation of the Founder's Missionary Impulse

Various influences shaped the missionary impulse of the founder of Moravianism from his childhood and teen years through to the formation of the Herrnhut Moravian church. First, we will examine the early years of the Count and the factors that shaped his mission fervor that include his Pietistic grandmother and aunt, August Francke at Halle University, missionary letters, visiting missionaries, and a mission prayer group.

Zinzendorf was born in Dresden in 1700 into a Pietistic family. He was raised in the Pietist-Lutheran tradition by his grandmother, Baroness Henrietta Catherine von Gersdorf and his Aunt Henrietta. The Baroness studied the Bible in its original languages, composed hymns in German and Latin, and corresponded in Latin with the likes of Spener and Francke. From an early age Zinzendorf showed a strong inclination towards spiritual matters as is evidenced by the following description of his childhood.

I firmly resolved to live for him alone, who had laid down his life for me. My very dear Aunt Henrietta endeavored to keep me in this frame of mind by often speaking to me loving and evangelical words. I opened all my heart to her, and we then spread my case before the Lord in prayer.
(Weinlick 1956, 19)

Beginning at ten years of age, Zinzendorf attended the Royal Paedagogium at Halle University for six years, and there was influenced by Professor Francke. Francke transformed that college into a center not only for European Pietism, but also for overseas mission. In 1705, the university at Halle in partnership with King Ferdinand IV of Denmark sent the first Pietist missionaries, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Henry Plütschau, to evangelize the people in Tranquebar, along the southeast coast of India. Pietist missionary letters from Tranquebar were read in meetings at Zinzendorf's grandmother's castle at Gross-Hennersdorf in Upper Lusatia. Reflecting on the first time he heard about the work of Ziegenbalg in India he stated, "I know the day, the hour, the spot in Hennersdorf. It was in the Great Room; the year was 1708 or 1709. I heard items read out of the paper about the East Indies, before regular reports were issued; and there and then the missionary impulse arose in my soul" (Hutton 1895, 179).

In Francke's home at Halle, the young Count met Ziegenbalg and Plütschau. Later he wrote that these conversations "with witnesses of the truth in distant regions, and the acquaintances with several missionaries . . . increased my zeal for the cause of the Lord in a powerful manner." It was during this time that he formed with four of his friends, a small group known as the Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed which focused on prayer and the cause of Christ. With one of these university friends, Count Frederick von Watteville, Zinzendorf vowed to "do all in our power for the conversion of the heathen, especially for those for whom no one cared, and by means of men whom God, we believed, would provide" (Hutton 1922, 7) even if they could not be missionaries themselves.

In these early years, the Lutheran Pietists influenced the Count's recognition that there was a biblical responsibility to evangelize those without the knowledge of Christ as Savior.

Francke and the Halle Pietists especially helped to consolidate the adolescent Count's biblical theology of mission. They emphasized the heartfelt religious devotion of the individual, belief in the Bible as the Christian's guide to life, and a complete commitment to Christ that would manifest itself in ethical purity and charitable activity. In doing so, they stressed the importance of experiencing God. These theological views would become the tenets for later Moravian mission.

Focusing of Zinzendorf's Mission Zeal

The formation of Zinzendorf's mission zeal intensified as he continued his education at Wittenberg, traveled Europe, and married Erdmuth von Reuss. After Halle, Zinzendorf attended the University of Wittenberg and studied law to prepare him to be a judicial counselor in the Dresden court of August the Strong, the Saxon elector. Yet service for Christ's kingdom was his ultimate goal. August Gottlieb Spangenberg quoted Zinzendorf regarding this career conflict, "My mind inclined continually toward the cross of Christ . . . and since the theology of the cross was my favorite theme, and I knew no greater happiness than to become a preacher of the gospel, therefore subjects not related to that I treated superficially" (Spangenberg 1838, 236). It was at Wittenberg that Zinzendorf became a "strict Pietist" by establishing a stringent prayer, fasting and devotional life, studied hymns and theological lectures, and read the Bible in Greek. He believed that a Christianity of the heart with its personal intimate experience of Christ the Savior transcended the denominational divisions between Orthodox, Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran. It was at Wittenberg that he promised to follow his Savior in humility and to abandon the world to fulfill his mission passion.

At nineteen years of age, after graduating from Wittenberg, Zinzendorf traveled through Germany, Holland and France as was the custom for his social rank as a German imperial Count,

visiting royalty, religious leaders and museums. He had the opportunity to gamble, dance and live the life of high society. “I went upon my travels but the more I entered into the world, the more firmly did the Lord retain his hold of me; and I sought out those amongst the great of this world, to whom I could speak upon the grace and goodness of my Saviour. I found them frequently where it would not have been expected” (Spangenberg 1838, 18). At an art museum in Dusseldorf he viewed a painting of Jesus crowned with thorns (*Ecce Homo*) by the Italian artist Domenico Feti. The inscription below the painting read, “All this I have done for you; what have you done for me?” Though he loved Christ, the Count realized that he had done little for him. He knelt in front of the painting and rededicated himself for the service of Christ. “From now on I will do whatever he leads me to do” (Moore 1982, 9). His year of travel had not only intensified his desire to serve Christ’s Kingdom wherever he could, but also prepared him for marriage, and his work in the courts of the Saxon elector.

Following his marriage in 1722 to Countess Erdmuth Dorothea von Reuss, Zinzendorf began his work in the court at Dresden and moved to his estate of Herrnhut at Berthelsdorf near the Bohemian border in Saxony. Erdmuth was the sister of Duke Heinrich XXIX Reuss of Ebersdorf who was a friend of Zinzendorf. The newly married couple vowed to put aside all favors of rank, to win souls and to hold themselves in readiness to go immediately wherever the Lord might call. The Count’s first wife proved to be an invaluable administrative support in implementing his dreams. She would provide the necessary home-base infrastructure to help maintain his vision of renewal and mission in Europe and abroad.

Shaping of the Mission Vision of the Herrnhut Community

The same year of Zinzendorf’s marriage, he met Christian David who asked permission for groups of *Unitas Fratrum* refugees from Bohemia and Moravia (present-day Czech Republic)

to seek asylum on his estate. Five years later, three hundred Moravians were living at Herrnhut as well as other religious dissenters such as German Pietists. The decades of religious persecution with their pilgrim life had made them spiritually resilient and ready for any service for their Savior. The stage was set for the shaping of Zinzendorf and the Herrnhut community into the dynamic force that would be one of the launching pads for modern Protestant mission.

Three key elements in this molding were Zinzendorf's pastoral care and teaching to unify the Moravian community, the church's renewal experience, and the missionary appeal of Anton Ulrich. In particular, this segment of the paper will elaborate on the renewal of the Herrnhut church and observe how after the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's "mystic wondrous touch," the Christians desired to love one another in "true sincerity," form an accountability structure for discipleship and prayer, and share the love of the Lamb. All these renewal impulses helped shape the mission vision of the first Moravians.

After five years, Zinzendorf left the Dresden court to concentrate on shepherding the growing settlement that manifested theological tensions because of working with the local Lutheran church at Berthelsdorf. Visiting each home Zinzendorf tried to bring unity to the fledging group and learning the historical background of the Moravians began to organize the village into a Christian community. Zinzendorf discovered Johannes Amos Comenius' *Account of Discipline* that validated his own attempt at guiding communal living in his monographs *Manorial Injunctions and Prohibitions* and *Brotherly Agreement of the Brethren from Bohemia and Moravia and Others* (Weinlick 1956, 74). There were forty-two items in the agreement that guided this group of people in promoting spiritual growth and the knowledge of God. This followed an attempt by the Count to end a dispute over end-time teaching between Christian David and Pastor John Rothe of the nearby Berthelsdorf Lutheran church.

In the midst of Zinzendorf's attempts to bring harmony to his Herrnhut estate, two important events explain the church renewal that followed. On May 12, 1727, Spangenberg reported that Zinzendorf made a covenant with the Moravians whereby they committed themselves to the Savior, confessed the sin of their religious quarrels and "sincerely renounced self-love, self-will, disobedience and free thinking . . . and each one wished to be led by the Holy Spirit in all things" (Spangenberg 1838, 83). Then on August 13 of that same year, the Moravians having gathered for a week of prayer and fasting, experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This service was impregnated with a sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit moving among the people in response to the increase in unity and spiritual renewal experienced during the summer. It was as if the Holy Spirit himself immersed them into one love.

Zinzendorf called it the Moravian Pentecost and stated that, "The whole place represented truly a visible tabernacle of God among men, and till the thirteenth of August there was nothing to be seen and heard but joy and gladness; then this uncommon joy subsided, and a calmer sabbatic period succeeded" (Thompson 1885, 53). The Moravian historian, J. E. Hutton, described the experience this way:

As the Brethren were learning, step by step, to love each other in true sincerity, Pastor Rothe now invited them all to set the seal to the work by coming in a body to Berthelsdorf Church, and there joining, with one accord, in the celebration of the Holy Communion. . . . The sense of awe was overpowering. As the Brethren walked down the slope to the church all felt that the supreme occasion had arrived; and all who had quarreled in the days gone by made a covenant of loyalty and love. . . . They entered the building; the service began; the "Confession" was offered by the Count; and then at one and the same moment, all present, rapt in deep devotion, were stirred by the mystic wondrous touch of a power which none could define or understand. There in Berthelsdorf Parish Church, they attained at last the firm conviction that they were one in Christ; and there, above all, they believed and felt that on them, as on the twelve disciples on the Day of Pentecost, had rested the purifying fire of the Holy Ghost.
(Hutton 1909, 209)

Now at Herrnhut there were love feasts, foot washings, festival days, song services and hymn writing—all manifestations of the love of the Holy Spirit.

It was after these two incidents that the Moravians began to desire to share this love of the Lamb. Preaching the gospel message became an extension of their personal love relationship with Christ. More and more the community began to desire to spread this love, so much so, that both men and women began to travel to other churches and Pietistic small groups throughout continental Protestantism bringing needed renewal.

Another result of the Moravian Pentecost was the formation of a highly organized communal system so that the adults could focus on discipleship and evangelism. A congregation divided into ten “choirs”: marrieds, widowers, widows, single men, single women, teenage boys, teenage girls, younger boys and younger girls, and infants. From within these choirs, “bands” were created to provide discipline, fellowship and worship in group accountability. It was out of these bands that there arose an emphasis on prayer. Zinzendorf became involved with the single men’s band and later inspired them to consider mission service.

Four years after this experience of the Spirit’s “uncommon joy,” Zinzendorf traveled to Copenhagen to attend the coronation of King Christian VI of Denmark. There he met two Christian Inuits from the Danish government-sponsored mission in Greenland founded in 1721 by the Norwegian Lutheran Hans Egede; and Anton Ulrich, a former slave from St. Thomas (a part of the present-day Virgin Islands) who spoke of the great spiritual need of his homeland. Several weeks later both the Inuits and Ulrich traveled to Herrnhut. Ulrich spoke to the community (on behalf of his enslaved sister Anna) about the possible need of selling themselves as slaves to gain access to the slaves’ quarters (Bossard 1987, 270-271). Tobias Leopald and

Leonhard Dober, members of the Moravian church at Herrnhut, felt called to go to the Caribbean, so the community waited on God for direction.

Characteristics of the Mission Theology of the Early Moravian Church

Having considered some of the historic factors that influenced and shaped the mission vision of Zinzendorf and the early Moravian movement, the paper will now view a number of the characteristics of their mission theology that affected their missional nature and practice. Such theological distinctives as their sometimes-excessive focus on the suffering and death of Christ, the prominent role of the Holy Spirit, harvesting the “first fruits,” and the concept of one gathered church of believers, all contributed in determining the motivation, message and method of the pioneer missionaries from Herrnhut.

The Suffering and Death of Christ

At the center of Moravian mission theology was the sacrifice of the Lamb. Sometimes called “blood and wounds” theology, the spotlight was on the suffering and death at Christ’s crucifixion. The mercy of God through Christ’s affliction atoned for the sins of the human race. Jesus paid the price through his blood on our behalf. It was only the cross and the Savior’s blood that could grant forgiveness to humanity. Concerning Christ, Zinzendorf understood that “he, as a malefactor, hung upon the cross between two murderers, and was thus vilified, despised, torn and wounded, out of love for our souls” (Zinzendorf quoted in Wesley 1744, 4). Christ’s sacrificial love called forth a deep personal affection for the Savior and an appreciation of humanity’s unworthiness. This brought forth humility in the missionaries as they prayed to be saved from “unhallowed ambition.” The Count claimed that Jesus “doth not hinder nor exempt his children from the cross and sufferings. He has suffer’d himself, and his kingdom in time present is and remains a kingdom of the cross” (Zinzendorf quoted in Wesley 1744, 13).

During the “sifting period” (1743-50), Zinzendorf encouraged in his followers an extreme appreciation of the wounds and blood of Christ. It was Christ’s suffering on the cross that told the total sacrifice of God for humankind, and the Moravian congregation was to keep this awareness ever before them. He understood that from this uniting with Christ in child-like faith would come a joyful enthusiasm for life. Radical practices arose during this time that centered on the wounds of Jesus. Since the Count’s rule was autocratic, notwithstanding all the committees organized during his lifetime, he directed these excessive proceedings. For instance, Christian Renatus, the son of Zinzendorf, built a hole in a side wall of the church in Herrnhut to enable the congregation to imagine that it was the wound in Jesus’ side. To experience the Savior’s suffering the congregation would march through the “side wound.”

The early Moravians viewed these mystical and sensual experiences as evidence of spirituality. They spoke of Christ as “Brother Lambkin,” and themselves as “little wound-parsons,” or “worms in the wounds in his side,” and “cross-wood little splinters.” In the words of the Count: “When he forgives our sins, we fall down at the footstool, and acknowledge, that it would be a Heaven Piercing sin, to with-hold the reward of his labour from him; as if the bloody sweat of Christ trickles down upon the ground in vain” (Zinzendorf quoted in Wesley 1744, 57). The more they focused on identifying with Christ’s suffering the more they became introspective which decreased their missionary and evangelistic zeal.

Zinzendorf eventually realized the excesses, confessed his error and realigned the movement to the Augsburg Confession of the Lutheran church. Yet even in the early nineteenth century, Moravian missionaries such as John and Anna Rosina Gambold continued in the extremes of the sifting period. They were both descendants from the Bethlehem Moravian church in Pennsylvania, and ministered amongst the Cherokees in Springplace, Georgia. From

their diaries (a handwritten manuscript recorded in an archaic writing convention called German script), it may be shown that they concentrated their mission theology on the blood and wounds of Jesus, especially the hole in the Savior's side. Their evangelistic work centered on the blood of Christ and why humanity should be thankful for his bloody sacrifice. To impart this message, the Gambolds used pictures and tableaus of the agonies and suffering of Jesus in worship services; and paintings of the crucifixion on the walls of the missionary houses and mission school. Again the side hole was the center-piece of their depiction of the Christian faith.

It seems that the Cherokees had little interest in the Christianity of the Gambolds. For these Indians, the European treatment of killing their God was shocking and blasphemous. Also to the Cherokees, the Moravians ate the flesh and drank the blood of their God, which to them were a cultural taboo and an abomination. Yet with all these fundamental differences between their beliefs, the Moravian missionaries showed respect to the Indians by extending hospitality, educating their children and performing various services. Surrounded by a European worldview that was largely intolerant to cultural diversity (demonstrated in racial prejudice, the dispossession of Indians and false treaties), the Gambolds showed a humility and simplicity that allowed peaceful and respectful interaction between two dissimilar worlds (McClinton 2002, 5-6).

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Mission

The theological characteristic of the Herrnhut church mentioned above regarding the sacrifice of the Lamb was foundational to their mission motivation and message. Intertwined with this belief was the Moravian's method in mission, purposefully directed by their understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit. We now turn to their awareness of the work of the Spirit in mission.

Led by Count Zinzendorf, the Moravians developed a simple three-point approach to mission. The love of God and his redemption in Christ warranted a retelling of the salvation story everywhere. The Spirit of God in his way and time would then change the hearts of the people hearing the story of the Lamb of God.

First, silently observe to see if any of the heathen were prepared, by the grace of God, to receive and believe the word of life. Second, if even ONE were found, preach the gospel to HIM because God must give the heathens ears and heart to receive the gospel, otherwise all of his labors would be in vain. Third, preach chiefly to such heathens, who never heard the gospel. We were not to build on a foundation laid by others nor to disturb their work, but to seek the outcast and forsaken.
(Loskiel 1794, 2:7)

Zinzendorf believed that the Holy Spirit was the only true missionary. The Spirit prepared the hearts of people to hear and receive the message of Jesus Christ. He was the One who called individuals from among the people to be converted. The missionaries were then led to these people by the Spirit.

Conversion of the people did not rest on the ability of the missionaries to preach and convince. Counting the number of salvations was not the prime motivation of the church, and hence they were encouraged not to fear failure. In a lecture “Concerning the Proper Purpose of the Preaching of the Gospel” the Count stated, “One is never converted by a preacher; never leaves a sermon in a blessed state if one did not come into the church already awakened” (Zinzendorf 1746, “Concerning” 28). He continued, “There is no ground to debate whether God performs the work of conversion in a soul himself or whether he makes use of men to this end. Certainly he is in need of no one, for he himself can draw . . . through his Spirit all the souls whom he wants to give to his Son” (Zinzendorf 1746, “Concerning” 32). The Holy Spirit prepares people so that when the missionary shares the gospel “the work falls into prepared soil,

into a cultivated field and is nothing other than the explanation of the truth which already lies in the heart” (Zinzendorf 1746, “Aspect” 51).

In simpler terms, Zinzendorf encouraged missionaries to pray that the Holy Spirit would lead them to these truth-seekers so that they could tell them about Jesus. They should not be concerned about converting everyone because mission is done “not out of fear for the fate of the unconverted but because one wishes to follow Christ” (Schattschneider 1976, 72). The Moravian leader did not encourage mass conversions since he believed that this would not occur before the conversion of the Jewish people. Until then a few converts, “first fruits,” would be saved (Revelation 14:4).

The Concept of “First Fruits”

At the Moravian mission in the Shekomeko village in Dutchess County, New York (1740-1744), Gottlob Buttner observed how the indigenous people were already “bent” toward the gospel (Westmeier 1994, 425). Those who believed were called the first fruit. They were to be baptized, trained and given the task of leading the local churches. Not only did the Spirit prepare the hearts of those who would hear, he would care for those he called. If the Spirit cared for the new believers, then the missionary was not to be permanent (Schattschneider 1984, 66).

The Count believed that the record of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) and Cornelius (Acts 10) showed various aspects of mission to the first fruits. First, the Holy Spirit prepared and initiated contact. “When the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, he melts the heart . . . this happened to Cornelius; this happened to Queen Candace’s treasurer. They felt this joy, and they tasted this blessedness; but they did not know what name to give it” (Zinzendorf 1746, “Aspect” 53). Second, the Spirit guided the missionary to those who needed to hear the message, just as he did for Philip and Peter. Third, the missionary should “work directly on no

heathen in whom one does not find a happy disposition to a righteous nature because it is just they, e.g., Cornelius, the Ethiopian eunuch etc., to whom Christ sent his messengers” (“Letter to a Missionary of the English Society,” in Schattschneider 1976, 77). The missionary should not “begin with public preaching but with a conversation with individual souls who deserve it, who indicate the Savior to you, and you will perceive it” (“Instructions for Missionaries to the East” in Schattschneider 1976, 77). Fourth, the few first fruits should be water baptized as soon as possible but only these chosen ones. In Acts, the baptism of Cornelius and the Ethiopian “did not take several weeks of preparation first; there was no need to memorize a book; there was no need for answering twenty-four or thirty questions” (“Instructions for Missionaries to the East” in Schattschneider 1976, 53).

Having a mission theology so strongly highlighting the work of the Holy Spirit in converting the first fruits gave the missionaries the liberty to move to another location without guilt if there was no evidence of any fruit for their labor. For example, in 1777 the minister Karl Schmidt and the doctor Johannes Grassman traveled to Serampon, India. In the midst of language and culture learning to translate the Bible, they received opposition from both Catholic and Protestant churches, as well as those from the higher caste system. After laboring for fifteen years, there was no indication of a “pre-awakening” by the Holy Spirit in the people so they finally left (Schattschneider 1998, 65, 84).

One Gathered Church of Believers

Along with the church’s belief in the occupation of the Spirit of God in the salvation and discipling of the first fruits of mission, the initial Moravians emphasized the unity of all Christians in Christ. They desired that Christians be unified in Jesus. “The real church . . . is not confined to one place but is scattered over the whole world” (Spangenberg 1838, 20). Their

focal point was Christ and his salvation since for them, true fellowship was found at Calvary.

The simplicity of their message of Christ left little room for denominational divisions. “Jesus is the Universal Restorer of all mankind; and the propitiation, not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world” (Zinzendorf quoted in Wesley 1744, 7). The following example from Zinzendorf’s life illustrates this point.

In his *wanderjahr*, the year following university studies that most nobility used to travel Europe before taking on court responsibilities, Zinzendorf visited various religious leaders. At this time he formed a friendship with the Catholic archbishop of Paris, Louis de Noailles. They discussed their differences between the Lutheran and Catholic churches but realized the commonalities they shared in their devotion to Christ. Both had a Christocentric faith expressed in personal obedience to their Savior. Over the years, their friendship grew through correspondence and occasional meetings.

This ecumenical experience confirmed the conviction concerning the union of all believers in Christ for those sent from Herrnhut. In sending missionaries to foreign lands, Zinzendorf hoped that the divisions of the western church would not be transplanted with the good news. He wrote in his “Letter to a Missionary of the English Society,” “It pains me very much that I must see that the heathen become sectarians, again that people polish up their churches and ask them of what Christian religion they are” (Schattschneider 1984, 67).

Zinzendorf never wanted the Moravians to become another denomination. His hope was to serve other churches throughout the world.

The idea of one gathered church of believers allowed the Moravians to work with many different religious groups. They were supportive of the Lutheran and Anglican churches as well as the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Foreign Parts and the London Missionary

Society telling people to remain within their churches and forbidding proselytization (Schattschneider 1984, 66). Zinzendorf led by example. In 1741, he resigned from his responsibilities as a bishop of the Moravian church to be free to serve the church in America. A year later, he renounced the title of “Count” and the privilege of nobility to be more effective in his ministry in the colonies. Instead, they called him “brother” (Weinlick 1956, 155). Then in 1744, he told Spangenberg to call the movement in America the Evangelical Brethren rather than Moravian or Lutheran in an endeavor to be nondescript to discourage people from other denominations in joining them. His passion was to work towards an interdenominational fellowship that God would use to bring renewal and unity to churches, and to take the message about Christ to those who had never heard (Van der Linde 1957, 420, 423).

Nevertheless, even Zinzendorf who had “many thousand friends, who loved him tenderly, and to whom he was indeed invaluable,” at the same time had “a host of enemies, who painted him in vile colours, and persecuted him with more untiring ardour, than if he had been the worst of heretics” (Spangenberg 1838, iv). Some of this reaction against him may have been due to his noble manner that remained an intricate part of his personality even though he had cancelled his imperial privileges.

For instance, in 1741 at Gray’s Inn Walks in London, the contrary points of view between Methodists and Moravians concerning the saving work of Christ for the world were debated in Latin by Zinzendorf and John Wesley. Wesley claimed that the Moravians overly emphasized Luther’s justification by faith and neglected real holiness, not teaching correctly the goal of the Christian life, which was “Christian perfection.” Zinzendorf disagreed. “I know of no such thing as inherent perfection in this life. This is the error of errors. I pursue it everywhere with fire and sword! I stamp it under foot! I give it over to destruction! Christ is

our only perfection. Whoever affirms inherent perfection denies Christ.” In reply to Wesley’s argument that it was “Christ’s own Spirit that works in true Christians to achieve their perfection,” the Count replied, “By no means! All Christian perfection is simply faith in Christ’s blood. Christian perfection is entirely imputed, not inherent. We are perfect in Christ; never in ourselves.” In a somewhat bombastic manner, Zinzendorf strongly opposed Wesley’s message that in the Count’s view combined the law with the gospel (Outler 1964, 367-372).

Also in some mission fields, the disciples of the Count copied their patron with similar tenacious theological opinions. When Christian David, a carpenter from the Herrnhut community, went to Greenland in May 1733, he was most critical of the Norwegian Lutheran pastor Egede and his attempt to reach the Inuit people. David and his colleagues seemed to have little regard for the twelve missionary years endured by Egede and his family, viewing them as colonialisers without any real understanding of the gospel message. Like the Norwegian Pietist, these Moravians had to learn endurance and faithfulness before there was any fruit from their labor.

The Mission Praxis of the Early Moravian Mission Movement

Having examined the historical background of the Moravian movement and the characteristics of the mission theology of the church that produced the early missionaries, we will now investigate the mission praxis that came from this history and theology. These practices included receiving guidance through prayer and the casting of lots, sacrificing for the Gospel of the Lamb, preaching Christ and his salvation, working with the marginalized, practicing the love of Christ in cultural humility, preaching the gospel in indigenous languages, with case studies looking at the Moravian approach to indigenous marriages and the slaves of the West Indies.

Guided by Prayer and the Casting of Lots

Following the Moravian Pentecost at Herrnhut on February 10, 1728, the church began an hourly intercessory prayer time with twenty-four men and women taking turns on a “watch of the Lord” that was continuous for over one hundred years. That first day, discussion and prayers included such countries as Turkey, Ethiopia, Greenland and Lapland. Spangenberg described this prayer vigil as an “intercession for the church of Christ collectively, for the community . . . for individuals, for the missionaries, the land in which they dwelt . . . the whole of Christendom, and the human race in general” (Spangenberg 1838, 88). Further, the group observed three main principles known as the “Brotherly Agreement of the Moravian Church”: salvation by the blood of Christ, sanctification through the work of the Holy Spirit, and love for one another. The upholding of these tenets of the faith was through Bible readings and three set prayer times daily. Prayer was central to the faith of the Christian community and was especially important in their practice of obtaining God’s guidance, as was the practice of casting lots.

Based on their interpretation of Acts 1:26, the Moravians trusted the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the prayerful casting of lots. This was used to decide who should serve in different roles in the community, whether or not someone should go as a missionary, who should be appointed as a clergy, what part of the Bible should be read daily, solutions to church problems and if an offer of marriage was to be accepted. Once the lot was consulted the decision was binding since God’s Spirit had spoken.

For instance, Dober and Leopold both believed that they should be the first missionaries sent out from Herrnhut to St. Thomas. Eighteen months after Antony’s visit to Herrnhut, the church council, after much prayer, cast lots to determine the next step. In that process, confirmation came to Dober a potter, but Leopold was to remain; David Nitschmann, a carpenter,

took Leopold's place. These men became exemplars to those that followed of what it meant to be sacrificial missionaries for the sake of Christ's gospel.

Sacrificed for the Gospel of the Lamb

In August 1732, Nitschmann and Dober set out as the first missionaries from Herrnhut. So sure was their trust in the Spirit's guidance through the church's prayer and the casting of lots that the two men began their journey to the West Indies with little plan or provision. After prayer and hymn singing, they were driven by Zinzendorf in his carriage for the first fifteen miles and charged to, "Do all in the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The potter and carpenter walked for two months to a Danish port and eventually boarded a ship to St. Thomas.

When Ulrich pleaded with the Herrnhut Moravians to go to his family, he warned them that they might have to become slaves themselves to have any contact with the slaves. Upon arrival on the island, the two men joined the African slaves in cutting sugar cane. Those first years of missionary activities were hard on the Moravians. Dober suffered much hardship and the resentment of the European colonialists as he preached to the people.

Two years after the first missionaries were sent a group of eighteen arrived in the West Indies to carry on Dober's work as he returned to Herrnhut to become an elder. Within a year, ten of the Moravians had died and another eleven volunteers came from Herrnhut with nine of these dying within a short time of their arrival. By 1736 all the survivors were recalled to Europe with Frederick Martin arriving to continue Dober's work. Martin had already been imprisoned for his faith in Moravia and within a few months he had won over two hundred converts to Christ. In the midst of witnessing to the slaves he suffered imprisonment at the hands of the European landowners. When Martin was arrested and put into prison, the slaves gathered outside his prison cell to hear him preach.

In 1738 Zinzendorf himself journeyed to the Caribbean with five missionary recruits to help those Moravians on St. Thomas and found Martin imprisoned. Using his authority the Count had him released after which Martin was able to minister at St. Thomas for another fourteen years. While there the Moravian leader conducted daily services for the slaves and reorganized the mission to be more efficient. Even through incarceration, sickness and death, the missionaries and their replacements persisted, and the work in the West Indies was extended to St. Croix, and then to Jamaica and Antigua (Fries 1973, 25-27).

The Moravian sacrifice in the Caribbean set the stage for future mission. A year after the first missionaries left Saxony for St. Thomas, two more missionaries from Herrnhut went to Greenland. Matthew Stach and Frederick Bohnisch, gravediggers by profession, suffered from disease, the cold and starvation. Finally, after twenty-seven years they witnessed their first Inuit converts, Kajarak and his family. The first two missionary teams sent from Herrnhut demonstrate the sacrificial attitude for the Kingdom of Christ that was such an integral part of this pioneering mission. Zinzendorf gave these missionaries such a vision of God's love through Christ that for this cause there was no challenge too great or difficult. One more example from Moravian history illustrates this trait.

From 1740-45, John Cennick, a Moravian evangelist in Britain was involved in open-air evangelistic campaigns in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire that drew large crowds and often a hostile reaction from some of the people. As he rode from village to village and from town to town, he was constantly attacked by angry mobs who objected to his message and method. At Upton-Cheyny, some of the villagers tried to drown out his preaching by hitting pans together and when this failed, they then attacked him with the same pans. At Swindon, in 1741, some men fired muskets over Cennick and when this did not achieve the desired effect, they brought

the local fire engine and drenched the Moravian with dirty water from the ditches. He more fully described this violent incident in his journal.

After I preached at Brinkworth about fifty persons on horses, and as many on foot, followed me to Stratton, where we had appointed a meeting. On the way, I opened my New Testament on these words: "We are persecuted but not forsaken," which served to hint to me what would happen. However, we had many hearers and a lovely meeting. But before I had said much the mob came again from Swindon, with swords, staves and poles, and without respect to age or sex they knocked down all that stood in their way. Some had the blood streaming down their faces, and others were almost beaten or trampled to death. . . . We escaped into a Baptist meeting-house just by, where I addressed the people with much affection.
(Hasse 1913, 82-83)

In the next section, we turn to the biblical message that the Moravians delivered to the people about Christ's love and its benefits.

Preached Christ and His Salvation

We have seen that Moravian mission began in 1732 with the journey of Dober and Nitschmann to St. Thomas to minister to the slaves in the sugar cane fields. Many wondered whether these groundbreaking missionaries would be successful since they were uneducated laborers and artisans. Yet Zinzendorf had studied cases of pioneer missionaries such as Egede in Greenland and had formed ideas about what should be their missionary message and method. In a letter to an English friend, Zinzendorf provided a summary of the early Moravian mission practice when he wrote:

You are not to aim at the conversion of whole nations; you must simply look for seekers after the truth who, like the Ethiopian eunuch, seem ready to welcome the Gospel. Second, you must go straight to the point and tell them about the life and death of Christ. Third, you must not stand aloof from the heathen, but humble yourself, mix with them, treat them as Brethren, and pray with them and for them.
(Zinzendorf 1732, in Hutton 1922, 20)

In other words, the missionaries were to have a humble reliance on the Holy Spirit and an intense devotion to preach and live for Christ.

For Zinzendorf the preaching of the Gospel was to preach Christ. “Paul did not make anything known among the heathen except Jesus, and, indeed, hanged and crucified” (“Instructions for Missionaries to the East” in Schattschneider 1976, 90). Moreover, the key event in Jesus’ life was his death. His death took the sin of the world and his blood freed the believer from guilt and judgment.

The ordinary of our Saviour is not to prescribe souls a long preparation and form of repentance: it costs him oftentimes but one word, and grace is present, and takes away all sins. It is highly exquisite to meditate furiously upon this matter; so that we may, by our own experience, be enabled to say, he can save, he can deliver all that come to him. (Wesley 1744, 11)

In Zinzendorf’s view, the non-Christian already knows that God exists. What they need to be told was “that Christ came into the world to save sinners; and therefore, the missionary must always begin with the Gospel message. And how is it that missionaries have failed in the past? They have failed because, instead of preaching Christ, they have given lectures on theology” (Zinzendorf in Hutton 1922, 21). He believed that if the missionary begins by teaching the doctrine of the creation, the fall and humanity’s sin, the people would stop listening before they hear about Christ. If Jesus were spoken of first then this would naturally lead to discussion about God and the rest of the biblical message since the hearer’s heart had been warmed.

In summary, the Moravian missionaries preached Christ and his salvation through the Holy Spirit before they spoke of creation, the history of the Jewish people and the work of the early church. They centered on Christ, his person and work of salvation. Zinzendorf wrote to George Schmidt the South African missionary, “I am very pleased with you. But, my dear, you aim too much at the skin of the Hottentots and too little at the heart. . . . You must tell the Hottentots, especially their children, the story of the Son of God. If they feel something, pray

with them, if not, pray for them. If feeling persists, baptize them where you shot the hippo” (Tucker 2004, 112). The illustration below further highlights this mission practice.

The first Moravian missionaries in Greenland struggled to witness any response from the Inuits to the Christian message. Then Andrew Grassman visited Herrnhut and brought back a renewed emphasis on the suffering and death of Christ. The missionaries then abandoned their preaching of theological doctrine and focused on narrative theology, especially the passion of Jesus. From this refocus, many Inuits were converted and baptized. In a letter to Zinzendorf, John Beck claimed that, “Henceforth we shall preach nothing but the love of the slaughtered Lamb” (Hutton 1922, 78). In 1740, one of them recorded this change in their mission strategy in Greenland:

The method hitherto pursued by them consisted principally in speaking to the heathen of the existence, the attributes, and perfection of God, and enforcing obedience to the divine law . . . abstractly considered, this method appears the most rational; but when reduced to practice, it was found wholly ineffectual. . . . Now, therefore, they determined in the literal sense of the word to preach Christ and him crucified, without laying first “the foundation of repentance from dead works, and faith towards God.” . . . This reached the hearts of the audience, and produced the most astonishing effects. . . . They remained no longer the stupid and brutish creatures that they had been. . . . A sure foundation being thus laid in the knowledge of a crucified Redeemer, our missionaries soon found that this supplied the young converts with a powerful motive to the abhorrence of sin and the performance of every moral duty towards God and their neighbour.
(Quoted in Neill 1990, 202-203)

Worked with the Marginalized

In preaching Christ and his salvation, Moravians seemed to choose the most neglected and oppressed places of the world. From the frozen deserts of Greenland to the scorching wastelands of Ethiopia, pioneering mission to the people of the Middle East and the Gold Coast of West Africa, they worked and lived among the poor and exploited. These groundbreaking Protestant missionaries also ministered among the African slaves of the West Indies and Surinam; and among the Indians of North America.

This Moravian mission focus on the oppressed may have been due to an empathy stemming from their history of persecution, as well as Zinzendorf's vow to serve among people that no one else desired, which was made with the friends of the "Society of the Mustard Seed" at Halle University (Westmeier 1997, 173). Before being sent, the Count challenged the missionaries to "show forth a happy and joyous spirit. And they should not (not even in the most insignificant external matters) rule over the heathen. Rather, they would receive their authority through the power of the Holy Spirit. And they should humble themselves below the people they minister to" (Westmeier 1994, 425). Thus the Moravians lived and worked beside the people stressing service to others motivated by Jesus' example as the servant leader in John 13:1-15, Mark 10:45 and Philippians 2:5-11. They desired to go and minister in loving persuasion, sharing Christ to the world, not only in word, but also in deed.

The Moravians believed that every Christian missionary should be a witness in their daily work. Thus, their members worked alongside the indigenous people and at a trade. Monies given for the journey to the mission field was limited so that upon arrival, they needed to use their trade to support themselves. This process Zinzendorf believed would "teach the natives the dignity of labor." This was an extension of what was common policy at home. For example, in 1747 at Herrnhut there were no less than twenty-four shoemakers, one for every thirty-five people.

In Labrador, the missionaries owned trading posts and cargo ships. This supported their ministry and provided assistance to the poor and financial incentives for the people. In the American colonies, the agricultural and artisan efforts of the Moravians assisted in the success of European colonization. In Surinam, the missionaries exerted economic influence as they founded tailoring, baking and watch-making businesses. In addition, most Moravian

communities provided social welfare programs, in which the missionaries had additional responsibilities to care for the widows and orphans, together with the sick and the poor, with virtually every group starting a school. Some examples follow that show the Moravian's use of social work as a vehicle to evangelize the marginalized.

After their arrival on St. Thomas, the missionaries offered to teach the slaves how to read, an incentive they hoped would lead them towards desiring religious instruction. The program was so well received that by 1741 tutoring in reading was restricted to those who were "intent on their own conversion." The slave masters on the island reacted to the Moravian agenda by burning any religious literature as a symbolic act asserting control over the lives of the African Caribbeans. Early Moravianism in the West Indies did not see the broader social demands of the Christian faith in terms of politics and labor. Their focus was on the individual turning to Christ and they mostly did not directly challenge the social injustices in the light of the gospel message. Some other missionaries even saw the Christianization of slaves as a means to bring about behavioral change that would suppress any thought of rebellion and protect the outnumbered white population from spiritual and physical danger (Frey and Wood 1998, 86).

The Moravians, who in 1801 had begun their work among the Cherokees who lived in Georgia, also built a school at one of their two mission stations (forty-five members in 1830). It was located near a major transport route, which meant that the Indians that lived there were more prosperous as they interacted with the European communities, obtaining supplies and having an opportunity to learn English. This was a result of a calculated policy by the Moravians to work among the more influential Cherokees believing that through their impact they in turn would influence the more traditional of the Nation (McLoughlin 1990, 23, 93). Colonel David Henley,

the superintendent of Indian affairs in Knoxville, in speaking to the Cherokee chiefs at a council in 1800 explained the Moravian purpose. He said that the missionaries were:

Good men who wish to know if the Cherokees would receive one or more of them favorably in the Nation to teach the young people to read and write, to be industrious in farming, etc., and above all, to teach both young and old to know the goodness of the Great Spirit and what He can do for them if they will follow the straight path which He will tell His servants to point out to them all.
(Schwarze 1923, 50)

Furthermore, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Moravians developed a training school for missionaries to the Indians (Kane 1971, 96). The mission stations were expected to become involved in mission sending, and nationals were trained to become elders and teachers.

Although Schattenschneider (1984, 66) states that the goal of the Moravian missions was to give the churches completely into the hands of the local leadership, it may be argued that the Bohemian organizational model stifled indigenous expressions of faith and the training of native leadership. This seemed to allow a lack of independence among the indigenous Christians.

Schmidt, the first Moravian missionary to the Hottentots of southern Africa (1737), also worked amongst the poorest of the poor. These people were often hunted and shipped to India as slaves. Working as a day laborer for the Hottentot farmers he pruned, threshed, butchered, and tanned. Eventually he obtained his own farm. The Dutch colonists opposed Schmidt's affinity with the natives, and he was eventually removed to Holland to answer charges that he was not properly ordained to give the sacraments. When he left, he had established a church of fifty Hottentots and some forty Europeans that had been converted to Christ through his influence (Hasse 1913, 125-126). Similarly, Christian Heinrich Rauch who in 1742 became the first Moravian missionary among the Mohicans at Shekomeko in central New York worked alongside the Indians, ploughing the fields, and harvesting the corn. Two years later Zinzendorf visited the

mission and found the missionaries living in wigwams and the chapel being held in a birch-bark structure.

Practiced the Love of Christ in Cultural Humility

As the Moravians lived and worked with the people, they built trust and respect. This earned them the opportunity to witness through preaching in addition to action. Here was mission by loving persuasion rather than by force. They offered a quiet invitation for those who were ready to embrace Christ by faith. Zinzendorf himself set forth this philosophy when he stated, “In order to preach aright, take three looks before every sermon: one at the depth of thy wretchedness, another at the depth of human wretchedness around thee, and a third at the love of God in Jesus; so that, empty of self, and full of compassion towards thy fellow men, thou mayst be able to administer God’s comfort to souls” (Thompson 1885, 54).

Although Zinzendorf was passionate about preaching Christ and his salvation to the powerless, and working as servant leaders in their midst, he was not interested in planting replicas of Herrnhut around the world. “Do not measure souls by the Herrnhut yardstick,” he stated in his “Instructions for Missionaries to the East” (Schattschneider 1984, 66). To preach Christ was to show love and humility, not to impose societal changes, even if they were for the good. Hence, the missionary followers of Count Zinzendorf desired to impart the love of Christ with minimum cultural interference. They attempted to approach an indigenous culture and language with respect and in gentle evangelism.

On visiting the indigenous mission at the Shekomeko village in 1742, Zinzendorf said, “Apart from this, they shall remain Indians” (Westmeier 1994, 425); meaning that the Moravian mission did not intend to change the native culture. Amongst North American Indians, the Moravians related the gospel by emphasizing the mystical aspects of Christianity that more

closely connected to the Indians' worldview. God was called the Great Spirit and Christ the Prince of Peace, which correlated to the peace tradition of the Indian culture (Westmeier 1997, 173-174). Arcowee of Chota, a former war chief in the Upper Towns in the Cherokee Nation who had helped to sign peace treaties with President Washington in 1792, said to the Moravians in November 8, 1799, "I believe that you have been inspired by the Great Spirit to be willing to come to us and to teach us" (McLoughlin 1984, 35).

This approach of dispensing the love of Christ in cultural humility may be seen in the diary of David McClure who visited the Moravian mission of Friedensstadt (south of present New Castle, Lawrence County, Pennsylvania) two years after it was founded by David Zeisberger in 1770.

The Moravians appear to have adopted the best mode of Christianizing the Indians. They go among them without noise or parade, & by their friendly behaviour conciliate their good will. They join them in the chase, & freely distribute to the helpless & gradually instil into the minds of individuals, the principles of religions. They then invite those who are disposed to harken to them, to retire to some convenient place, at a distance from the wild Indians, & assist them to build a village, & teach them to plant & sow, & to carry on some coarse manufactures.
(McClure 1899, 51)

Zeisberger's unique strategy in the conversion of the Seneca Indians was based on his awareness of the cultural stress these people endured when they left their tribe and joined the mission community—a village that had elements from both cultures, especially the use of the native vernacular in speaking the message of Jesus Christ.

Preached the Gospel in Indigenous Languages

Most early Moravian missionaries realized the importance of the indigenous language in communicating the gospel of Christ. Zeisberger, for instance, translated the Bible into the Delaware and Mohican languages during the early days of the American colonies. Similarly, Christian David served in Greenland using the Inuit language and saw his first convert after five

years. The reading of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane in the people's tongue moved the leader Kayarnak, and "he became the first fruit of a glorious harvest" (Hasse 1913, 123-124). It then followed that other Christian literature such as hymns, litanies, and the Catechism were translated into the language of the Inuit people.

Not every Moravian missionary was successful in his or her attempt to learn and use the local language. An example of a failed effort may be seen amongst the Cherokee Indians. No Moravian missionary ever learnt to speak Cherokee even though some of them had lived among the people for twenty-five years. The conclusion arrived at was:

Their language cannot be attained by Adults and when attained is incapable of conveying any Idea beyond the sphere of the senses; there seems to be no other way left by which the Spiritual or Temporal Good of these People can be promoted than by teaching them in our Language.

("John Gambold to Thomas L. McKenney, January 7, 1817." Moravian Archives, Salem [Winston-Salem], North Carolina. Cited in McLoughlin 1984, 64)

Thus, the ideal of practicing the love of Christ in cultural awareness did not always completely work out in practice. For example, Zeisberger spent sixty-three years conducting missionary activities mostly among the Delaware Indians establishing six missions in Tuscarawas County, Ohio. In the Christian villages Zeisberger founded, he tried to find a common ground for the two cultures to live in harmony. However, the European rules governing the villages were very strict, even though he did make provision for compromise and forgiveness. To live in the Christian villages at Languntoutenunk (Friedensstadt) and Welhik-Tuppeek (Schoenbrunn) in August 1772, the indigenous people had to agree to nineteen statutes, a number of which follow.

- IV. No person will get leave to dwell with us until our teachers have given their consent, and the helpers (native assistants) have examined him.
- V. We will have nothing to do with thieves, murderers, whoremongers, adulterers, or drunkards.
- VI. We will not take part in dances, sacrifices, heathenish festivals, or games.

- VII. We will use no tshapiet, or witchcraft, when hunting.
VIII. We renounce and abhor all tricks, lies, and deceits of Satan.
(Olmstead 1991, 246-247)

Mission Praxis regarding Indigenous Marriages

Likewise, there was evidence of a similar yearning to be culturally sensitive, yet not compromise the gospel, in the Moravian attitude to indigenous marriages. Zinzendorf allowed the practice of polygamy in Africa since he believed that the people would see the problem as they grew in their understanding of the gospel. Dismissal of polygamous marriages to bring about conversion and baptism was not permitted. Furthermore, in the Caribbean islands, compared to other Protestant missionaries, the Moravians were tolerant towards prior marriage arrangements and separations caused by the slave owners. They believed in the sanctity of marriage, but also viewed previous marital connections as God-ordained. For them it was inappropriate to “compel a man, who had, before his conversion, taken more than one wife, to put away one or more of them, without her or their consent.” It was hoped that the matter would be resolved through one of the partners agreeing to what would be a divorce. If this did not eventuate, then the man would remain in the congregation but not have the opportunity of leadership responsibilities. For those cases where the marriage partners were forced to separate by their slave masters, “the Brethren cannot advise, yet they cannot hinder a regular marriage with another person” since “a family of young children, or other circumstances [might] make a help-meet necessary” (Buchner 1854, 44-45).

Mission Praxis regarding the African Slaves in the West Indies

Another illustration of the challenges that faced these initial Protestant missionaries in practicing the love of Christ in cultural humility was their work with the African slaves in the West Indies. Although their failure to attempt to win freedom for these slaves may appear to be

a neglected moral obligation, until the 1780s there was no systematic attempt to convert the slaves in the Caribbean except by the Moravians. In 1792, they had one hundred and thirty-seven men and women working in this region to bring salvation to these people (Frey and Wood 1998, 129).

Among the Moravian missions in the Caribbean, there was a strong system of moral discipline. Each person was interviewed regarding his or her spiritual condition to fulfill the church's covenant objective to walk in newness of life. This led to the Moravian slaves being loyal, law-abiding, and not involved with slave revolts. The early missionaries worked hard to avoid nominal conversions, but in doing so, perhaps neglected issues of social justice that included slavery and the genocide of native peoples. Their ecumenical spirit extended to the political arena where there was every attempt to convince the ruling order that mission activities brought peace and not rebellion to the West Indies. For example, during the Napoleonic Wars, Moravian missionaries in Antigua rallied their membership to join the local black militia (Frey and Wood 1998, 138).

There appeared to be a tight-rope that the Moravian missionaries walked in their work with the slaves in the Caribbean. The mission stations were based on plantations, and for the most part the missionaries were dependent on the estate owners and their own labor for survival. This dependency meant that there was a need to cultivate cooperation with the colonialists. The Brethren in Jamaica, for instance, were used by the slave owners as "spiritual police" to rebuke troublesome slaves. The missionaries reinforced plantation policy partly through dependency and partly through religious conviction that slaves should submit to their masters. In tension with this scenario were the actions of the missionaries "to challenge the very system that provided them with the means of subsistence by introducing radical social values into the

existing social order” (Frey and Wood 1998, 86). Hence, the Christian message of racial equality attracted the slaves, while the Christian message of racial submission appeased the slave masters. This paper will now look at some of the Moravian practices that challenged the existing hierarchy.

While Moravians accepted slavery as a part of God’s social order in the world, at the same time they welcomed slaves into their multiracial Caribbean churches. They visited slaves in their cabins, sitting and talking with them “as if they were . . . equals,” shared food and clothing, and greeted them by the shaking of hands “in the manner of good friends.” These early missionaries even went as far as approving an interracial marriage between Matthaues Freundlich and Rebekka, a mulatto woman from St. Thomas, to advance “God’s work among the Negroes” (Bossard 1987, 280, 338-339, 351). This message of Christian fellowship did much to communicate racial equality, a notion that the slave owners tried to suppress in every way.

From their first contact with the Moravians in the West Indies, the African slaves were involved with preaching the good news. Unable to speak Creole, the language of most of the Africans, on February 5, 1738, the Moravians employed four men and a woman to give religious instruction to small groups of five to ten persons. Early success in this venture led to women and men slave converts being promoted to elders and preachers. One such example was the slave Abraham who had “extraordinary gifts as a preacher,” and whose sermons made “a ready access to the hearts of his listeners.” His knowledge of Creole and the customs of his comrades provided assistance to the missionary effort. In doing so, promotion was made of a contextualized biblical message and the value of the native language and culture affirmed (Bossard 1987, 360-361).

In brief, the Moravian missionaries of the eighteenth century were desirous of being guided by God into mission, willing to go wherever he led, only preaching Christ and him crucified, and in doing so tried to share their love of the Lamb by working alongside the people in a culturally responsive way.

Conclusion and Implications for Present-day Mission

It was predominately mission mentors from Lutheran Pietism who developed the mission fervor of Count Zinzendorf and accompanied by the Herrnhut spiritual renewal of 1727 produced in the first Moravians a mission renewal with a mission theology dominated by the atoning death of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, this spirituality created a mission praxis that incorporated an awareness of the Protestant church's responsibility for cross-cultural mission, and preached the salvific love of the suffering Christ with culturally perceptive action and a desire to bring renewal and unity to the worldwide church.

Accordingly, the main positive contributions of the Moravians to mission were that they brought an understanding that mission mentors developed mission fervor, spiritual renewal preceded mission renewal, and in mission theology the atoning death of Christ should be paramount; and a Protestant recognition that it had an obligation to do mission. On the other hand, the foremost negative factors of Moravian mission were their obsession with the physical death of Christ, and an ignorance of broader social issues.

Mission Mentors Developed Mission Fervor

A study of the early life of Zinzendorf supports the belief that mentoring is important in fostering mission concern. The Count's relational experiences with various family members and university colleagues in which people empowered him by sharing their God-given resources created a mission fervor that shaped his life. The New Testament supports this idea in the

ministry of Jesus and Paul. Christ selected and trained twelve (Luke 6:13-16) and then seventy followers (Luke 10:1-17) to be “laborers in God’s harvest.” The apostle Paul imitated Christ in mentoring work associates and his permanent entourage.

Friends provided Paul with special services (Philippians 4:18) and staff assisted him as secretaries (Romans 16:22), messengers (1 Corinthians 4:17), financial collectors (2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5, and itinerant preachers (Titus 3:13). In his letters, Paul used terminology of equality (Romans 16:7) and family (Philemon 10) to describe his relationship with these acquaintances and friends. Like Christ’s ministry (Luke 8:2-3), Paul’s work involved women. His writings record fifty-four men and twelve women that “shared his struggle in the cause of the gospel” (Philippians 4:3). Priscilla in Ephesus, Chloe in Corinth, Nympha in Laodicea and Apphia in Colossae were house church leaders. Romans 16 names ten women that were Paul’s colleagues. He highlights that they “worked hard” in the Lord, and were “fellow-workers,” “servants of the church,” “helpers,” “fellow-prisoners,” and “apostles” together with him in the ministry. Further, the mission journeys of Paul included various ethnic co-workers from only Jewish people in the first outreach into Asia Minor (Acts 13:7), to both Jew and Gentile associates in the second (Acts 15:40; 16:3) and third journeys (Acts 19:22, 29). Since the apostle’s mission strategy was to go to the Jewish synagogues first in the cities of the Roman Empire, he needed both Jewish and Gentile helpers in his mission trips (Acts 16:3).

Like Paul, there were many different types and methods of mentoring in Zinzendorf’s beginning years, which could be used today to promote mission awareness in people. J. Robert Clinton’s work on leadership emergence theory popularized in *The Making of a Leader* (1988), and his work with Paul D. Stanley, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (1992) on mentoring for leadership growth, are helpful in analyzing Zinzendorf’s

mentoring relationships. Clinton describes nine types of mentoring (discipler, teacher, coach, spiritual guide, sponsor, counselor, historical model, contemporary model, and divine contact) that may occur in a leader's life at different phases and sub phases of his or her development. The young Count's family disciplined, taught and coached him in his spiritual development through prayer, hymns, and Bible study. Thus, children's hearts and minds may be inspired towards mission by engaging in the spiritual disciplines. Our Christian homes and churches should include opportunities for children to be informed and challenged by God's heart for the nations. Similar to Zinzendorf, young minds today can be inclined towards God's cross-cultural purposes through music, prayer and Bible stories.

In Zinzendorf's early days with his grandmother and aunt, missionary letters also played a significant role in creating in him a yearning for mission. Information distribution has been important through church history in fanning the flames of spiritual passion. The writings of John Wycliffe, Jan Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, and many others were used to inform the church of biblical truth and move it towards a godly response. Missionary biographies and letters from such notables as Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, David Brainerd, Adoniram Judson, David Livingstone, George Müller, Hudson Taylor, C. T. Studd, Mary Slessor, Lilius Trotter and Amy Carmichael have inspired many Christians to serve God in a cross-cultural capacity. In more recent times, books such as Elisabeth Elliot's *Through Gates of Splendor* (1957), Thomas Hale's *Don't Let the Goats Eat the Loquat Trees* (1986), Bruce Olson's *Bruchko* (1978), Jackie Pullinger's *Chasing the Dragon* (1980), Don Richardson's *Peace Child* (1974), and Corrie ten Boom's *Tramp for the Lord* (1974) offer both pleasure and inspiration in mission. The writings listed above are some of the works used in my intercultural

studies classes at Wheaton College to develop a mission fervor in the students in a similar way to Zinzendorf's childhood experiences.

Furthermore, we need to consider the service of modern technology in the distribution of information to cultivate interest in cross-cultural work. There are other methods that may be used to promote the field of Christian mission such as feature film and the internet.¹ Films with mission themes have not always inspired people in a positive manner. Movies such as *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (1991), *Black Narcissus* (1946), *Black Robe* (1991), *Hawaii* (1966), *Miss Sadie Thompson* (1953), and *The Missionary* (1981) have portrayed Christian missionaries as culturally ignorant imperialists with issues of superiority and suppressed sexual drives that are unleashed to the indigenous people in the stressful situation of adapting to a new cultural.

However, movies such as *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* (1973), *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958), *Lilies of the Field* (19), *The Mission* (1986), *The Nun's Story* (1959), and *Paradise Road* (1997) are exceptions to this trend where western missionaries are viewed with some understanding and sympathy. Since there are less than forty feature films that have any overt reference to Christian mission there is a need to encourage students to write books, screenplays and direct/produce films that represent Christian mission informed by the insights of the discipline of missiology and an understanding of the Christian worldview. It is gratifying to see a recent graduate of our program, Bryan Hudkins, writing screenplays and directing short films for television with these goals in mind. The church and the secular world need to be challenged and inspired by movies that portray Christian missionaries with the same integrity and dignity as Betsie and Corrie ten Boom in *The Hiding Place* (1975).

¹ See Shawn B. Redford, "Missiology and the Internet," in *Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission*, Charles E. Van Engen, Nancy Thomas and Robert L. Gallagher, eds., Monrovia, CA: MARC/World Vision, 1999, pp. 215-224.

A final thought on the implications from Zinzendorf's early mentoring experience concerns the impact that Francke and Halle University had on his missionary impulse. The professor of theology sponsored and spiritually guided the young German nobleman. In Francke's home, Zinzendorf met missionaries from India that caused the young man to acknowledge that the resulting conversation "increased my zeal for the cause of the Lord in a powerful manner." Francke inspired Halle students to go to the mission fields in Greenland and India, and established a center for European Pietism that became the base for Moravian mission theology. Further, in an educational institution that served the cause of Christ, Zinzendorf started the Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed, a student prayer meeting focusing on evangelism and mission.

These reflections on the university at Halle indicate the important role that Christian centers-for-learning can play in the mission program of God. Mentoring students by faculty and staff may empower them towards commitment to Christ and giving their lives for God's cross-cultural purposes. As a faculty member at Wheaton College, I view mentoring students in my department as a privilege and responsibility. It is an opportunity to do what Francke did for the young Zinzendorf that eventually affected the course of Protestant mission. Office hours, emails, phone calls, letters, meals, attending conferences, collaborative writing projects, delivering academic papers, and visits to my home, all play a part in my guiding and encouraging students in mission. Students need faculty to connect with them. Their lack of experience and limited capabilities requires exposure to the wisdom and maturity of those who have gone before so that their potential is more fully enhanced in the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional and social dimensions of their lives.

Spiritual Renewal Preceded Mission Renewal

Mission mentors in Zinzendorf's early years helped produce an intensity to serve Christ's Kingdom wherever he could. His commitment to mission accompanied by a spiritual renewal amongst the Herrnhut Brethren caused a mission renewal. The summer of 1727 saw the Christian community come together for confession and repentance of their religious quarrels, seek God in prayer and fasting, and experience an immersion of the Holy Spirit in "joy and gladness." They believed that on them, as on the church at the day of Pentecost had rested "the purifying presence of the Holy Ghost." Their behavior towards each other changed from this restoration experience, and they began to celebrate together in worship, prayer, the Lord's table, foot washing and festival days. Because of this spiritual rejuvenation by the Spirit, the Moravians desired to preach the gospel beyond the borders of their domain and traveled to churches throughout Europe, and eventually across the oceans of the world, telling their story of the love of the Lamb.

The Luke-Acts narrative of the ministry of Jesus and the early church also bears witness to this connection between spiritual and mission renewal. In Luke 3:21-22 we read, "Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased'" (NIV). At his water baptism, Christ received divine affirmation and the fullness of the Spirit. God spoke to him from Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, both prophetic quotations regarding the missional Messiah. While praying, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and began his work (Luke 3:23). Parallel to the Moravian experience of August 13, 1727, prayer was the catalyst to Jesus' refilling by the Holy

Spirit that initiated his ministry. In other words, for Luke, prayer and the empowering presence of the Spirit impel God's people in mission.²

Similarly, Jesus told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received power from on high—the immersion of the Holy Spirit. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV). Like Jesus at his baptism and the Christians at Herrnhut, at Pentecost the first believers prayed (Acts 1:14), the Spirit filled them (Acts 2:4),³ and they then went out to do ministry (Acts 2:38, 41, 47b). The Holy Spirit came upon the early church to continue the Messiah's mission. The Jerusalem believers journeying from their Herrnhut to spread the gospel “to the ends of the earth” compare to the Moravian believers after their experience of Spirit renewal.

Another similarity between the renewal of the Moravians and the first followers of Christ is the correlation between prayer and mission. It was upon a community in prayer that the Holy Spirit fell that August day in Saxony. Six months later the community at Herrnhut began a roster for a continuous intercessory prayer meeting for the nations that ran for one hundred years. In addition, the Brethren met three times daily for prayer (cf. Acts 2:42b).

² The Gospel of Luke is the only gospel that states that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit when he went into the wilderness. Luke 4:1a says, “And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus returned from the Jordan “and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness” (Luke 4:1b). The Holy Spirit led Jesus into difficult ministry. In verse 14 after the wilderness experience we read, “And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.” Again, the Spirit was guiding Jesus' mission. In Nazareth, Jesus' first recorded sermon begins in verse 18. He unrolled the scroll and read, “And the Spirit of the LORD is upon me” (Isaiah 61:1). In Luke's gospel, the Messiah did mission empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. He did not act on his own initiative. God's Spirit working through Christ guided and influenced him to do God's will.

³ Peter, quoting Joel 2:28-32, says that this was what the Holy Spirit had promised.

And afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days (Acts 2:17-18, NIV).

Peter inserted a phrase that is not in Joel 2. “And they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:18c). He was underlining the notion that when the Holy Spirit comes upon believers, both women and men, they will speak about God. For Peter, prophecy was the main effect of the Holy Spirit among believers whether they were young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, ranked or untitled, powerful or powerless.

Luke-Acts also bears witness of this association between prayer and mission. The author linked prayer with the most important events in Jesus' life. Jesus prayed at his baptism (Luke 3:21) and after a day of working miracles (5:15-16). Before choosing the Twelve, Jesus spent the night on the mount in prayer (6:12). Peter's confession of faith and the first prediction of the Passion were preceded by Jesus praying alone (9:18; cf. 5:16). Jesus goes to the Mount of Transfiguration to pray (9:29). He prayed with gladness and thanksgiving after the mission of the seventy disciples because of his Father's revelation to the little ones (10:17-21). His example led the disciples to ask him to teach them to pray (11:1). Jesus prayed during his agony on the Mount of Olives (22:39-46) and during his Crucifixion (23:34-46). Luke alone related two special parables about prayer: the friend at midnight (11:5-8), and the unjust judge (18:1-8). He alone presented the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector at prayer in the Temple (18:9-14), and Jesus' exhortation to his disciples to pray during his agony in Gethsemane (22:40).⁴

Taking into account the connection between prayer and mission in the early church, we see the following. While praying the disciples received the Spirit that empowered them to speak the word of God with great courage and impact (2:42; 4:31). Prayer is the special obligation of the Twelve (6:4). It accompanied the ordination of the Church's ministers and commissioning of its missionaries (6:6; 13:3; 14:23). Through prayer, the Samaritans received the Spirit (8:15, 17), and Cornelius is converted (10:2, 4, 9, 31; 11:5). Prayer preceded the miracles of the apostles

⁴ The Lukan Gospel teaches that Jesus' prayers were always answered. He received the Holy Spirit at his baptism (3:22), the Twelve after his night of prayer (9:20), Peter's confession of faith after his prayer (9:20) and his glorification at the Transfiguration following his prayer (9:29). Further, the disciples learnt to pray the Lord's Prayer after his prayer (11:1), Peter repented (22:62) because Jesus has prayed that his faith would not fail (22:32), and the apostles preached the forgiveness of sins to the people of Jerusalem (Acts 2:38), which Jesus had requested of his Father at the Crucifixion (23:46). Luke implies that what follows upon Jesus' prayer was the answer to his prayer and the sign of its effectiveness.

(9:40; 28:8). Through prayer are communicated the divine power, inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus, the Church prayed at decisive moments in its life (1:14; 4:23-31).⁵

In summary, Luke not only gave remarkable emphasis to the role of prayer,⁶ but prayer for him served a particular purpose. It was the means whereby God directed and guided his mission of salvation to “lost” humanity. Through prayer, God steered the mission of Jesus and the early church and apprehended the dynamic power of the Spirit for salvation history. Luke conceived of prayer as an important means by which God guided the course of redemptive history (*Heilsgeschichte*). Prayer served as a significant way in which the divine plan of salvation was made known. How much more should the faculty, staff and students in the Intercultural Studies department of Wheaton College follow the example of Christ, the early church and the Moravians, and pray.

⁵ Luke presented the content of Simeon’s prayer (Luke 2:29-32), Jesus’ prayer upon the return of the seventy (10:21f), the Lord’s Prayer (11:2-4), the prayers offered at the Temple (18:9-14), Jesus’ prayer at the Mount of Olives (22:42), Jesus’ death prayers from the cross (23:34,46), the prayer at the selection of Matthias (Acts 1:24-25), the prayer offered by the community upon the release of Peter and John from prison (4:24-31), and Stephen’s death prayers (7:59-60).

⁶ Luke emphasized prayer more than any other synoptic by using prayer terms and motifs. Luke’s Gospel has more to say about prayer, the prayers of Jesus and what Jesus taught about prayer than any of the other Gospels. A comparison of Luke’s Gospel with his sources, Mark and Q, shows that Luke has 16 prayer terms where his sources do not and that these terms appear at significant points in his Gospel. This interest in prayer continues in the Acts of the Apostles.

The Greek verb “to pray” (*proseuchesthai*) occurs in the following texts which are only in the Lukan Gospel: Luke 1:10; 3:23; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 11:1; 18:1, 10, 11. And in common texts: Luke 6:28 = Mt 5:44; Lk 11:2 = Mt 6:9; Lk 20:47 = Mk 12:40, Mt 23:14; Lk 22:41 = Mt 26:36; 22:44 = Mk 14:39. In Acts 1:24; 6:6; 8:15; 9:11; 10:9, 30; 11:5; 12:12; 13:3; 14:23; 16:25; 22:17; 28:8. *Proseuchesthai* and its cognate noun *proseuche* appear 47 times in Luke-Acts compared to 17 in Matthew, 12 in Mark, 0 in John and 16 times in other New Testament writings. Luke records nine prayers of Jesus, of which all but two are found in no other Gospel. The parallel texts of the Synoptics do not mention Jesus’ prayer in the following instances: the baptism (3:21 = Mt 3:13 = Mk 1:9); the selection of the Twelve (6:12 = Mt 10:1 = Mk 3:7); Peter’s confession of faith (9:18 = Mt 16:13 = Mk 8:27); the Transfiguration (9:28 = Mt 17:1 = Mk 9:2); before the teaching of the Lord’s prayer (11:1 = Mt 6:9); and at the crucifixion (23:34, 46 = no parallel text).

Atoning Death of Christ

Not only did the Moravians bring an understanding that mentors developed mission fervor and spiritual renewal preceded mission renewal, but also that missionary preaching should be about the atoning death of Christ.⁷ Zinzendorf's mission motivation and goal was centered on Christ. He was concerned with the representation of the Lamb of God as the sole redeemer and sanctifier of the entire world, and the doctrine of his passion as a comprehensive theology in both theory and practice. In simpler terms, Moravians proclaimed the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ and the atonement to be the basis of all other Christian truth.

Similar to the Moravians, the main issue for contemporary Christians in understanding the biblical basis and drive for mission is Christ and his uniqueness. If Christ is not uniquely the Savior of all humankind, then why did "God so love the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16, NRSV)? This is the gospel that Christ gave his followers to proclaim throughout the world. If this is not so, then there is little point to mission. If it is accurate that other religions have a way to the truth about God and salvation, then why bother sending missionaries to them? If there are many ways to God and the atoning death of Christ is only one way, then Christ's death is a tragic mistake and Christian mission is a waste of time, and money. Like Moravian mission, the central focus of contemporary Christian mission should be the distinctiveness of Christ Jesus and his gospel for a world separated from God.

When we biblically evaluate the missionary practice of the Moravians in preaching Christ as the only way of salvation, we need to consider a hermeneutical method that is not proof-

⁷ The Moravians defined atonement as the work Christ did in his death to earn our salvation. That is, through Jesus' dying he paid for our sins on the cross. This paper also uses this definition.

texting, but approaches Scripture from the perspective of mission motifs of God's action in the world. Viewing the Bible as an interwoven tapestry with various themes stretching over the entire historical expanse of both Old and New Testaments affirms the Bible as a unified whole (Van Engen 1996, 40-43). Because of the limited scope of the paper, we will consider only one book in the Old Testament using this tapestry method of viewing the exclusivity of God's salvation. The Book of Isaiah declares that the God of Israel alone is Savior (Isaiah 43:10-11), and the gods and religions of the nations are nothing (Isaiah 42:8). Apart from Yahweh there is no God (Isaiah 44:6-8), and Israel is God's chosen servant to mediate salvation to the world (Isaiah 45:4-6). Hence, all nations should turn to the Lord and be saved (Isaiah 45:18-22). "There is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22).

The motif of the uniqueness of God's salvation for separated humanity is throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and extends into the New Testament through his Son, Jesus Christ. Peppered throughout the early church record are references to the cause (John 3:16; Romans 3:25-26), necessity (Matthew 26:39; Luke 24:25-27; Hebrews 2:17, 9:23-26), obedient nature (Philippians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Romans 5:19), and suffering nature (Hebrews 5:8; John 1:29, 19:31-33; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24) of Christ's atonement. In addition, four different terms describe varying aspects of the atonement: sacrifice (Hebrews 9:26), propitiation (1 John 4:10), reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19), and redemption (Mark 10:45). To sum up the New Testament's appreciation of the matchlessness of the saving death of Christ, hear Peter's confession before the Sanhedrin Council. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NASB).

Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly difficult in a pluralistic world to proclaim the uniqueness of the Christian faith as did the eighteenth-century Moravians. There is an unprecedented resurgence today of the non-Christian religions that are vigorously challenging the exclusive claims of Christ. To the Hindu, Buddhist, Confucianist, and Moslem, the exclusivity of the Christian message is perhaps the most offensive aspect of twenty-first century Christianity. Yet not one of these religious leaders such as Buddha, Mohammed, or Confucius ever claimed to be God. Only Christ made such audacious claims. Christ is the only religious leader who ever asserted to be deity and the only one that convinced millions of the world's population down through the centuries that he spoke the truth.

Not only on the mission field are there such challenges to the distinctiveness of salvation through Christ but also in Christian colleges. Some educators claim that nearly sixty percent of incoming college students in North American evangelical institutions do not think that the heathen are lost. These freshmen do not believe that Christ is the only way of salvation, and non-Christians are separated from a loving God and will go to hell. How should I answer an undergraduate student from my Introduction to Mission class who asked, "What about those who have never heard the gospel of Christ and had an opportunity to believe and be saved? It isn't really fair of God to condemn them to hell, is it?" Alternatively, how would the Moravians respond to the following comments from another student in the same course?

A Native American grows up entrenched in the ideas of there being many different "spirits." At death, would it be fair for them to immediately be judged for not having believed in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior? I don't think so. It's clear that general revelation is *not* enough to tell all of God's Word, which is why nature was supplemented with the Living Word. I do believe that God is fair, and so, I feel that whatever happens must somehow make it possible for people to simply make a choice between God's will or their own. The fairness of God would require that they, deep down, have some inkling of the truth. How could they be judged for what they had no way of knowing?

In a recent Mission in Acts class, I addressed this issue by discussing the Gentile Cornelius. His credentials before his salvation through Christ were impressive. The Book of Acts describes him as a devout man who feared God with his household, and gave money to the Jewish people as well as praying to God continually (10:2, 4). In other words, he was a righteous and God-fearing person well spoken of by the entire nation who was also divinely directed by an angel (10:22). Further, his prayers and his generosity were remembered before God (10:4, 31). Here was a man who followed the Jewish God and did what was right (10:35).

According to the students quoted above, it would seem that if God were fair then it would be right for this Roman centurion, with such impeccable qualifications, to be accepted by God. However, Acts records that he still needed to repent (11:18), believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (11:17; 15:7) after hearing the gospel (15:7), have his heart cleansed through faith (15:9), and his sins forgiven through the name of Jesus (10:43) to be saved by the grace of the Lord (11:14; 15:11). Then he received the Holy Spirit (10:45, 47; 11:15-17; 15:8) with speaking in tongues and exaltation to God (10:46), and was water baptized (10:47-48; 11:17).

The Bible teaches that God is not so much fair as righteous (Genesis 18:25; Deuteronomy 32:4; Isaiah 45:19), and as such, always acts rightly since he is the ultimate yardstick of what is correct. Because of God's righteousness, he cannot but deal with people according to what they merit. Humanity has sinned and thus deserves to be punished since sin is wrong. If God did not punish sin, it would mean that God is not right. Hence, God sent Christ as a sacrifice to take the penalty for the sin of the world showing that he is indeed righteous since he gave the appropriate punishment as well as forgiving human sin. Romans 3:23-26 (NRSV) states,

Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously

committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

I believe that Moravian mission was correct in preaching that Christ's death took the sin of the human race, and his blood freed the believer from guilt, and eternal judgment. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and therefore the missionary should proclaim this good news. It was the mercy of God through Christ's sacrifice on the cross that paid the price on our behalf. Hence, it is imperative that evangelical missionaries and Wheaton College be reminded of this abiding truth, and witness to the full gospel. As John Stott exhorted, "We engage in evangelism today not because we want to or because we choose to or because we like to, but because we have been told to. The Church is under orders. The risen Lord has commanded us to 'go,' to 'preach,' to 'make disciples,' and that is enough for us" (Stott 1967, 1:37).

However, though this Christocentric Moravian mission practice was exemplar, it needs further thought since there are a number of implications that arise from proclaiming Christ's atonement that warrant caution for our contemporary global context. Let us now briefly consider some of these issues: a lack of contextualization, religious syncretism, indifference to social justice, and extreme subjectivism that may act as hindrances to the gospel message.

Lack of Contextualization

Evangelicals believe that the Bible needs to be interpreted in its original context. Scholars devote considerable energy and time to understand what the first author was saying to the first audience. However, the task of interpretation is not complete when the earliest meaning is understood by the scholar. God's message communicated in those ancient times must then be reinterpreted in such a way that it is correctly understood and responded to by contemporary

people in various times and places. This aspect of biblical interpretation is known as contextualization.

The object of contextualization is to bring the gospel message to all nations in such a way that they understand the truth of Christ as accurately as the people of the early church did. The challenges of contextualization were evident in Moravian mission. For example, the Gambolds' evangelistic endeavors among the Cherokees centered on the death of Christ, which the Indians rejected because the message was shocking and blasphemous to their culture. How do we make the gospel known in human context? Like the Gambolds, our message might be one hundred percent true, but unless it is communicated in a way that makes cultural sense to the hearer, it will be one hundred percent irrelevant.

Looking at this issue in the Bible, we discover that Christ and the early apostles presented a contextualized message. Jesus taught his audience in a way that was meaningful to them. When teaching about the Kingdom of God to fisherman he spoke of fishing and nets (Luke 5:10); to farmers he used agricultural images (Mark 4:2-9, 26-32); to a Samaritan woman at a well he painted pictures of water (John 4:7-15); to the religious leader Nicodemus, Christ employed biblical quotes in discussing the born again experience (John 3:5-10). Certainly Jesus found that his audiences did not always understand his teaching (Mark 4:10-13). However, in Mark 4 he says that the truths concerning the Kingdom of God are available to those who seek. Understanding the mysteries of God are not to be hidden from those who have ears to hear (Mark 4:21-25).

The early church record in Acts has a number of speeches that were contextualized presentations of the gospel. In each case, they were clothed in language and images that had specific meaning to that particular audience. Peter speaking to devout Jewish people used

Hebrew Scripture and Messianic titles (Acts 2:25-28; 3:14-15). Before the Sanhedrin Council in Acts 7, Stephen defended the accusations against him by using the history of Israel to recall that the presence of Yahweh was not confined to the Jerusalem Temple and Israel had always resisted the Law of God delivered by the prophets. Paul speaking to the Jewish audience in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch again used the history of the Hebrew people in complementary fashion to Stephen. The speech in Acts 13 was structured to reveal God's preparation of the Messiah, the fulfillment of that promise through Jesus, and the call to faith in Christ, the Anointed One. For Jewish audiences the Messianic Jews preached about their risen Lord using Jewish terms and biblical narratives.

Luke next records three Pauline speeches that were tailored for three very different audiences. In Acts 14 Paul applied agrarian imagery to speak to the people of Lystra without using any direct Old Testament quotes, yet echoing scriptural truth. Then three chapters later before the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers at Athens, the apostle dressed his Christian message in expressions (17:28) and descriptions (17:29) from their philosophical teachings. Finally, in Acts 20 before the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Paul reflected on his association with that church and exhorted them to "be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). Here he exposed his apostolic authority and fatherly heart to the Ephesian leadership in Christian terminology.

To come to the point, Jesus and his disciples spoke to various audiences in ways that had meaning to them. In particular, the speeches in Acts were examples to the largely Gentile audience of how to present the gospel in a contextualized fashion to varying people groups such as the religious Jews, rural pagans, Athenian philosophers, and Christian leaders. In like manner,

contemporary missionaries need to be aware of the importance of conversing in a dynamically equivalent mode to the people that they desire to reach. The Moravians did not always do so.

Religious Syncretism

Another challenge that might arise in the process of witnessing about the death of Christ is religious syncretism. When bringing Christ cross-culturally to people, all may not quickly acculturate to this new spiritual system. In accepting the gospel, people sometimes draw upon their religious traditions causing a syncretism—a dilution of the essential truths of the gospel by including non-Christian religious elements. In some cases, Christianity merely touches lives in a superficial manner with acceptance being a matter of expediency. In other situations, individuals could find an authentic Christian experience and belief.

It needs to be mentioned that syncretism of some sort or another has always existed with the people of God. Throughout the Bible there are many case studies dealing with syncretism. A summary of this constant struggle is found in 2 Kings 17:41. “Even while these people were worshipping the LORD, they were serving their idols.” In the New Testament, the most prominent syncretic debate was over the inclusion of the Gentiles in Acts 15. The church has constantly wrestled over the issue of how to relate to the surrounding culture. All churches in some sense are syncretic since they are culture-based.

Furthermore, often the dominant culture is the one that decides on the syncretic criterion of judgment, which may be used against those practices that threaten their prestige. This highlights the need for hermeneutical communities composed of multicultural representatives to examine the cultural phenomena under scrutiny in light of biblical truth. It should not be left only in the hands of the prevailing culture. The local church should be empowered to evaluate their own practices and traditions against the teachings of the Bible. Missionaries must learn to

trust the Holy Spirit working in the people to develop and maintain the correct outworking of Christian truth for their cultural context.

Indifference to Social Justice

Another possible negative implication is a myopic focus on the death of Christ and an accompanying reluctance to deal with the broader social issues. This might be said of the first Moravians in the Caribbean who ignored the injustices dealt to the African slaves and concentrated on preaching the gospel. In terms of the number of converts, these pioneering Moravians were successful, particularly among their slave missions in Antigua. In 1791, this station reported a membership of 7,400 slaves, free blacks and people of color (Goveia 1965, 280-281). Other Protestant groups in the Caribbean islands, especially the Methodists, Baptists and Anglicans, copied the missionary organization and discipline that the Moravian Brethren used in evangelization because of their achievement. Apart from the religious conviction that Christians had a responsibility to convert slaves, the Moravian experience had convinced European missionaries that a religiously trained black membership could be effectively used in bringing moral discipline and submission to the larger black slave populations of the West Indies (Frey and Wood 1998, 132). The Moravian missionaries primarily concentrated in preaching Christ to the indigenous people, but in doing so, inadvertently cooperated with a cruel and unjust system without social challenge.

We need to evaluate the Moravian practice in the West Indies from a biblically informed Christian worldview. To discuss this issue we will turn to the Gospel of Luke and explore Jesus' mission to the marginalized. As the only non-Jewish writer in the Bible, Luke sees Christ from a unique viewpoint. He mentions the Lord Jesus ministering to Samaritans, tax collectors, women, and the poor—people who were on the periphery of society.

Samaritans were despised by first-century Jews (John 8:48), yet the Lord went through a Samaritan village seeking hospitality (9:51-56), taught about a good Samaritan who was merciful (10:30-37), and healed a Samaritan leper who returned to worship him (17:11-19). Tax collectors were no better off in Jewish Palestine since they collaborated with the enemy and stole from their own people. John the Baptist preached repentance to them (3:12-13), Matthew was a converted tax collector (5:27-32), one of his colleagues was righteous in prayer (18:9-14), and Zaccheus found salvation by restoring what he had stolen (19:1-10). Jesus' words and actions in the Lukan Gospel declared that by believing in him, the hated Samaritans, and the despised tax collectors could be a part of the Kingdom of the Messiah.

Women were also marginalized in the Jewish community and restricted in religious practice and social functions. In Luke's Gospel the following references regarding women are unique: Gabriel, and Mary (1:26-38); Mary, and Elizabeth (1:39-45); the Magnificat (1:46-56); the widow's son (7:11-17); the woman forgiven (7:36-50); women supporters (8:1-3); Mary and Martha (10:38-42); the woman healed (13:10-17); the woman, and a lost coin (15:8-10); and the widow, and judge (18:1-8). Luke's pattern of women being forgiven, accepted and loved by Christ across cultural and religious barriers, pointed to their inclusion in God's Kingdom regardless of gender, sin or social status.

Lastly, with the poor in the Gospel of Luke, the writer places them either as first on a list of those that God accepts in his Kingdom (4:18; 6:20-23; 14:13, 21), or on one occasion, last on a list (7:22) to emphasize the importance of this group from God's point of view. The poor are mentioned as follows: the first sermon in Nazareth (4:18-19; cf. Isaiah 61:1-2a); the sermon on the mount (6:20); John's doubt (7:22); God's banquet (14:13, 21); the rich young ruler was

disappointed (18:22); Zaccheus and the poor (19:8); and the poor widow's giving (21:2-3). Christ's mission empowered the poor with human dignity and worth.

The Lord Jesus in his earthly ministry not only preached the good news of his Kingdom, but also reached across social, religious and cultural taboos to dispense God's love and grace. The present-day missional church should follow Christ's example and not be intimidated as the early Moravians were in the Caribbean. God has told us what is good and what is required of us. We are to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8) by ministering alongside the marginalized of society in word and deed.

Extreme Subjectivism

A final caution concerning the message of the atonement was the Moravian's obsession with the physical death of Christ. A form of this weakness continues to hamper some sections of Protestant evangelicalism. Moravianism under Zinzendorf stressed experience, which at times degenerated into an extreme subjectivism and mysticism. Emotions tended to control the Christian faith rather than the other way around. The sifting period was such a case where an unhealthy introspection slid into a morbid preoccupation with the condition of the person's soul. There was a strong element of subjectivity that placed an over emphasis on the immediate and direct revelation of God. Through emotional apprehension of spiritual reality, Zinzendorf encouraged special revelation apart from the Bible, which degenerated into subjectivism, and a loss of the objective standard of the word of God. The Count believed that he had received a new interpretation of the Bible, and a gift of special revelation.

Moravianism so strongly emphasized emotion that it impeded the importance of the intellect. There was a failure to keep personal spiritual vibrancy and intellectual rigor in balance. This resulted in early Moravian theology being somewhat superficial and suspicious of the

academic arena. It placed more emphasis on the practical aspects of Christianity to the detriment of doctrine, which perhaps assisted the theological deviations during the time of sifting.

There is a need for prudence when people share the belief that God speaks apart from his Word, the Bible. Often this happens when a movement centers on one dominant leader, as was the case with early Moravianism. There was a tendency to replace the church with the leadership of Zinzendorf that distorted the biblical view of the church and its leadership. The Count might be accused of having an over-exaggerated view of the importance of his own leadership, which pushed the movement towards mysticism. He assumed an improper apostolic authority through a lack of theological understanding and Christian maturity. To Zinzendorf's credit, he modified his extreme subjectivism and the Moravian community then marched on to greater mission endeavors.

Awareness of the Protestant Church's Responsibility

One of the Moravian's greatest contributions was to awaken Protestantism to its responsibilities for cross-cultural mission. Over the years, the Moravian influence extended to the lives of eighteenth century leaders such as John and Charles Wesley, and William Carey. The Moravian, Peter Boehler, who founded the Fetter Lane Society, challenged the Wesley brothers to experience Christ, which led to the founding of the Methodist movement that launched the evangelical revival in eighteenth century England. Carey read "Periodical Accounts Relating to the Moravian Missions" carried in an English magazine and first published in 1790. Addressing the Baptist Brethren at Kettering he said, "See what the Moravians have done! Cannot we follow their example, and in obedience to our Heavenly Master go out into the world, and preach the Gospel to the heathen?" (Hutton 1909, 251-252). By 1792, the Baptist Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society had formed under Moravian inspiration.

Thus, the Moravian movement did not stop in Saxony, but fired by their love for the Lamb, they dispensed their impassioned faith far beyond national boundaries. Whereas most other Protestant denominations allowed their theological and political opinions to restrict their evangelistic sphere of influence, the disciples of Zinzendorf felt free to carry God's word of reconciliation to the remote corners of the world. Stephen Neill spoke of the lack of mission in the Protestant world during the period of the Reformation and beyond and recalled the psychological limitations of the concept of the regional church. "In each area the ruler is responsible for the spiritual welfare of his people; he will decide how they will worship, and in his dominions he will exercise supreme authority over the Church as well as in the state. He has no responsibility for anything outside; other rulers will care for the people of their own dominions" (1990, 188). Since most organized Protestantism was on a territorial basis, it was difficult for the Reformed, Lutheran and Anglican traditions to become missionary minded when confined by such geographic limitations. Further, the Anabaptists withdrew into a survival mode, and the Congregationalists and Baptists hindered any early orientation towards mission by their hyper-Calvinism.

The Moravians were one of the exceptions to this picture, perhaps since as displaced persons separated from their native states and rulers, they had discarded their territorial identity and were no longer reluctant to embrace a global, universal mission paradigm. In addition, the Lutheran and Reformed state churches, as well as their pietistic constituencies, viewed some of the teachings and practices of the Moravians with suspicion. They then had little choice but to follow an independent course.

Significance of Zinzendorf and the Early Moravian Mission Movement

The positive contribution of Moravianism was extensive and the good points are many. It fostered a concern for Christian piety and renewal amongst many Protestant churches in Europe. It kindled a missionary program that reached the poor and oppressed in remote regions of the world. Moravianism reminded people that Christianity needed to be more than religious talk. It needed to be of the heart and emotions as well as the intellect. We need to “love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength” (Mark 12:30). Their mission activities left the work of soul winning to the Holy Spirit while the missionary followed the Spirit’s guidance in speaking and living out the love of the Lamb. These missionaries were lay people who were trained as evangelists and who supported their witness by working alongside the common people in humility. Desiring to identify with their prospective converts as equals and not as superiors, they won them through patience, love, and caring more than through teaching and preaching doctrines.

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