

Robert L. Gallagher is an associate professor of Intercultural Studies at Wheaton College Graduate School in Wheaton, Illinois. He holds masters degrees in education, theology, and missiology, and a doctorate in intercultural studies from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He has worked as an executive pastor in Australia and a theological educator in Papua New Guinea and Oceania.

Beginning with the Herrnhut community in 1722, Nicholas von Zinzendorf created a methodology for missionary leadership selection and training that developed and expanded over the course of his 38-year ministry. Through the far-reaching impact of this methodology, 18th century Moravian missionaries successfully carried the gospel to many nations and established a missiological perspective that would inform God's people for centuries to come.

Zinzendorf and the Early Moravians: Pioneers in Leadership Selection and Training

Propelled by missionary zeal, a small group of Moravian exiles formed in Herrnhut, Saxony, beginning in 1722. Known as the *Unitas Fratrum* and led by Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a German Lutheran Pietist, they developed an all-encompassing desire to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. With a congregation of around 600 people and limited means of transportation and communication, theirs was a unique global movement. During this time when there was a considerable lack of Protestant emphasis on foreign missions, the first overseas missionaries set out from the Herrnhut community as an appointed duty from God. "The Moravians have tended to go to the most remote, unfavorable, and neglected parts of the surface of the earth. Many of the missionaries have been quite simple people, peasants, and artisans; their aim has been to live the gospel and to commend it to those who have never heard it" (Neill 1965: 237).

With people and ministry so humble, nothing but the grace of God could account for the strong methodology of Moravian missionary leadership selection and training under Count von Zinzendorf. From the early beginnings of the Herrnhut community in 1722 until his death 38 years later, Zinzendorf's methods of choosing workers and developing preparatory instructional processes were impressively effective and have continued to influence missions significantly even to this day.

Moravian Mission Theology

The all-encompassing charisma of Zinzendorf's visionary persona is difficult to separate from the early Moravian movement. His theology of mission impacted the movement's mission motivation and organizational structure, as well as influenced the selection and training of the early missionaries. Under the Count's direction, Moravian Pietism developed certain characteristics, including the fundamental joy and emotional union of the missionary with his or her Savior, and the centering of religion upon a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Assent to theory was not an acceptable substitute for experiencing God personally. Salvation was based on a loving comprehension of Christ's suffering and atonement for human sin. Fusion with the living Jesus occurred

through the emotions rather than only through the mind, and theology developed from a firm belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture.

Together with the work of the apostle Paul and his tent-making model of operation, the Count provided the stimulus behind the first Moravian missions. Central to this pattern was the total dependency of the mission on the role of the Holy Spirit. Any results in mission were due to the work of the Spirit of Christ and were never merely dependent on human strategy or technique. Zinzendorf fully believed that the Holy Spirit searches out people to be chosen for the Christian community, and only those souls could respond to the missionary's preaching. Theology simply needed to be presented in such a way that biblical revelation would result in a genuine experience of God's love. The question paramount in his mind was "How does the Bible work in the daily life of the Christian?"

Moravian Mission Governance

Zinzendorf was "sensitive, able, with a global encompassing imagination" (Latourette 1975: 897); he was also talented enough to weave scriptural mandates into a practical vision, which began with the persecuted refugees seeking security on his estate. By creating a challenging program for all those living under the roof of Herrnhut, a global plan of action was established. It started with three daily meetings filled with prayer, song, and Bible study, and a 24-hour prayer meeting that ran every day of the week, with various people between the ages of 16 and 60 years taking turns to lead. Along with these meetings, each individual belonged to a small gathering of three to five persons known as a "band." By 1728, the congregation was divided into 90 such groups for prayer and sharing, with each band meeting two or three times a week.

All of this activity took place in addition to the daily job responsibilities of the village, which were assigned according to each person's unique gifting. This strongly accountable work program complemented the spiritual activities, producing highly disciplined soldiers for Christ. The programmed daily life of Herrnhut became the launching pad for Moravian mission, with the bands acting as the nuclei for mission fervor. These bands were eventually grouped into quasi-military regiments called "choirs," where congregational members were divided according to both gender and station in life, forming a detailed sectionalizing of the community (Hutton 1909: 140).

The early Moravians were deeply serious about their religious and social lives. They regarded themselves as an army whose captain was Jesus Christ. In 1728, when the Single Brethren's Choir covenanted themselves to live in one house, they did so with the purpose of being the vanguard for the advancing army to march throughout the world. "There they would avoid any occasion for scandal and could receive educational training and religious care" (Hutton 1909: 36). Zinzendorf himself directed these 26 unmarried men in their studies of writing, languages, geography, medicine, and Bible for the explicit purpose of preparing them for missionary work. The members of other choirs subsequently pledged themselves in similar ways. For example, in 1730, 17 single women decided to submit their lives to the service of Christ, foregoing any intentions of marriage.

The Moravian choirs became training schools for missionary candidates, each characterized by severe simplicity. By 1730, more than 50 members of the Moravians had been imprisoned for the cause of Christ, and seven years later, the household of the

Single Brethren had provided 56 recruits for foreign missions. Over the years, the choirs placed the training and education of the children in the hands of the church. Those children became the property of the Brethren since they believed that the church had first claim on the lives of its members. The choir houses conditioned the youth for the mission field since the lack of parental and family bonds made it easier to travel to distant places (Sessler 1971: 98-99). This was one of the key reasons for their widespread mission work.

Moravian Mission Selection

The early selection process of the Moravian missionaries relied heavily on the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the people. Zinzendorf did not urge all Brethren to enter mission service. In fact, any candidate who revealed the slightest degree of hesitancy was not allowed to enroll. Before volunteers were fully commissioned by their congregation, their call was tested by a procedure of delay and examination. In most cases this involved the use of the lot to determine God's final approval. Zinzendorf and his leaders knew that, for them, the mission field was still uncharted territory.

Zinzendorf drew clear lines between pastors and witnesses. A pastor required training as a representative of the state who conducted civil responsibilities, though he did not, perhaps, need such a vital religious experience. However, the witness (a traveling lay evangelist), called by God himself to give a meaningful proclamation, required experience, but not necessarily the training required of a pastor. Based on Zinzendorf's theological beliefs, the only requirements for mission service were a liberal supply of "heart-religion," a willingness to be sent, and the approval of the congregation. The Count believed that the essential qualification for a preacher of the gospel was to be so single-minded with the things of God that there would be an overflow of speech from the abundance of the heart.

In the early years, missionaries were not given any formal instructions before they were sent. They were simply encouraged to work at a trade and to itinerate as much as possible. Then, once societies were established in a given region, the workers would correspond by mail to keep in close contact with the home church. The Count himself sometimes wrote or responded to these letters. In fact, Zinzendorf spent much time becoming acquainted with each of the candidates for missionary service. His selection of candidates was based not on people's academic learning but on their quality and heart-felt religious experience.

Moravian Mission Training

In 1737, the Duke of Saxony, Johann Adolf II, exiled Count Zinzendorf from Saxony for "disturbing the church and the state." Though his political ostracism lasted for ten years, it was the catalyst for intensifying the Moravian spread of the gospel beyond Europe. During this time, Zinzendorf moved his headquarters to Marienborn, which became the new home for the Moravian Brethren for the next 14 years. Here gathered those followers who intended to undertake missionary work in various parts of the world. The Count called them his "warrior band" and resolved to train them himself in preparation for active service.

To prepare his missionaries, Zinzendorf gathered around himself an informal group of friends and advisors he called the "pilgrim congregation." It was a union of men

and women whose mission was to proclaim the Savior throughout the whole world and itinerate from place to place in accordance with the need (Spangenberg 1838: 211). Members of this wandering church who had any financial means supported themselves, while those who had little were provided for by the others. Not one was paid for his or her services.

Moravian headquarters and appointments changed often, as Zinzendorf directed individuals' evangelistic efforts in many nations, including Germany, England, and America (Addison 1932: 57). Still, the program strictly observed all the regulations that had been established at Herrnhut. Zinzendorf would share his global vision with the pilgrims in a constant round of daily devotions, which were then copied down and sent to various Moravian settlements throughout the world. Faithful records of the activities were kept, and Marienborn witnessed an almost daily stream of visitors from all over Europe. Among these guests was John Wesley, who in July 1738 recorded in his *Journal* his experience with the pilgrim congregation.

The family at Marienborn consists of about 90 persons gathered out of many nations. They live for the present in a large house hired by the Count which is capable of receiving a far great number; but are building one, about three (English) miles off, on the top of a fruitful hill [Herrnhaag]. "O how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" And here I continually met with what I sought for, viz., living proofs of the power of faith: persons "saved from inward as well as outward sin," by "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts;" and from all doubt and fear by the abiding "witness of the Holy Ghost given unto them." (Ward 1988: 259-260)

A decade after Wesley's visit, more than two hundred men and women were sent out in one year from Herrnhaag on missionary duty. This was the scene of Zinzendorf's most devoted activity, as he briefed the cross-cultural workers before they left for their mission, corresponded with this band of laborers, and counseled returning missionaries on home assignment. Zinzendorf's discipleship format produced missionaries who were prepared to go anywhere in the world and to lay down their lives for the sake of Christ.

With the move from Herrnhut to Marienborn, Zinzendorf increased his energies toward training workers for mission. Within a year, the Count started a theological seminary to train his future missionaries. "For ten years this new settlement at Herrnhaag was the busiest center of evangelistic zeal in the world" (Hutton 1909: 260). The Moravians were kept busy from morning until evening. There were Bible classes to attend, which involved much study and corporate prayer. Languages had to be learned, as well as some way of earning a living. The latter was important since the potential missionaries would eventually have to work to maintain themselves in the foreign country.

The political exile of the Count had severed his final hope of working in harmony with the state Lutheran church, but Zinzendorf believed that ordination for his ministers was important, especially when working among the Episcopalians in the English colonies. Relying on qualified Lutheran ministers to operate the Moravian missions was impractical. For the administration of baptism and Holy Communion to be seen as valid, the Count agreed with the Moravian Brethren to have the Episcopal ordination and church privileges of their fathers renewed. This released him to pursue his God-given dream of reaching the lost for the Lamb.

Throughout their training programs for missionaries and ministers, the Moravians paid close attention to their standards of admission. Only those who felt called to the ministry were admitted to the highly disciplined settlements. As a result, in 1747 the Single Brethren's choir at Herrnhag had 162 applications for admission of which only 50 were approved. The others were advised to return home (Weinlick 1984 [1956]: 194). Formal mission training also had a practical side: the community conducted free schools for the children of the surrounding district, provided food and clothing for the needy and held Bible studies for visitors and the community at Marienborn. In addition, there was a publication house, which produced large quantities of scriptural lessons, hymnals, homilies, and poems that were sent to the Diaspora.

Training Beyond the Borders

As Zinzendorf grew older, he used even more innovative approaches to education. Undoubtedly, his increased travel to the mission stations allowed him to obtain first-hand experience that contributed to a movement away from conventional teaching practice. He sought new ways to train his "warriors" through written instruction, pastoral counseling, and modeling the concept of "the whole church as mission."

Once the Moravian missionaries were overseas, Zinzendorf wrote letters of direction and encouragement, and the circular instructions from their "Ordinary." These practical guidelines were to inspire dedication and encourage the downhearted to persevere, even without any apparent results. In particular, the 1738 treatise was a long series of actions and attitudes that were to be avoided, with a strong emphasis upon the missionary's own mental health and his or her relationship with other persons. Similarly, six years later, the Count's instructions continued guiding the workers in their conduct, with an additional section dealing with Christ and how he is to be presented to those who have never heard of him.

The leader of the early Moravians did not, however, confine himself to written instructions. Zinzendorf traveled internationally, visiting the Diaspora colonies and conducting interviews and conferences with the Moravian personnel. Though he journeyed mostly on horseback, carrying papers and books with him, he sometimes traveled on foot—usually with a company of his pilgrim congregation. Whenever he could, he devoted himself to study and writing. Writing wherever he happened to be, he produced an abundance of letters, hymns, and theological treatises, which continually influenced his followers with his mission zeal.

During his ten years of exile from Herrnhut, Zinzendorf made two visits to America, spent considerable time in England, and traveled extensively on the continent, including a trip to Riga, Latvia. Through all his travels, the Count held almost daily conferences with elders, choir leaders, teachers, and missionaries, counseling and praying with his workers and enthusing them with his contagious faith. His warrior band of apostles, sent to the non-Christians, never lacked volunteers. The goal of their leader was constantly before them: win souls for the Lamb.

Education-by-Extension

During the early 1750s, Zinzendorf was not only training his pilgrim congregation through an apprenticeship model, mentoring his workers via letters and instructions, and visiting the mission settlements, but he was also planning for the future training of Moravians by establishing formal educational institutions. Toward the end of his life Zinzendorf focused increasingly on developing leaders for the mission field. As patriarch of the Brethren, his desire to leave a heritage heightened.

Some of the movement's key theological leaders were thrust into foreign settlements to establish theological education-by-extension programs that aided in the process of leadership development. For instance, Theophilus Salomon Schumann, a professor at the Moravian Seminary in Germany and a person of spiritual fervor, was posted to Surinam in 1748. Here he mastered the language quickly, translated portions of Scripture and hymns into Arawack, and prepared lexical and grammatical aids for his associates. In 1753, John Jacob Friis, another seminary professor from Barby, became the spiritual educator at Bethabara in the American colonies.

While in London, Zinzendorf negotiated the purchase of 100,000 acres in North Carolina where he planned to build a town that included a training college for Brethren ministers and missionaries. Just a year before the Count's death, 36 per cent of the total male labor force at Bethlehem in the American colonies was occupied in some sort of missionary activity. This group had more than doubled itself within the decade of the fifties. By the close of the year 1760 (the year of Zinzendorf's death), as a result of his creativity and energy, the Moravian church had sent out no fewer than 226 missionaries. There were "49 brothers and 17 sisters serving in 13 stations in Greenland, North and Central America, and the West Indies, with responsibility for 6,125 souls" (Schattschneider 1984: 64). In the words of August Spangenberg, the leading Moravian missiologist at the time, "Often have I been astonished at the willingness and desire of the brethren for this service" (1788: 37).

The Moravian Legacy

Though successful in and of itself, Moravian mission impacted generations of missionaries throughout Protestantism. As a stand-alone Protestant model in the 1700s, it set itself apart from Catholic religious orders involved in mission by acting as an independent group—sending out not only single men and women but also married couples and families.

During the 18th century alone, the Moravians served in mission outposts in the Virgin Islands (1732), Greenland (1733), North America (1734), Lapland and South America (1735), South Africa (1736), and Labrador (1771). Their all-consuming purpose was to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth, a passion that was evident in their proportion of missionaries to laypeople, by some estimates a ratio of 1:60. (Danker 1971: 73, cited in Tucker 2004: 99)

Moravian writings and practical mission strategies have proved invaluable, influencing John Wesley, William Carey, and many 19th century missionaries. Although often overshadowed by denominational chasms, Moravian missionary outreach continued into the 20th century:

But as had been the case in centuries past, no matter how low the established church sank, there were always those who sought a deeper spiritual meaning in

life. . . . Pietists and their Moravian successors fanned out all over the world, and Christians in Britain and America were moved to action by a spiritual concern for the native American Indians. The dawning of the modern missionary movement had begun, but only after generations of uncertainty.” (Tucker 2004 [1983]: 20)

Zinzendorf, a scholar himself, supported academic training and attracted a number of notable theologians to his leadership team. However, he did not restrict his selection of workers to an elite professional group. He made room in the Moravian organization for people of all social and educational backgrounds. If they were willing to use their gifts for God, then there was a place for them, dependent on their commitment and availability. According to William Danker, this might be their most important contribution. “[It] was their emphasis that every Christian is a missionary and should witness through his daily vocation. If the example of the Moravians had been studied more carefully by other Christians, it is possible that the businessman might have retained his honored place within the expanding Christian world mission, beside the preacher, teacher, and physician” (Danker 1971: 73, cited in Tucker 2004: 99).

This community of people moving out together, sensitive to indigenous cultures and committed to prayer, intent on preaching the gospel of the Lamb to any who had not yet heard, are missionaries that today’s women and men should strive to emulate. In summary,

The Moravians soon became committed to world missions as a church. That is, the whole church became a missionary society. Because of this deep commitment, this small group furnished over half the Protestant missionaries who sailed from Europe in the eighteenth century. They became the forerunners and models for the growing streams of missionaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Pierson 1982: 6)

May we be inspired toward God’s mission and exclaim as William Carey did, “See what the Moravians have done! Cannot we follow their example in obedience to our Heavenly Master and go out into the world and preach the gospel?” (Davies 1977: 19)

References Cited

Addison, William G.

1932 *The Renewed Church of the United Brethren*. London: Macmillan.

Danker, William J.

1971 *Profit for the Lord*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Davies, Andrew A.

1977 *The Moravian Revival of 1727 and Some of Its Consequences*. London: The Evangelical Library.

Hutton, J. E.

1909 *A History of the Moravian Church*. London: Moravian Publication Office.

Latourette, K. S.

1975 *A History of Christianity*. Vol. 2. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Neill, Stephen.

1965 *Christian Missions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Pierson, Paul E.

1982 *Christian History*. Vol. 1. W. Carey Moore, ed. Worcester, PA: A. K. Curtis.
Schattschneider, David A.

1984 "Pioneers in Mission: Zinzendorf and the Moravians." *International
Bulletin of Missionary Research*. April 1984.

Sessler, Jacob J.

1971 *Communal Pietism Among Early American Moravians*. New York: AMS
Press.

Spangenberg, August G.

1788 *An Account of the Manner in Which the Protestant Church of the Unitas
Fratrum or United Brethren, Preach the Gospel and Carry on Their Missions
Among the Heathen*. London: Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the
Gospel.

1838 *Life of Nicholas Ludwig Count Zinzendorf*. London: Samuel Holdsworth.

Tucker, Ruth.

2004 *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions*.
Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company.

Ward, W. Reginald, ed.

1988 *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol.18. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Weinlick, John R.

1984 [1956] *Count Zinzendorf*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.