

Moravian Moment # 04...
How did the Moravians decide on the need for mission?

The story of the planting of the Moravian Church in the Eastern West Indies reads like an 18th Century “Acts of the Apostles”. Influenced in early life by contacts with Missionaries, Nicholas Louis Von Zinzendorf, an earnest Christian, became convinced that the chief duty of the Christian Church was to evangelize the unconverted, especially the despised and neglected. In due time, God laid before him, an opportunity to translate his conviction into action.

In 1731, when Zinzendorf attended the coronation of Christian VI of Denmark, he met and entered into conversation with a Negro slave from St. Thomas. Anthony Ulrich had come from St. Thomas with his master to the coronation. He shared with Zinzendorf the conditions in the Islands, of the hardships which the slaves suffered and of their need for the Gospel. The story of Anthony weighed heavily on the mind of Zinzendorf and he felt that God was calling him to do something for the slaves in the West Indies. Here was a need and, it seemed as if in the providence of God, Zinzendorf had the very men who could meet that very need.

Zinzendorf, at that time, had on his estate in Saxony (Germany) the band of Christians to whom he had given refuge when they fled from their homeland in Moravia on account of religious persecution. He had grown to love these Moravians who knew what it was to sacrifice all for the sake of the Gospel to others. These Moravians firmly believed that the evangelization of the world was an imperative obligation for the living Church. The Missionary purpose was there and needed only the external occasion to change it to the Missionary deed. It seemed as if God had sent them to Herrnhut to prepare to meet this need in the West Indies.

Upon returning to Herrnhut, Zinzendorf told the Moravians what Anthony Ulrich had revealed to him concerning the wretched condition of the slaves, and of their need of the Gospel. The account made such an impression on the minds two of them, Leonard Dober and Tobias Leopold that they decided to go as Missionaries to the slaves. Moravians were on fire and were determined to go on the Mission for God.

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