

## Revivals And Church History :: Moravian Question

### Moravian Question - posted by gakridge, on: 2011/7/7 23:34

Can anyone tell me where I can find the written account of the two Moravian missionaries who sold themselves into slavery in the West Indies? Paris Reidhead mentions it in his sermon, "10 shekels and a shirt." Where can I find the written account? Thanks!

### Re: Moravian Question - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2011/7/18 16:02

Hello gakridge,

I believe this is the account of those two Moravian missionaries. and can be found in the book: The vanguard of the Christian army; or, Sketches of missionary life, by the ... By Christian army

West Indies  
Leonard Dober

THE missionary work of the Moravians in the West Indies began so early as 1732. It originated in a journey to Denmark, undertaken by Count Zinzendorf in the month of June, 1731, for the purpose of his being present at the coronation of King Christian vi. Some of the brethren who attended upon the count became acquainted with a negro from the West Indies, named Anthony, who was at the time in the employ of a Danish nobleman. This man had frequent conversations with the brethren from Herrnhut, and especially with the elder, David Nitschmann. He told them that he had often sat on the seashore of the Island of St. Thomas, and prayed for a revelation from heaven; and that, by the providence of God, he had been brought to Copenhagen, where he had, through Divine grace, become a Christian. He represented in an affecting manner the temporal and spiritual condition of the negroes, among whom was his own sister, who was very anxious to know the Gospel; and he assured the brethren that if they had a mission in the West Indies it would certainly prove successful.

When the count came to know these things, he wished to send Nitschmann himself to St. Thomas, but that was not practicable; and he resolved to mention the matter to the Church when he should return to Herrnhut, in the hope that some member of the body would volunteer to go. When the count stated the case it greatly affected all present, but especially Leonard Dober and Tobias Leupold, two young men of ardent zeal and courage, both of whom wanted to go at once, that they might preach the Gospel to the negroes in the "West Indies. The two young men were friends, but they did not open their minds to each other on this matter. But next morning Dober's mind was made up. Having fixed upon his friend Leupold, with whom he was accustomed to meet every night for conversation and prayer, as the most suitable person to be his companion in the enterprise, he told him what had been passing in his mind. Great was his surprise to find that Leupold had been thinking and feeling in the very same way; and that he had thought of no one else as his companion in the event of his appointment but his friend Dober.

Anthony had obtained leave from his master to visit Herrnhut, and he arrived on the 29th of July, and in a few days he was introduced to the Church. He gave an impressive description of the state of the poor negroes in the West Indies, and expressed a hope that many among them would be converted, if they could hear of the Saviour as he himself had. At the same time he fully revealed the difficulty of obtaining access to them for the purpose of imparting religious instruction, and gave it as his opinion that the object could only be accomplished by the missionary himself becoming a slave, inasmuch as the negroes were kept so closely at work that there was no opportunity of speaking to them except during the hours of labour.

But Dober and Leupold were not to be discouraged by such representations. They declared their readiness to sell themselves into slavery, or even sacrifice their lives in the service of Christ, if they could be the means of saving a single soul. They therefore offered themselves for the difficult and arduous enterprise. But unforeseen hindrances prevented their at once entering upon it. After the manner of the Moravian Church, it was decided by lot that Dober should go, and that Leupold should remain at home in the meantime

Dober accordingly received his appointment, and the chief elder gave him his blessing in the name of the Church. The young man, not wishing to go alone, asked the brethren to give him David Nitschmann for a companion, till the mission should

ould be established. When the Church proposed this to Nitschmann he immediately agreed with it, although he had a wife and children whom he must leave behind him at home.

On the 18th of August they were commended to God by the Church in a solemn service, and left on the 21st, accompanied by Count Zinzendorf for a few miles, who, at parting, gave each of them a ducat (about half-a-guinea). This was all the money they had, with the exception of half-a-dollar given to each of them by the Church. They meant to embark at Copenhagen, and, on their way, they visited several pious persons, and told them the errand which they had set out upon; but no one encouraged them except the Countess of Stolberg, whose influence upon them cheered them not a little. They were everywhere told of the difficulties and dangers which they might expect from the degraded character of the negroes, the unhealthiness of the climate, and other causes. But they were resolved to proceed, persuaded that they were in the path of duty, and that God would protect them and provide for them.

When these humble but earnest men arrived at Copenhagen they found it there as it had been on the journey—there was no one inclined to favour their undertaking. Persons of all ranks regarded the enterprise as wild and impracticable. They were told, moreover, that no vessel would receive them on board to go to the West Indies on so foolish an errand as that of attempting the conversion of the negroes. In addition to their other troubles, they by-and-by met with discouragement from Anthony himself, who had come under the influence of those who disapproved of the project. But he gave them a letter to his sister, and they proceeded with their preparations for the voyage. Their unwavering resolution at length produced a favourable impression in some quarters, and they began to be somewhat encouraged. The two court chaplains now not only assisted them, but persuaded others to be of the same mind. When the royal family was made acquainted with their design, the queen favoured it, and one of the princesses sent them money to pay their passage, and a Dutch Bible. Several other persons presented them with tokens of regard; and although they had never despaired, they were now more hopeful.

None of the West India Company's vessels would take them on board; but one of the king's officers assisted them in procuring a passage in a Dutch ship bound for St. Thomas's. The captain received them very willingly; and the kindness which they had latterly received not only enabled them to pay their passage, but also to purchase some carpenter's tools and other necessaries. They sailed on the 9th of October, 1732. On the voyage the sailors often ridiculed them, and tried to dissuade them from their purpose; but they were immovable, and instead of listening to this evil counsel, they laboured earnestly to promote the conversion of those who gave it. Their upright and kindly behaviour soon obtained for them better treatment. The voyage lasted ten weeks, although it had often been performed in three or four. In calm weather the brethren employed themselves in making a sideboard for the captain.

They arrived at St. Thomas's on the 13th of December, grateful to the Divine hand which had, in its goodness, preserved them. They were somewhat perplexed on landing, and were considering how they might be able to obtain a living in a country in which provisions were very dear, and in which they were entire strangers, when a negro came and invited them to the house of Mr. Torenzen, a planter. An old servant of his had kindly given them a letter of introduction to him. He generously offered them board and lodging at his house until they could procure accommodation for themselves; in which kindness they gratefully saw the hand of their heavenly Father.

They began their labours on the same day. In the afternoon they went to see Anthony's sister and her brother Abraham, who were both slaves. They read to them their brother's letter, which contained an account of his conversion, and an earnest exhortation to them to follow his example by seeking the Lord. There was a number of persons present; and they stated to all within their hearing the object of their coming, and their readiness to teach all who were willing to be instructed. The negroes at once comprehended their meaning, and clapped their hands for joy; for till now they had thought that such privileges belonged exclusively to the whites, their masters.

They now made arrangements to visit the negroes wherever they could obtain access to them, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, when they had most time to attend to their instructions; and they found greater facilities for this work than they had expected, although there was, nevertheless, a considerable amount of opposition from the masters. The planters, and other white residents on the island of St. Thomas, were far from being of one opinion in regard to the missionaries. Some honoured them as servants of God; others despised them, and treated them as deceivers. And, over and above this, they both suffered from the influence of the climate upon their health and comfort.

Nitschmann was a carpenter, and he soon found sufficient employment to support both himself and his companion. Dober was a potter, but he could make no progress in regard to his trade on account of the bad quality of the clay, and from want of a proper kiln. Nitschmann had been instructed to return in April, 1733: his duties at home required him. The two friends were therefore obliged to part. Nitschmann gave Dober all his money which was not necessary for his passage; a

nd Dober sent a letter to Herrnhut, expressing his entire satisfaction with the work in which he was engaged, and his confident expectation of success in it.

Thus was Dober left alone in a strange land, without any visible means of support. But in the course of the next three weeks the governor proposed to him that he should become steward of his household. He accepted the appointment on condition that he should be at liberty, so far as his business would permit, to attend to the religious instruction of the negroes. The governor was perfectly willing. He had taken him into his service, he said, purely on account of his piety. This greatly improved his temporal circumstances. He says, "I sat at the governor's table, and had everything that heart could wish; but I was ashamed to see myself so raised above my former ideas of slavery, and this new manner of life was so oppressive to me that I was often quite wretched. I could only comfort myself with the assurance that the Lord had placed me in this situation; for I had solemnly promised Him not to seek employment from any one, but to give myself up implicitly to the direction of His providence."

In the beginning of 1734 he was attacked by a severe illness; and when he recovered, he resolved to leave his station at Government House, because it diverted him from his true calling. It was with much reluctance that the governor consented to this. He now hired a small room to live in, and tried to obtain a living by watching the plantations, or by doing anything that would bring him into contact with the negroes, and give him the opportunity of instructing them. The subsistence which he thus obtained was very meagre, but he rejoiced in the liberty that he now possessed in regard to the work in which he had come to engage. Anthony's sister and her brother Abraham were among the first converts, and there were others of whom he had reason to be hopeful.

At the end of April in the same year he was persuaded by a planter to take the management of a small cotton estate at the extremity of the island. This brought him into very direct contact with the class of people whom he so much wanted to serve.

But ten months had now passed away without any intelligence from Herrnhut; and he inquired in vain of every vessel which arrived if there were any letters for him. On the 11th of June he was told that another ship had reached the island; and before he had time to learn any particulars, his old friend Leupold and two other brethren, Schenk and Milksch, had landed and found their way to him. The joy on both sides was very great. They spent the whole night in conversation, prayer, and praise. These brethren informed him that eighteen persons—fourteen brethren and four sisters—had come with them to form a colony at St. Croix, a neighbouring island, where there were plantations belonging to De Pless, the King of Denmark's chamberlain, but which had been neglected for forty years. Dober was greatly distressed by this news, inasmuch as he saw how disastrous would be the enterprise; and his forebodings were painfully verified by the early death of ten of the colonists, who sank under the unhealthiness of the climate.

These brethren also informed Dober that he had been chosen chief elder of the church at Herrnhut, in place of Martin Linner, who had died. This required his speedy return home. He therefore quitted the service of the planter, to be ready when the first ship should sail, meanwhile giving such information as might be useful to the brethren who were to carry on the work which he had begun.

He arrived at Copenhagen on the 27th of November, 1734; and reached Herrnhut in the February following. During the time that he had spent at St. Thomas's he had had the happiness of seeing several negroes embrace the Gospel, and others who were well disposed were afterwards truly converted by means of the instructions of his successors.

This, then, was the beginning of the Moravian missions in the West Indies, which have since extended to Antigua, Barbadoes, Tobago, and other islands, and have been fruitful of blessing to the long-neglected population of those places. The mission at St. Thomas's greatly prospered in after years, and it continues to be a centre of light and a source of spiritual blessing to the inhabitants.

**Re: Moravian Question, on: 2011/7/18 16:11**

love it !

**Re: - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2011/7/18 17:22**

This story has been made into a movie. You can watch it on you tube.

here is the link.

<http://youtu.be/UzuDW1WQqAY>

**Re: , on: 2011/7/18 19:08**

Excellent post. Loved reading the account. The Moravians were great missionaries for the Lord.