

## Mark Ebert

I love history. I always have. History is one of the subjects that kept my attention in school, and let me tell you, keeping my attention was not an easy thing! Being stuck in a classroom all day was not my cup of tea. Of course as I grew older and moved on from school into a more real life, most of what I had learned from those history classes seemed to fade away.

Although I grew up Moravian, I don't remember ever having been told much of the Moravian Church's history. Sunday school was always about the well-known Bible stories, and preaching was just something to endure. The few church times that I did enjoy, as all good Moravians do, were the Christmas and Easter seasons. Those times are what became church to me. After leaving home to live life on my own, however, most of that also faded away—or so I thought.

Then I met Jesus! There is something about meeting Jesus that just makes everything you know or thought you knew different. Coming back to church was not that hard; even though I had not been for so long, I had still been able to make most of the Christmas and Easter services. But now I wondered: Who were these Moravians, and why was I one of them? There had to be more to it than “beeswax candles and lovefeast buns”! So, to history I went.

The first stop on my journey was my own family history of how we had become a part of the Moravian Church. I was surprised to find that my own Moravian history went back

to the early 18th century. Next was to study and understand what these early Moravians believed. What I learned was that the early Moravians *knew Jesus*! They did not just know Him in a go-to-church-on-Sunday kind of way; they knew Jesus in a much deeper way than I had ever thought of. If I were to be a Moravian as these folks were Moravian, God had plenty of work to do in me!

Have you ever thought of what it would take for you to believe in something so much that you were willing to leave everything you knew and even die for it? History records many stories of how believers came together in a place called Herrnhut, and these stories are not easy to hear. Most people came to Herrnhut seeking refuge from persecution and death and with the desire to worship in freedom. As I read these stories I ask myself: Why would these people endure such hardship and remain faithful to their beliefs?

Then there was a man named Zinzendorf. History tells us that from an early age this man knew Jesus. To Zinzendorf there was but one thing in life: to serve his Lord and bring souls to the Kingdom. At one time Zinzendorf is quoted as saying, “My own will is hell to me.” Wow, those are hard words! But God had a plan, and in His sovereignty He brought these people together for the purpose of creating one of the greatest mission movements ever. And the rest, as we say, is history.

Or is it? Is stopping in Herrnhut near enough for us to understand what God had

done in these people? Can we understand how God could lead them to go to almost every part of this world to share the good news of Jesus Christ, to leave family, homes, jobs, everything, and in some cases in the face of certain death? Who were these people?

“History” said real slow, as some here in the South have a habit of doing, comes out “His Story.” Each individual in the history of the Moravian Church has had his or her own “His Story,” which was and is the story of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This story is lived in and through the lives of those who are willing, those who really know Him. As I am beginning to understand this, I realize that the only history I can really depend on is *His* story. Many other historical statements and events shaped what we know as the Moravian Church, and all those have their place and meaning, but only one thing can truly identify who we should be as Moravians: that is “Christ and Him Crucified.” Let history simply identify Christ; only in Him will we find our Moravian Identity.

In Joshua chapter 1, the Hebrews had been led by Moses for 40 years, and all of those who had come out of Egypt had died in the desert. After hundreds of years in Egypt, they had forgotten who they were and the promises that had been made to them. At the river Jordan, God tells Joshua, “My servant Moses is dead. Now go and cross the Jordan into a land that I am about to give you. I will give you every place you set your feet, as I promised Moses.” Moses did his job and now God is saying to Joshua that it is his turn: “It’s your time to make

history. Move on to your destiny that has been promised from the foundation of the earth.”

I hear my God telling me, “Mark, my servant Zinzendorf is dead; now it is your time to make history and live out my story with your life!”

*Our Lamb has conquered. Let us follow Him.*

*Mark Ebert is Director of Volunteer Ministries for the Board of World Missions.*

---

## **Fred Linyard**

My response to Paul Peucker’s article is very personal—not a close critique of the article but a sharing of thoughts that followed my reading.

One sometimes hears the criticism that we Moravians in the British Province—and I suspect this would be true of the Continental European and American provinces as well—are more interested in our past than in our present and future. In view of this criticism, it is helpful to have Paul’s perceptive article setting out the importance of history in helping to shape our identity as a church. It is a biblical insight that history should not be an obstacle to living in the present but that “remembering” can lead us to a deeper commitment to the ongoing work of God. It is crucial, then, that while we may explain who we are by referring to our history, we should always present ourselves as a church for the present, alive to the needs of contemporary society and trying to meet those needs.

I welcome therefore the distinction Paul makes between history and nostalgia.