John Wesley and the “Unitas Fratrum”:
A Theological Analysis
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Introduction

There are many important circumstances which make an investigation of the relationship of the Moravian movement and the work of John Wesley a significant scholarly effort. The practical religious purposes were similar, their religious mood not far apart. It is important to observe that the spiritual relationship between Luther and Wesley was directly mediated by the Unitas Fratrum. The revolutionary forces of spiritual life which Wesley helped loose in England were partially traceable to Lutheran Germany, though he gave few indications of gratitude to either Luther or the Moravians. Hildebrandt acknowledges “the particular medium of Herrnhut Pietism through which Wesley made his contacts with Luther . . .,” but he sidesteps analysis of these relationships. Pietism is “an unnecessary and dangerous detour from Luther . . . Wesley represents the direct apostolic and evangelical succession.” Here Hildebrandt, unlike many scholars, links Wesley closely to Luther. Surely he is correct in this assessment, although overstating the dimensions of the relationship by his desire to avoid linking Wesley and Pietism.

The two principal figures in the Moravian-Methodist movements lived contemporaneously: Zinzendorf (1700–

1“Unitas Fratrum” is more precise than “Moravian.” I shall however use Moravian or Brethren as equivalent throughout.
1760) and Wesley (1703-1791). The conditions of birth placed them in widely divergent settings and this helped shape much of their mature thought. There were differences in the two, but also significant similarities. Both were dynamic leaders, skilled in organization, sober thinkers. Institutionally, each intended to develop a society in harmony with the church of their fathers, but in each case divergence resulted. When we analyze their theological relationships, we find decided variance. Wesley and Zinzendorf disagreed on many important issues as their meeting at Gray's Inn Walks demonstrated.

It is important, however, to underscore the relationship of other persons in the Moravian movement to Wesley. Those possessing the most positive influence were Peter Bohler and August Spangenberg. Zinzendorf and Phillip Molther evoked negative responses. Other important Moravians were Christian David, Arvid Gradin, David Nitschmann and James Hutton. We can scarcely judge whether the positive or the negative impact was most significant in Wesley's life. In “experience” Wesley was helped by the work of Bohler and Spangenberg. On major theological issues, Wesley reacted with vigor against the major Moravian emphases. If Wesley had known only the judicious Spangenberg, his response would almost certainly have been moderate. Wesley's personal association with Spangenberg was not all satisfactory, but it was a far cry from the controversy engendered with Molther.

Several preliminary observations should be made. First, we should note that the main relationship between Wesley and the Moravians was fairly brief, covering only segments of the years 1735-1741. Limited exchanges occurred afterward, with polemics by Wesley and apologies by Zinzendorf, but these few years comprised the major flurry. Even as late as 1771, Wesley and James Hutton remained devoted friends.\(^3\)

The first encounter with the Moravians began on the

voyage to Georgia. On October 17, 1735, Wesley began to study German in order that he might converse with the Moravians, who numbered twenty-six persons on board. This initiated the first Wesley-Moravian phase which lasted until after Wesley's return to England, included his conversations with Bohler, and continued through Wesley's Aldersgate experience on May 24, 1738. This phase was notable for Wesley's journey to Marienborn and Herrnhut, June 14, 1738 to September 16, 1738. A second phase, marked by the beginning of questions in Wesley's mind, began around November 1, 1739, increased in intensity as the "quietism" of Molther gained force, and reached its conclusion on July 20, 1740, when Wesley and others withdrew from the society at Fetter Lane. The remaining members of the Fetter Lane society were constituted a Society of the Moravian Church on October 30, 1742.

A third phase was characterized by important letters and conversations between Wesley and Bohler, as well as Zinzendorf, which explained their differing viewpoints. This phase opened on January 28, 1741, when some old friends tried in vain to win Wesley back to the Fetter Lane society. The most interesting and perhaps most important meeting was held between Zinzendorf and Wesley at Gray's Inn Walks on September 3, 1741.

I wish to examine here the theological questions which occupied Wesley and the Moravians during these years. Since this study purports to be a theological analysis, I shall devote limited attention to the historical data. In considering their theologies, two things should be kept in mind. First, consider that both sides were in the process of developing theological positions. There were some inconsistencies. Second, the background of the Brethren rested primarily on the Lutheran view of justification and grace with particular emphasis on imputed righteousness.

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5Clifford W. Towlson, Moravian and Methodist (London: Epworth Press, 1957), is a good commentary, not systematic, but historical. A major limitation is lack of reference to Zinzendorf's works.
Wesley's position stressed both the imputation and impartation of God's righteousness to the believer.

The First Phase

The first stage of the relationship was initiated by Wesley's uncritical admiration of the Moravians for their resolute courage in the storm on the voyage to Georgia. He first described them as "men who have left all for their master... dead to the world...." After their safe arrival in Savannah, Wesley and Spangenberg conversed and Wesley was asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" This shocked Wesley, who responded that he knew that Jesus was the Saviour of the world. Finally, pressed by Spangenberg, he professed to know Christ, but later in his Journal he confessed: "But I fear they were vain words." Apparently Spangenberg, if not Wesley, was satisfied, for he wrote in his diary about Wesley, "I noticed that true grace reigns and dwells in him." He shared with Wesley his life's work, his education at the University of Jena where he studied languages and "the vain philosophy which I have now long been laboring to forget," a theme which is repeated throughout this relationship. Leaving the university behind, Spangenberg went out to save his soul, then returned to teach for a time at Halle. In this fear of philosophy can be perceived the concern of the more mystical pietists that reason may be a threat to the pure spiritual life.

Wesley continued to admire the Moravians, but the press of duty prevented any significant theological discussion. He learned from them the use of sortilege or lot, appealing to the lot to determine whether he should marry a young lady, Sophy Hopkey. The lot said "No." Finally, on July 31, 1737, about eighteen months after arriving in Georgia, he and Spangenberg discussed the theology of the Moravians. Wesley asked thirty-one questions concerning the Christian life. Spangenberg declared that conversion is a

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1 *Journal, I, p. 110.
3 *Cited in Towlson, p. 41.
real change, having elements of instantaneity and gradation. Scripture is clear on essential questions of faith. When asked the definition of faith, Spangenberg gave the word of Hebrews 11:1. Faith is not merely shown by good works, “By works faith is made perfect”. For Spangenberg, the visible church is “a society of men united together in apostolical order and discipline and endued with the Spirit of Christ. . . .”

Spangenberg speaks affirmatively concerning use of the means of grace. The Lord’s Supper is a means of grace for the believer along with fasting, reading the Scriptures, and prayer. He regarded the hymns as set forms of prayer, but other prayer was to be extempore. To whom were prayers to be more often addressed? He said, “We believe the Son equal with the Father.” Finally, on questions of social responsibility, Spangenberg affirmed capital punishment and the right of the Christian to hold the magistracy, but denied the right to defend one’s life by force, to bear arms, to go to law, or to swear before a magistrate. 10

This conversation gives insight into certain Moravian views and indicates a few of Wesley’s interests, e.g., the nature of conversion, the means of grace, spiritual nurture and social ethics. It is clear at this juncture that Wesley and Spangenberg were in reasonably close agreement on the means of grace.

Wesley soon left Georgia and returned to London, there to meet Peter Bohler. He had confessed in the Journal as he voyaged homeward the great ferment in his mind and soul, that his great discovery in America was “what I least of all suspected, that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.” (Wesley appended a footnote to this later, “I am not sure of this.”) He reflected upon his labor and sufferings, his use of the means of grace, and his moral rectitude: “Does all I ever did or can know. . . justify me in his sight?. . . Or the having a rational conviction of all the truths of Christianity?” 11 This

10Ibid., pp. 372-374.
11Ibid., pp. 422-423.
did not justify. So Wesley searched that he might find a gracious God. First Spangenberg and then Bohler led him toward the meaning of faith as Luther had come to know it. Bohler’s early contacts with Wesley convinced him that Wesley was very serious about the religious life. On February 7, 1738, the two met, and that long and mutually pleasant association was begun. On February 17th, Bohler and the two Wesleys traveled to Oxford. Bohler wrote, “On February 28th I traveled with the brothers John and Charles Wesley, from London to Oxford. The elder, John, is an amiable man; he acknowledges that he does not yet rightly know the Saviour and suffers himself to be instructed.”

Bohler thought one of Wesley’s major problems to be rationalizing: “Mi frater, mi frater, excoquenda est ista tua philosophia,” (“My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away,”) he advised. Wesley could not understand what Bohler was driving at, and this critique of reason was to be one of the recurrent issues. But we may ask whether Bohler was true to his principle of Scripture authority in his famous advice to Wesley to “Preach faith till you have it; and then because you have it you will preach faith.” Wesley began haltingly to follow this “new doctrine” although he stated, “my soul started back from the work.” He preached to a condemned prisoner offering for the first time in his life “salvation by faith alone.” Wesley had begun to move toward the realization of faith and he acknowledged Bohler’s role in it. When later in 1742 Zinzendorf claimed him indirectly as “a son of our church,” he was giving voice to a fact Wesley acknowledged. Zinzendorf had written, “Mein Bruder, George Whitefield, ein Sohn unsrer Kirche (denn unser Bruder Peter Bohler hat ihm und den Brudern Wesleys,  

12In this first phase Wesley’s theological concern was essentially subjective. After Aldersgate, he moved toward more objective analysis.  
13Towlson, p. 49, errs in putting the date 1737. Wesley was in Georgia then. The difference in day between Wesley’s and Bohler’s reports is due to calendar differences.  
16Ibid., p. 442.
James Hutton... das Blut Jesu gebracht....”) 17 (My brother, George Whitefield, a son of our church because our brother Peter Bohler had brought him and the brothers Wesley [and] James Hutton. . . . to the blood of Jesus.)

It is obvious that Wesley was perplexed over the idea of "faith alone." On April 22, 1738, he again met Bohler and informed him that he was now ready to accept the meaning of faith as Bohler taught it, but could not receive the idea that this faith could be given in a moment. Turning to Scripture, he found many illustrations of such a gift. He then concluded that while this was true in the "first ages" of the church, it could hardly be true today. "But on Sunday, the 23rd," Wesley wrote, "I was beat out of this retreat, too." Bohler first brought Wesley four witnesses, then, Wesley remaining doubtful, brought more. Wesley was persuaded. Bohler described this meeting to Zinzendorf, relating Wesley's deep emotion and surprise over all he heard: "I called upon the blood-covered name of our Saviour for mercy on this sinner. He [Wesley] said to me, if he once had this he would certainly preach about nothing other than faith." 18 In fact, Wesley, once having achieved "this" preached continuously about the necessity of good works in the Christian life.

On May 4, 1738, Bohler departed from London to voyage to the Carolinas. He would miss the great day in Wesley's life. Writing to Wesley on the eighth, he urged Wesley to "believe in your Jesus Christ." Wesley began to see more clearly both the glory and the scandal of the doctrine of justification by faith. To Charles he described the hostility he faced when preaching this theme. He then declared:

But the doctrine of faith is a downright robber. It takes away all this wealth (of self-righteousness) and only tells us it is deposited for us with somebody else, upon whose bounty we must live like mere beggars. 19

18 Cf., Towlson, pp. 54-55; Journal, I, p. 455n, for part of letter. A handwritten copy of this letter in German is preserved at Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pa.
Wesley's view of faith had thus been modified by his contacts with Bohler. As Towlson points out, Wesley was aware before meeting Bohler of the value of “faith and the means of grace, and good works, not on their own account, but as believing God. . . would by them bring me. . . to the mind that was in Christ.” Wesley now saw the meaning of faith as the sole way of justification, combining it no longer directly with sacrament or good works as the means to justification. (But it must be immediately added here that this diminution of good works has reference to justification, not sanctification. Good works are the fruit of faith and the expression of the life which has received saving grace.) Wesley had come to see that even his good works were under judgment. “All my works, my righteousness, my prayers, need an atonement for themselves,” he wrote on May 21-23, 1738. He saw that Christian theology must maintain the true order of salvation by giving priority to faith.

Wesley followed Luther in teaching that “a good man does good works.” His order of salvation was, first, faith, then good works. Still Wesley seems to have maintained that the means of grace were useful to the sinner, though they could never justify him. This rested upon his doctrine of prevenient grace. By the use of this doctrine, Wesley could argue that a sinner’s use of the means of grace would be of value, but could never possess any merit. Wesley was vitally concerned to preserve an ethic which prevented antinomianism, yet gave full place to the glory of God’s work in man received by faith.

Having changed his views on the nature of faith, Wesley had only to realize the full assurance of this faith. This occurred on May 24, 1738, as he listened to Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. His testimony was, “I felt I did trust in Christ.” He had thought himself deficient in faith, not “wholly void” of it. Bohler’s witness convinced him that “this faith was the gift, the free gift of God and that he would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly sought it.” Whether

20 Cited by Towlson, p. 56; Journal, I, p. 419.
22 Ibid., p. 471.
these witnesses said anything about "earnest seeking" may be questioned but they did insist that faith is the free gift of God.

Soon after Aldersgate, Wesley was confronted with his first test of faith — to base the reality of his faith upon joy, or upon a "more sensible change" in his life; in a word, upon some observable phenomena rather than in Jesus Christ. Wesley learned from the Moravian Toltschig not to fight these fears, but to trust in the wounds of Jesus. Wesley learned three lessons in this early phase of contacts with Bohler and other Moravians. First, he learned the true nature of faith; second, that the experience of faith may be given in a moment; third, the doctrine of assurance was amplified. Bohler emphasized assurance in his instruction, but not as much as he stressed the nature and epoch of faith. Wesley was acquainted with the doctrine of assurance for his father on his dying bed had insisted upon it as the true verification of Christianity. Throughout all of the discussions with the Moravians, Wesley had consistently been the learner.

James Hutton, the "first English Moravian," had come under the influence of Wesley and remained in association with him for some time, until the split with the Fetter Lane society. Hutton then became the leader of the society. In this early period, however, he was swayed by Wesley's devotion, to the deep dismay of his parents. Mrs. Hutton wrote a letter to Samuel Wesley, John's older brother, also an Anglican priest, complaining that John, "my son's pope," seemed to have become "a wild enthusiast or a fanatic." She suggested that Samuel might either convert or "confine" John in order to restore his sanity. Samuel analyzed John's recent experience at Aldersgate in his answer to her letter and agreed that "perpetual intenseness of spirit... may have disordered my brother." Samuel includes a fine statement of the Anglican view that baptism is a Christianizing ordinance, a view that John held.

23Ibid., p. 476.  
24Cf., Ibid., p. 454.  
25Towlson, p. 49.  
26The letters are found in Benham, pp. 33-39.  
The first phase of the Wesley-Moravian encounter was concluded with Wesley's three month visit to Marienborn and Herrnhut. On June 14, 1738, he and Benjamin Ingham went to Germany, where he met several Moravian leaders and theologians, engaging in lengthy discussions with them. Arriving at Marienborn on July 4, Ingham was admitted to the Lord's Supper, but Wesley was turned aside. Benham declared that the Moravian congregation "saw Wesley to be homo perturbatus and that his head had gained an ascendancy over his heart...," and so deemed it proper to turn him away from the table. Then Benham asserts that Wesley, becoming moody over the refusal, allowed it to distort his estimation of the Brethren. Too, Wesley's lack of facility with the German language, Benham contends, may have led him to a misunderstanding of the Moravians. What may be said of these arguments? The latter argument has some merit. Wesley had known German only three years. Zinzendorf also seemed to think that there was such a problem. The former argument lacks substantive evidence. It is true that Wesley seemed at times in the heat of controversy to go beyond the bounds of pure argument and to become very biting in his remarks. But Wesley's writings do not show evidence of resentment.

As soon as possible, Wesley began involvement in the life of the Moravian community. An early sermon by Zinzendorf, "Can a man be justified and not know it?" attracted Wesley's attention. Zinzendorf stressed that justification means forgiveness, is realized instantaneously, and gives the man peace with God, but not always joy. He might not know that he is forgiven for a long time, for justification and assurance are distinct experiences. Others might know it before the man himself. This is a theology of religious experience in which the whole community provides

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28Benham, p. 40, *Journal*, II, pp. 10 ff. Wesley doesn't refer to this episode. Curnock argues that it may be apocryphal in part or the whole.
corroboration of the individual’s faith. Wesley compared Zinzendorf’s idea of assurance with Bohler’s, to discover major differences. Bohler had repeatedly taught that a person can have neither deliverance nor peace with God without knowing that he has it. The Count equated justification with the new birth, something Wesley would not agree to since he believed in a subjective as well as a juridical righteousness.

Wesley’s second major contact in Germany was with Christian David, whom he heard preach four times. David distinguished between the weak state of those who were indeed justified, but did not yet have a new, clean heart, and those who had received the constant indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The first group lived in the “intermediate State” between bondage and liberty. Such was the condition of the apostles from the time of Christ’s death until the day of Pentecost. David laid the foundation of justification on the objective reality of “something without you, viz., the righteousness and the blood of Christ,” not that which is wrought “in you by the Holy Ghost.” Expressed theologically, he saw righteousness as an imputed quality, a forensic attribution of goodness. Contrition is a related emotion, but it does not produce remission. It may prove a hindrance when grief or conviction of sin are allowed to become the foundation of justification. There is nothing in man to unite him to God. Only sin, said David, separates us from God. Yet, paradoxically, only sin unites us to God, for Christ sees the sin of man and is moved to die for him.

Man is reconciled by faith. This is the foundation of our hope. Faith is the gift of God which lives in the heart, not in the head. “The faith of the head, learned from man or books, is nothing worth.” David told Wesley that he too had stumbled over the doctrine of “faith alone.” At last he was assured by degrees that he was forgiven. Justification is different than the full assurance of faith. There are degrees of faith. This became a bone of contention for Wesley later

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30Wesley followed Bohler in this position.
on when other Moravians insisted that there are no degrees of faith, that when a man is justified he receives the full degree of faith.

Christian David related to Wesley some of the details of the rise of the Brethren, indicating the ethical concern which was felt when the Moravians became remiss in their practice, “so insisting on faith as to forget . . . both holiness and good works. Observing this terrible abuse of preaching Christ given for us,” David suggested, “we began to insist more than ever on Christ living in us.”

Thus, the early Moravians emphasized a rigorous ethic. This lasted for a time until they moved toward the objective fact of “Christ for us” once more. They also softened their standards of church discipline, admitting persons to the Lord’s Supper, even though they had not the full assurance of faith. David concluded with Zinzendorf that assurance was distinct from justifying faith. We are dependent on Wesley’s account here and this reiteration of the idea of assurance reflects Wesley’s concern about assurance. The Moravian historian, A. H. Mumford, regarded the doctrine of assurance as the chief lesson Wesley learned from the Moravians.

Michael Linner gave recognition to diversity in the work of the Spirit, believing that the usual work of God resulted in a simultaneous experience of forgiveness and assurance. In his own experience there had been a lapse between the two. David Nitschmann received an instantaneous assurance, while for Albinus Feder it came six weeks after justification. Martin Dober taught Feder not to be concerned with assurance, but with faith. Augustin Neisser did not know when he received the full assurance; it came by degrees. Arvid Gradin, a Swede trained at the University of Uppsala, gave Wesley his first definition of the “fulness of faith”: “Repose in the blood of Christ. A firm confidence in God and persuasion of his favor.”

32 Cf., Vernon Nelson, ed., Christian David, Servant of the Lord (Bethlehem, The Archives of the Moravian Church, 1962), pp. 76-81. This is a translation from the German of Georg Neisser’s correction of some of Wesley’s errors in his transcription of the talk with David.
33 Our Church’s Story (London, Moravian Publication Office, 32 Fetter Lane, 1911), p. 227.
34 These testimonies are found in Journal, II, pp. 25-49.
David as we have noted made an important distinction between "those who are 'weak in faith', who are justified, but have not yet a new, clean heart; who have received forgiveness, . . . but have not received the constant indwelling of the Holy Ghost." George A. Turner sees this distinction as Wesley's first introduction to the difference between a justified man and an entirely sanctified man.

Wesley also learned something of a theology of the church when he observed the organization of the Church at Herrnhut. This was decidedly a church under discipline, developing the "sectarian" society, or the "believer's church". This influenced Wesley greatly and helped shape his own method of organization. Peter Bohler had introduced Wesley to the idea of the band.

Wesley appended in his Journal an extract of the Constitution of the Church of the Moravian Brethren, which had been prepared in 1733. Dealing primarily with church order, it also included some references to the Moravian social ethic. The care of the indigent received constant attention. In language closely akin to that of the New Testament-oriented Anabaptists, they stressed non-resistance and obedience to the magistracy. Conscience must remain inviolate. "In all things which do not immediately concern the inward, spiritual kingdom of Christ, we simply . . . obey the higher powers." The apostles, "who . . . meddled not with outward, worldly things," were Herrnhut's spiritual exemplars. Marriage is reverenced as "conduscive to the kingdom of Christ," but it must be realized between believers; none of the young people of Herrnhut must plan marriage "till they assuredly know they are married to Christ." Then they must present their plans to the whole church, and after fourteen days they may be married.

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35Ibid., p. 25.
37Using Ernst Troeltsch's idea of a sect as an exclusive society.
38Cf., Christian Century, LXXXIV (August 23, 1967), pp. 1077-1080, for discussion on contemporary ideas of the "believer's church."
39Journal, II, pp. 52-56.
Like Menno Simons, the Moravians provided for exclusion for irregularity, but no reference is made to the ban. The errant were to be publicly cast out of the congregation.

On August 19, 1738, Wesley met Professor Francke of Halle, the son of the great pietist, and was graciously received by Francke. As a result of this meeting, the Moravians concluded that Francke prejudiced Wesley against them, a possibility which Nehemiah Curnock affirms, since the relationship between the Moravians and Francke was poor. On August 21, 1738, Wesley arrived at Jena where Spangenberg had taught and Bohler had studied. The end of August saw Wesley's return to England and the end of the first phase.

The initial phase was characterized by a deep admiration and a near servility on Wesley's part to learn from the Brethren. With the exception of his exclusion from the Lord's Supper at Marienborn, it was uniformly a positive experience, without ripples of controversy. The Moravians showed affection and interest in Wesley, spending long hours with him. If they were condescending, Wesley did not show it. He taught the Moravians nothing but his own spiritual aspirations. He learned much from them: justification by faith alone, the instantaneous work of grace, the idea of the "believer's church," the separation of the work of justification from assurance, the idea of degrees of spiritual life — an important part of his doctrine of Christian perfection — and a more substantive doctrine of Christian assurance.

The interim between the first phase and second lasted for nearly fourteen months. No discussion of the Moravians is found in the Journal in this period. There are two details which invite our attention. First, a statement of Wesley on January 4, 1739 reveals his uncertainty. He wrote about "One who had had the form of godliness many years . . .," and declared: "My friends affirm I am mad because I said

41Curnock reminds us that Jena was the university of Schiller, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer.
I was not a Christian a year ago. I affirm I am not a Christian now. . . . [This] I surely know as that Jesus is the Christ.” After stating that Christian is one who has the fruit of the Spirit, joy, love, and peace, he reiterates this strange testimony. How did he know this? “Why, as you know whether you are hot or cold. You feel this moment that you do or do not love me. And I feel this moment I do not love God; which therefore I know because I feel it.” This came after Aldersgate. It is an extraordinary statement, showing that Wesley still had times of deep dissatisfaction. There is an excessive dependence here upon emotion. He was overly convinced of the validating force of feeling.

Secondly, important confirmations of his commitment to the principle of sola fide are discovered in this interim. In a discussion with the Bishop of Bristol, who called faith a good work, Wesley contended that it is “a gift that presupposes nothing in us but sin. . . .” Called a “papist” by some, he retorted that formerly he might have been thus named, but now saw that no good works, properly speaking, could be done before justification, “none which have not in them the nature of sin.”

The Second Phase

Not until November 1, 1739, more than a year after Wesley left Herrnhut, do we come upon a new contact between Wesley and the Moravians. The meeting opened a second phase which was a time of serious questioning, a period of “transition.” It was marked both by praise and condemnation of the Brethren. Phillip Henry Molther was the central Moravian personality, a man who evidently taught a doctrine of “stillness” or “quietism.” Wesley’s introduction to the fourth part of his Journal, written June 1739.
24, 1744, was addressed to the Moravian Church in England. He expressed a strong desire for fellowship and harmony with the Moravians, hoping still for a restoration of their broken relationship. The events in the fourth journal cover a period from November 1, 1739 to September 3, 1741. The introduction was written afterward. Wesley had delayed writing to the Moravians because he wished not to create any "obstacle to that union which . . . I desire above all things under heaven." Admiration for the purity of their ethic, their discipline, their emphasis on grace and faith, and their concern for spiritual and temporal relief, marked his message. He asked them to consider his complaints against them, found in the Journal. Here the story of Wesley and Molther unfolds, the story of the theological grievances of Wesley which probably prevented him from becoming a Moravian. His quest for peace led him to modify certain ideas, but not to move to the Moravian position. It is clear that Wesley insisted upon a position allowing for the place of good works, subsequent to justification.

Wesley came to London from Bristol on November 1, 1739, there to meet the fruit of Molther's teaching. Molther had been in the city only two weeks, and had already planted his "quietism", the ceasing from outward works. On November 4, Spangenberg spoke to the society at Fetter Lane, urging a passive waiting on God. For Spangenberg, this meant abstaining from the means of grace, especially the Lord's Supper. Wesley agreed with Spangenberg on the power of faith, but disagreed on the question of means of grace. He did not accept Spangenberg's teaching that the presence of doubt or fear meant the absence of faith. Faith can exist when doubts assail. Spangenberg and Molther believed that none should receive the Lord's Supper until he

46Wesley qualified the title "Moravian Church" by adding, "So called of themselves, though improperly."
48Turner, p. 200.
had the "full assurance of faith." The result of this teaching threw many into doubt, confusion and denial of God's gift.

Wesley found one after another who had lost faith. Finally he found one who declared with certainty that Christ had made himself known in the Supper. Now Wesley revealed a basic clue to his method and epistemology:

What is to be inferred from this undeniable matter of fact — one that had not faith received it in the Lord's Supper? Why: 1) that there are means of grace — . . . ordinances — whereby the inward grace of God is ordinarily conveyed to man; 2) that one of these means is the Lord's Supper; and 3) that he who has not faith ought to wait for it in the use both of this and of the other means which God hath ordained.

This was Wesley's appeal to experience. He who eighteen months before needed twelve witnesses from Bohler to support the idea of the immediacy of faith needed only one here to confirm his own view.

Wesley's first conversation with Molther was most important. The ground traversed had to do with faith, the way to faith, and the propagation of the faith. Molther held, according to Wesley, that no man has any degree of faith before he is completely regenerated, until he has the full assurance of faith. Apart from this there is no justification. The joy and love which some used as a validation of their faith was derived from "animal spirits," or natural emotion, and imagination, unless they had the full assurance. Wesley took the precise opposite of these views. A man may be justified before having the full assurance of faith. Wesley's position remains fairly constant throughout his life, although a year later he cautions

49In their discussion of thirty-one questions in Georgia, Spangenberg and Wesley had agreed on the value of the means of grace. Cf., Journal, I, pp. 372-374. If Wesley correctly transcribed Spangenberg's responses there, Spangenberg has definitely altered his views. In 1737, he was asked by Wesley "Ought we so to expect the Holy Ghost to convert either our own or our neighbor's soul as to neglect any outward means?" Spangenberg's answer, in Wesley's transcription, "Many things are mentioned in Scripture as helps to an entire conversion. . . . None therefore ought to neglect any of these, when it is in their power to use them."

No mention is made here of the ordinances, at least specifically, but in this same conversation, Spangenberg and other Moravians affirmed the Lord's Supper to be a means of grace.

against profession of justifying faith apart from the consciousness of forgiveness.

The way faith, according to Molther, was through being "still," not using the means of grace, not to go to church, not to fast or use private prayer. The use of these means would produce the risk of trusting in them for salvation. Those who waited for God were to do no temporal or spiritual good since those who had no fruit could help no one else. Wesley proposed full use of the means, to attend church, and observe all the ordinary means, because, wrote he, "I believe these . . . do ordinarily convey God's grace to unbelievers." To use them does not mean that one will trust in them. One should also do good because many fruits of the Spirit are given through those who do not have them. Even those who have little faith may have more light from God than those who are strong.

The faith may be spread, said Molther, by various means such as the use of guile, the employment of wrong impressions, exaggeration of truth to lead hearers to stretch upward to the truth, or by pretense. Wesley could accept none of this. While Molther felt much good could be done, Wesley saw the grounding of faith on a false foundation. In short, this conversation indicated an almost total cleavage between Molther and Wesley. The structure of the dialogue, as we have it, was shaped by Wesley in his summary. The dialogue shows that Wesley had not budged from his long sustained conviction of the value of the means of grace. Though there was no shift over the basic stance regarding the singularity of faith in justification, there is still a balanced insistence on works after justification, regardless of the strength of faith. Where faith is present, good works should follow. These works help others and strengthen oneself.51 Too, even where faith is very real, there may be doubt and fear to trouble the man.

Soon Wesley set out to destroy the "grand delusion" of stillness.52 In morning meetings of the Fetter Lane society, he

51Cf., Ibid., pp. 328-331, for the contrast between Wesley's and Molther's ideas.
52Cf., Ibid., pp. 354-362, for the attempted refutation of Molther's views. Was Wesley successful? He thought he was. Still, the tension in which Wesley held faith and works was and is attended with serious risks, especially of a return to works righteousness.
challenged the proponents of quietism, raising issues that created the controversy. First, the assertion that weak faith is no faith. He defined weak faith as faith mixed with fear, resulting in uncertainty regarding perseverance; faith mixed with doubt as to whether we are truly forgiven, or may be deceived; faith which has not yet purified the heart. Almost all new believers experience such debilities. Yet weak faith is real faith, as Wesley proceeds to prove from Scripture passages, e.g., Peter failed, and sinned against Christ even though Christ had prayed that his faith not fail; or, as Jesus said, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Certainly these people, Peter and the disciples, were justified, though they did not have clean hearts. So, Wesley contended that there are degrees of faith.

Secondly, he took up the Molther declaration that faith is the Christian’s only duty. This by Wesley’s criteria was contrary to the principle of the complementary character of law and gospel. The Christian is to obey God's commands, joyously, but still with the realization of doing that which He wills. “To desire to do what God commands, but not as a command, is to affect, not freedom, but independency.”

Wesley attempted to summarize Molther’s view regarding faith:

They affirmed also that there is no commandment in the New Testament, but ‘to believe’; that no other duty lies upon us; and that when a man does believe he is not bound or obliged to do anything which is commanded there . . . ; but may or may not use any of these things (being in no bondage), according as he finds his heart free to it. 53

Molther recognizes faith as God’s gift to those who wait for it. Faith which saves is “gift.” At no time can it be called the result of obedience to God’s command. In this last point Wesley would heartily concur, but he rejected the waiting aspect of Molther’s thought.

Thirdly, Wesley dealt with the use of ordinances, which Molther and Spangenberg insisted should not be used by the

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unbeliever and hold no value for the believer. The means of grace may be used or declined as the believer desires; it is of no moment. Christ is the only means of grace. This Wesley attacked proceeding from a study of the Pauline question, "Why are ye subject to ordinances?" Wesley asserted that this pertained to Jewish laws and had no reference to the ordinances of Christ, which Christ himself commanded us to follow. His commands are binding on us. Wesley admitted that "means of grace" was an extra-Biblical term, but affirmed that the sense of it was true to Scripture. The means are used to convey the grace of God, either to believers or unbelievers (by unbelievers, Wesley means those who are seekers under prevenient grace, but not yet justified). He contended that the Lord's Supper is a converting ordinance, not a confirmation. Appealing to "experience", he showed that it was at the sacrament that many first were moved toward God, perhaps by conviction of sin. "Now, one single instance of this kind," he wrote, "overthrows the whole assertion [of Molther]." The apostles of Jesus, "who were then unconverted, . . . who (in the full sense of the word) were not believers . . . ," were commanded to share in the Supper.

The Lord's Supper was established by Christ to be a means of conveying grace for man in every condition, whether prevenient grace, or justifying and sanctifying grace. The sacrament is for those who want grace for restraint of sin, for forgiveness, or for renewal in the image of God. No preparation but a desire to receive as God gives is requisite to the communicant; no fitness but the sense of one's sinfulness; "everyone who knows he is fit for hell being just fit to come to Christ. . . ."

Good works were continually stressed by Wesley as necessary to the life of the good man. Such actions as prayer, scripture reading and communicating are mentioned. But his thought carried him beyond the personal center to others around him. Thus his ethic included an insistence on "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, . . . and visiting or relieving
those that are sick or in prison."\(^5^4\)

The second phase concluded with Wesley's withdrawal from the society at Fetter Lane, after he had read a paper describing the errors of the Moravians. This phase was characterized by analysis and debate as Wesley attacked Molther's ideas with great vigor. In fact, Molther is Wesley's major contact with the Moravians in this period.

Some observations may now be made. First, the concern of Wesley for the "means of grace" was long standing, not something that grew out of the debate with Molther. This was well known to Spangenberg, who wrote to the Moravian brethren describing the Wesleyan position that Holy Communion is a means of grace and that a man can be converted by it. Spangenberg asked his colleagues to accept Wesley in love and be patient toward him.\(^5^5\) When Wesley visited Herrnhut in 1738 he was treated with Christian kindness. Secondly, we should note that Wesley's arguments were addressed mainly to Molther, even though others were involved in presenting the idea of "stillness", including Spangenberg. Molther's vigorous presentation of quietism did more than anything else to fracture relationships. Spangenberg was more tractable. Moravian historians differ in their analysis of the Wesley-Moravian problem. A. H. Mumford called Molther a "poor, half-baked enthusiast . . . who had just joined the Moravian Church," a man who disgusted Wesley with his "wild talk."\(^5^6\)

Thirdly, Wesley did not judge the entire Moravian Church by the teachings of Molther. The preface to the second journal, written September 29, 1740, shows that Wesley was still friendly toward the church, but troubled by the expressions of quietism. He was also concerned about their failure to admit that a man might be justified by faith and yet not have a clean heart. He expressed the belief that he was an


\(^{55}\)Towlson, p. 46.

\(^{56}\)J. Taylor Hamilton, *A History of the . . . Moravian Church*. (Bethlehem, Times Publishing Co., 1900), p. 89, properly sees the antithesis. Mumford, p. 231f, saw it as the "difference in temperaments," and as showing "how good men see different sides of Christian truth."
instrument of God sent to “open the intercourse between the English and the Moravian Church.” Wesley did not believe that these doctrines of Molther represented the true faith of the Moravians. Thus Wesley did not issue a blanket judgment.\textsuperscript{57}

The Third Phase

On January 28, 1741, two old friends, now Moravians, came to urge Wesley to return to the Fetter Lane society. He declined because he considered the Moravian scheme a mystical, not a Biblical approach. Guile could be found in their words, they despised the “daily cross”, and conformed in appearance to the world. Their zeal for good works was limited to themselves.\textsuperscript{58} Still Wesley had not closed his mind to reunion.

The Moravians continued efforts to win Wesley to their church, inviting him to a lovefeast at Fetter Lane on May 1, 1741. Here theological issues were again raised. Bohler and Spangenberg debated with Wesley over the meaning of the new creature. A justified man, said Spangenberg, is a new creature, but the old man remains in us until death. The old man has a corrupt heart, the new man a clean heart, and the clean heart is stronger. This in general was the experience of the Moravians, he asserted. Wesley’s followers at the lovefeast affirmed a real deliverance from corruption, but Spangenberg with much emotion warned them of delusion. Only at death might the inner corruption of the soul be cleansed. Spangenberg was here denying an infused righteousness such as Wesley taught. In his \textit{Idea Fidei Fratrum}, Spangenberg treated sanctification as a unitary part of justification, contained in justification. “Sanctification is so intimately connected with justification. . . . God does neither change any one so suddenly, . . . as to make him incapable of sinning. . . . Jesus Christ is our righteousness.”\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Journal}, I, pp. 429-431.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 448-449.
The debate signalled the beginning of a controversy over whether righteousness is infused or imputed. Properly speaking, Wesley contended for both imputed and infused righteousness, while the Moravians contended that all righteousness given to man is imputed. The idea of justification by faith alone and assurance dominated the first phase. The teaching of the use of the means of grace and the meaning of good works characterized the second phase. Here in the third phase, the question of imputed and/or infused righteousness prevailed in the debates.

Peter Bohler picked up the argument by likening the old nature to an infected tooth, which though removed bit by bit, can never be totally removed. A root remains and “sometimes will ache, too.”

The question of imputed or infused righteousness was the major topic of the important meeting between Wesley and Count Zinzendorf at Gray’s Inn Walks, September 3, 1741. Wesley wrote the essence of their conversation in Latin and did not translate it. In the conversation, Zinzendorf referred to a letter written by Wesley on August 8, 1740 to the “Church of God at Herrnhut.”60 This important document forms the backdrop of the Wesley-Zinzendorf dialogue, and should therefore be reviewed. The letter raised issues which Wesley thought vital to theology and ethics. He repeated the arguments about whether the heart may be truly cleansed from sin or not; the liberty of the Christian from any duty but faith; the worldly conformity of the Moravians; their desire to avoid persecution and cross bearing; the use of dissimulation and equivocation, not having a “frank, open carriage to all men,” their pretending something that they were not; and the having faith which justifies without knowing it.

Wesley further complained in the letter that the Moravians were sectarian in the extreme. “I have scarce heard one Moravian brother in my life own his church to be wrong in anything. . . . Many of you I have heard speak of your church as if it were infallible. . . .” He charged the Moravians with an

authoritarian structure. They preferred the mystical interpretation of the Bible over the "ancient" interpretation. Of special interest is Wesley's contention that the Moravians "philosophize on almost every part of it [scripture] to accommodate it to the mystic theory." The Moravians, especially Bohler, had criticized Wesley for distorting scripture by the use of reason, and now Wesley returns the indictment. One need only read the text of the dialogue between Zinzendorf and Wesley to see that both men freely used reason. Their language was not limited to the very words of Scripture.

In the Gray's Inn Walks meeting, the two men first sparred over the "change" in Wesley's religion. Wesley denied any change. Zinzendorf then attacked Wesley on the question of "sinful Christians," arguing against Wesley that all men are sinners until death. Wesley had been "mixed up" when he came to Herrnhut, and his confusion had increased. Zinzendorf acknowledged that the Moravians had wronged Wesley in their conflict and he had commissioned Spangenberg to come to England and correct matters. Spangenberg however had written Zinzendorf that no success was achieved because Wesley "preferred fame to peace."

Wesley then proceeded to state his major grievances with the Moravians: the questions of Christian perfection and the means of grace. Zinzendorf contended there can be no inherent perfection in this life. All our perfection is in Christ, imputed, not imparted. The Christian is indeed holy, not subjectively, but "in Christ." Christians are not holy in se, as Wesley contended. "No one has any holiness in se." Wesley's view that the perfected believer has the full imago Dei was qualified by Zinzendorf to mean "legal, not evangelical holiness. Evangelical holiness is faith." Holiness doesn't "belong" to the believer, Zinzendorf insisted, but to Christ.

Wesley then presented the idea of growth in holiness, but Zinzendorf countered that when one is justified he is fully sanctified. There is no "degree" of sanctity. "The event of sanctification and justification is completed in one instant.
Thereafter it neither increases or decreases.” At the time of justification, one is perfected in love, not freed from sin. Zinzendorf used an analogy to clarify his position. When a piece of lead is changed to gold, it remains gold the first, second, and third day. Thus, it is renewed day by day, but it never becomes “more gold” than it was the first day. The whole issue of degrees shows the difference between the views of an objective or a subjective righteousness. If man actually receives righteousness, then it may be given in degrees, but if it is only imputed, then he has the righteousness of Christ.

Finally, to Wesley’s inquiry about dying more and more to the world, Zinzendorf replied, “We reject all ‘denials’ . . . . As believers, we do as we please and nothing else. We heap scorn on all ‘mortifications’. No purification is prerequisite to love’s perfection.” Wesley promised to consider all that he had heard from Zinzendorf, but clearly his own views stood in direct antithesis to Zinzendorf’s. Benham’s analysis of the discussion at Gray’s Inn points up the differences:

Wesley desired to give a prominent place in his system of the Christian religion to the doctrine of an active love, proceeding from the new birth and faith; and manifesting itself in striving after holiness and christian perfection, and to the doctrine of the furtherance of this active love by the means of grace in the church. Zinzendorf on the other hand allowed of none other than a grateful love, proceeding from the . . . heart of a pardoned sinner . . . .

Throughout the arguments, Wesley returned again to his sources of knowledge and authority: scripture, reason, and experience. A letter to James Hutton underscored his dependence on scripture: “I think the Brethren wrong in a few things . . . because I believe the Bible.” The practice of guile was contrary to the “plain, artless, blunt” character of the Bible, asserted Wesley.

The struggle was not ended by 1744 when Wesley penned his preface to the fourth part of his journal. Several major tracts and letters were yet to come. The Moravian apologies belong to this later period, too. With little variation, Wesley’s

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61 Benham, p. 112.
writings repeat the same issues raised in earlier debate. In 1745, he wrote *A Short View of the Difference Between the Moravian Brethren Lately in England and the Rev. Mr. John and Charles Wesley; A Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend; and A Second Dialogue*. The first essay was written that Wesley might “guard such as are simple of heart against being taken in by these cunning hunters [the Moravians].” The Moravians made void the law through faith, while Wesley established it, i.e., the Moravians undercut the need of good works flowing out of a good life. The dialogues feature two speakers, the antinomian and his friend. Wesley is obviously the “friend.” A major argument between them centers on the use or abuse of reason. The antinomian responded that men abuse reason so it were best to avoid it. Then “friend” rejoined, “You are reasoning against reason.” This emphasis runs throughout the dialogue.

Wesley raised the issue of observing God’s laws, which the Moravians confused with legalism. The crucial problem, as Moravian historians recognize, was that Wesley felt the Moravian emphases were antinomian, and the Moravians believed that Wesley returned to a works righteousness. Faith and works united seemed to them to cut the foundation away from the work of Christ. This issue prevails in the second dialogue. The questions of God’s righteousness and inherent righteousness were distinguished by the Moravian spokesmen. The antinomian charged the friend with knowing only “the righteousness of inherent qualities, dispositions, and works.” Wesley believed that all righteousness was of Jesus Christ, but also that His righteousness could be imparted to a Christian man.

In his *Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ* (1762), Wesley declared his reluctance to use the terminology “imputed righteousness.” Since the antinomians had so abused the idea to “justify the grossest abominations,” it seemed to make Christ the “minister of sin.” If the personal obedience of Christ becomes mine when I believe, then how

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63 *Works*, X, pp. 201-204, 266-276, 276-284.
can I add anything to it by my own works or obedience? Why should any attempt be made at obedience? Wesley, in attacking "stillness", was not opposed to the doctrine of *sola fide*. Benjamin Ingham had interpreted the quietism of the Moravians as an expression of Luther's famous principle, a notion Wesley was at pains to correct. However, Wesley does at times criticize Luther for enunciating a principle which he thought tended to weaken ethical response. He does not accuse Luther of quietism, but for the tendency of his teaching. Unfortunately, he does not adequately respect Luther's insistence on the ethic of the good man, as expressed in Luther's treatise *The Freedom of the Christian Man*.

Wesley does not criticize Moravian laymen, but rather praises their sincere love for Christ. But he attacked the teachers, assailing them as "no better than a kind of Protestant Jesuits." This kind of bitter attack seems more and more a part of Wesley's response. Christians must be warned about the "German wolves (falsely called Moravians)." On November 27, 1750, writing to George Stonehouse, Wesley complained at length. First, he questioned the use of the title "Moravian," because only a few were Moravian born. That Parliament had in 1749 recognized the Moravians as "an ancient Protestant Episcopal Church" was "putting . . . a cheat upon so august an assembly." Wesley was justified in questioning their use of the title "Moravian", but wrong in his hard words. Further, Wesley questioned the ingrown character of the Brethren, and their condescending attitude to outsiders. "I do not admire their confining their beneficence to the narrow bounds of their own society." In view of the energetic Moravian missionary efforts, this is invalid and uncharitable, but it seemed to Wesley to be the consequence of their emphasis on "stillness".

On September 15, 1750, having read Zinzendorf's autobiography, Wesley sniped at him again. "Was there ever such a Proteus under the sun as this Lord Freydeck, Domine

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65 *Journal*, III, pp. 258-261 for letter to Ingham.
It is true that he has almost as many names as he has faces or shapes.” He fumed over the “amazing compound of nonsense” in the hymnal published by Zinzendorf. Wesley could not endure the sentimentality of some of the hymns, but translated others and used them in his own hymnal. Among these was Zinzendorf’s “Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness,” and “O Thou, to Whose All-Searching Sight.”

At various junctures, the union of Moravians and Methodists seemed possible, as in December 1745. The Wesleys asked the Moravians at Marienborn to consider points of agreement, points that could be allowed to rest, and then to consider how a basis of union might be reached. However, conditions seemed to have moved past recovery. The name calling and the general nature of the debate after this time indicated that the whole relationship had deteriorated too greatly.

The Moravian Defense

What may be said about the various charges in which Wesley takes a leading role? Were Wesley’s attacks fair and were his arguments sound? There are both positive and negative aspects in the relationship. Wesley adopted the Moravian (Lutheran) emphasis on faith, the instantaneous work of grace, and the doctrine of assurance, as well as lesser ideas. He reacted against their use of Scripture, their rejection of reason, their diminution of works, resistance to the means of grace, and their disregard for law and command. He rejected the Moravian emphasis on imputed righteousness, rejection of degrees of faith and sanctity, their disbelief in present cleansing from sin, and their general demeanor and response to society, including their sectarian character. Some of these invite our attention for comparison and contrast.

68Ibid., p. 495.
69Ibid., p. 389.
Most significant was the question whether the Moravians by extreme emphasis on faith destroyed any ethical base, or whether Wesley by his linking faith and works did move toward Pelagianism. Did Wesley weaken *sola fide* or undercut the distinctive work of Christ as Saviour, to which there could be no complement. We may appreciate Towlson’s mediation of the question, when he suggests that the Moravians were mistaken in thinking Wesley untrue to *sola fide*, and that Wesley was wrong to think the Moravians unconcerned about ethics.\(^1\) There is much merit to the thesis, but it is not adequate. Undoubtedly, the Moravians were concerned for ethics — their rigorous discipline in the societies at Marienborn and Herrnhut, and in England, amply demonstrates this. However, they faced the familiar dilemma of a weakened emphasis on good works in their strong insistence upon the importance of faith. Wesley preserved the genius of faith, but hedged this doctrine with safeguards against antinomianism by insisting that a good man will show his faith by good works. Wesley was able to maintain what is always a precarious balance. Some of Wesley’s followers have not possessed his theological perspicuity and have often drifted toward or into a Pelagian position.

Both interpretations, Molther’s and Wesley’s, require rigorous safeguards; both are susceptible to extremes. Molther was a man of singular mind, not careful enough to protect both *sola fide* and ethics. Wesley was more wise. Yet, we must ask if his insistence on the value of the ordinance to a sinner may be construed as good works which contribute to salvation? Is communicating a good work to the unjustified man? Wesley contended that all his prayers, communicating, and good deeds were tainted by his sin. If this is the case, how can the sacrament help one to God? The answer appears to be found in Wesley’s concept of prevenient grace. All good works, so called, are accomplished by the grace of God which lies before the human effort. The act of communicating is an expression of

\(^1\)Towlson, p. 166.
God’s grace at work even in the sinner. The act is of value because of God’s grace in it.

On some of the questions, there is less room for mediation than on the question just analyzed. At times the controversy over perfection seemed to Wesley a strife about words, but always it developed that a basic difference of theological perspective prevented concord. Wesley did not believe in “sinless perfection,” but he did believe in an infused righteousness. The Moravians could not concede this kind of righteousness.

Was Wesley just and unprejudiced in his assessment of the Brethren? The Moravians take the position that Wesley was not correct in his analysis of their theology. He was criticized for making his attack a personal vendetta for the supposed mistreatment and slights he received from the Brethren. James Hutton advised,

John Wesley, being resolved to do all things himself . . . and having mixed the works of the law with the Gospel as a means of grace, is at enmity with the Brethren. Envy is not extinct in him.

Hutton attributed Wesley’s displeasure to his “not being thought so much of as formerly.”72 Knowing the influence of Wesley’s theological heritage with its synergism, we cannot accept this critique as valid. The Brethren were with good reason offended at Wesley’s publications against them, especially the fourth journal. Wesley, however, had delayed publication for three years due to his desire to avoid hindrances to union.73 Perhaps the watershed for Moravian-Methodist relations was the meeting of Wesley and Zinzendorf at Gray’s Inn Walks. It appears that Zinzendorf took the offensive in this dialogue. In any event, the two remained unreconciled. Benham, the Moravian apologist, calls this meeting an “open rupture” between Zinzendorf and Wesley. He is probably correct. Franz Hildebrandt thinks we should see in the Gray’s Inn Walks meeting the fundamental difference between Moravian and Methodist spirituality. He does not recognize that the major differences were not over

72Cited in Benham, pp. 46-47. Letter from Hutton to Zinzendorf. See also Forell, xv.
spirituality or pietism, but over basic theological positions such as faith and ethics. Hildebrandt's vigorous rejection of pietism may lead him into this error. Zinzendorf himself lends support to this refutation of Hildebrandt. When Bishop Gibson of London identified the Moravians and the Methodists as essentially one, Zinzendorf wrote that Methodism was "the old opus operatum, and sadduceeism become phariseeism, and now transmuted into . . . essenism." Zinzendorf, in a series of articles, letters and books, dealt with the charges leveled at the Brethren by various opponents. Ordinarily he does not identify them by name. He acknowledged that the Brethren had made mistakes, one of which was the union with the Brethren of "some good English Christians . . . to the few Brethren that were in England." When some of these became disaffected, they departed. Others were not admitted to the society and this created scandal for the Moravians. This statement of Zinzendorf has clear reference to Wesley and others, as is evident from a footnote which follows the line, "But now some of those who had seemed to be our spiritual children, attacked us." The footnote reflects Zinzendorf's anguish,

Very well, but what ailed us to attack them also? . . . I therefore . . . ask Messers John and Charles Wesley pardon for having given my opinion of them when I had no manner of right so to do. These Gentlemen it is true make very free with me. They may do as they please; it may be it is their way, but it was never mine. . . . It was a Deviation.

It is not easy to assess the influence of the disenchanted people who broke with Moravianism, some of whom were in contact with Wesley. We know that Zinzendorf wrote The Plain Case . . . of the Unitas Fratrum as a defense of the Brethren in England. When in 1748-1749 the Parliament considered whether to grant episcopal status to the Moravian Church through the Church of England, there was a protracted

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74Hildebrandt, pp. 199-200.  
75Benham, p. 165.  
76Nicholas von Zinzendorf, The Plain Case of the Representatives of the People known by the name of the Unitas Fratrum. (London: John Beecroft, 1754), pp. 10-12.
conflict. The bill was presented on February 9, 1748 and approved May 26, 1749. One speaker called the Moravians "a new sect of a new religion," which like the Catholics submit to a pope. "I am at a loss," said he, "whether I shall style the Petitioners, Jesuits, papists, or Moravians." He advised rejection of the petition, because the Brethren were deemed destructive of government and, if they received legal status, should be prevented from making converts. All who joined this society should be punished. The Parliament approved the bill, but in the face of opposition.\textsuperscript{77}

Zinzendorf, like many other writers, complained that his opponents attacked him without thoroughly reading his works, reading only single lines here and there. Citing Luther, he complained,

\begin{quote}
They cry out 'Rash'  
'Tis wrong,' 'Tis trash 
Yet ne'er have read it o'er.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

Did Wesley read Zinzendorf in this manner? Did he depend primarily on verbal exchanges which lend themselves to misunderstanding? Wesley did read Zinzendorf and quoted him in his own written documents.\textsuperscript{79} In each of these citations, Wesley gives only a sentence from Zinzendorf's works. This may account for Zinzendorf's criticism, but does not prove that Wesley only read sentences here and there out of context.

Zinzendorf sought to defend the Moravians against the charges which Wesley brought but he does not mention Wesley by name. It is obvious that he has Wesley in mind, for his answers are to the precise charges that Wesley made. He may be speaking to others as well. He defined the nature of the attacks as those against his person, his office, the life and conversation of the Moravians. The Moravians had suffered before the magistracy; their words had been tortured to a new meaning.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{77}Reasons and Objections For and Against the Privileges Granted to the \ldots Unitas Fratrum (London, Robert Brown, 1750), p. 3f.

\textsuperscript{78}Nicholas von Zinzendorf, \textit{Peremtorisches Bedencken}, or \textit{The Ordinary of the Brethren's Churches}. \ldots \textit{Remarks on the \ldots controversies} (London: J. Beecroft, 1753), p. 15.

\textsuperscript{79}Cf., the "Dialogues" in \textit{Works}, X, p. 266ff.

\textsuperscript{80}Zinzendorf, \textit{Peremtorisches Bedencken}. \ldots, p. 1f.
A most important defense was published by Zinzendorf in 1755, *An Exposition or True State* . . . , in which Wesley's charges are answered in part. But the treatise answers only the more personal attacks on Zinzendorf, not the basic theological issues. This is surprising, but apparently Zinzendorf wanted simply to make a personal defense. He flatly denied that he ever used guile, disguise, evasion. As a "Publick Character" he tried to avoid excessive attention, but only as all such persons do. He admitted traveling incognito as did many of his rank, but only that he might avoid "le Curieux Impertinens and the time killers." Never would he lie for God, for this is without excuse. In behalf of Zinzendorf, against whom Wesley made very serious charges, it should be said that what might appear to be evasion to Wesley would be no problem to many sincere Christians. Wesley knew only the direct, blunt approach; his scruples were as highly developed as Thomas à Kempis, or Jeremy Taylor, two of his preferred authors. It is probable that Wesley's own scrupulosity adversely affected his evaluation of Zinzendorf.

Zinzendorf also defended himself against the charge of prejudice by declaring that he always sought ways to think well of a man, even an errant man. The Moravian Church was the only church under heaven that was unprejudiced against others. Nearly all Moravians were good Christians but there were other good men. The Moravians would not force their stamp on others. Zinzendorf pondered the charge that he became chameleon-like, taking on the color of the surroundings. There are times when condescension is necessary to provide the basis for becoming like other men, "all things to all men."81 James Hutton said that Zinzendorf had nothing to hide, therefore had no need of equivocation.82 Hutton consistently praised Zinzendorf in the highest terms.

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Conclusion

In the long view, how significant was the Moravian-Wesley relationship? There can be no doubt that Wesley's concept of faith as worked out by good works and self-denial was sharply modified by his contact with the Brethren. This, however, was not an original Brethren contribution, for they were mediating to Wesley the basic Reformation idea of justification by faith. Wesley learned more about assurance than he had known, but he found a division of thinking — Zinzendorf saying that a man may be justified and not know it for perhaps a long time; Bohler contending a man was assured at the time of justification. At this time, Wesley followed his friend Bohler, declaring on August 10, 1740 that none should regard themselves justified apart from assurance but his usual opinion was closer to Zinzendorf. On many serious questions, Wesley and the Moravians were hopelessly divided. Hildebrandt regards the major Moravian teaching a deviation from Luther and contends for a straight line from Luther to Wesley. The Moravians, says Hildebrandt, were "lesser mediators... who merely 'gave a hand' with the burden Wesley had to carry over." Thus he is responsible for extending the Protestant Reformation. Nowhere is this more evident than in his use of the Homilies of the Church of England which were written during the English Reformation. When measured by the span of the eighteenth century, Wesley's relationship was a minor chord in the life of the Moravian church. Arvid Gradin, the Swede whom Wesley met at Herrnhut in 1738, wrote *A Short History of the Bohemian-Moravian Protestant Church of the United Brethren* in 1743. He mentions certain controversies, the charges leveled at Zinzendorf, and then stressed the openness of the Moravian church. He even referred to the Georgia expedition, but not

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*Journal*, II, p. 375. In 1768, Wesley emphasized assurance as the "common privilege" of Christians, but allowed that there may be exceptions to this rule. "Therefore, I have not for many years thought a consciousness for pardon to be essential to justifying faith." *Letters*, V, pp. 358-59. See Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), pp. 112-114, for further discussion.

Hildebrandt, pp. 15-16.

*(London: James Hutton, 1743)*.
once does he refer to Wesley. August Spangenberg's defense of the Moravian faith, written in 1752, makes no mention of Wesley.\textsuperscript{86} Perhaps this is only following a policy of silence, but that seems unlikely.

On the other side, in his \textit{A Short History of the People Called Methodists} (1781), Wesley ignores the controversy completely, and speaks warmly of Bohler and the Moravians at Herrnhut.\textsuperscript{87} This history was mainly an abridgement of Wesley's journal. He completely bypassed the two years of controversy from November 1, 1739 to September 3, 1741. The Moravians thus seem in Wesley's recollections to be an important force only for a brief part of his life. Nevertheless, Wesley contributed far less to the Moravians than he received from them. The Moravians deserve more credit in Wesley's development than Franz Hildebrandt is prepared to give them.

When considered from the theological perspective, the entire dialogue takes on considerable import. It shows the value of theological debate with its consequent clarification of issues and refinement of concepts. The debate and discussion helped make it possible for Wesley to balance the relationship between faith and good works. Most significant in this study may be the emphasis on good works in the Christian’s life as an essential part of a sound Christian ethic. For the next half century Wesley repeatedly emphasized the teaching that faith expresses itself in love. This doctrine is the heart of his Christian ethics.

\textsuperscript{86}Apologétique\textit{ Schluß-Schrift Worinn uber tausend Beschuldigungen gegen die Bruder Gemein...} (Leipzig: In der Marcheschen Buchhandlung, 1752).

\textsuperscript{87}Works, XIII, pp. 303-81.