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Religion on the Margins: Transatlantic Moravian Identities and Early American Religious Radicalism

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Publication Date
2017

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RELIGION ON THE MARGINS: TRANSATLANTIC MORAVIAN IDENTITIES AND EARLY AMERICAN RELIGIOUS RADICALISM

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY

by

Benjamin M. Pietrenka

September 2017

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Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies
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2017
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Abstract

Religion on the Margins: Transatlantic Moravian Identities and Early American Religious Radicalism

by

Benjamin M. Pietrenka

This dissertation traces transatlantic processes of German religious and social identity formation in eighteenth-century North America through the lens of an expansive correspondence network established by the pastoral missionaries and common believers of the Moravian Church, a small group of radical German Protestants who migrated to all four Atlantic world continents and built community outposts and mission settlements in diverse religious, political, and social environments. Common Moravian believers, I argue, fashioned this pioneering correspondence network into a critical element of their lived religious experience and practice, and it became fundamental to both the construction and maturation of their personal and collective identities. In addition, this correspondence network functioned as a medium for ordinary believers to articulate nonconformist spiritualities, communicate new standards of moral conduct, and advocate alternative gender and racial hierarchies. British American society worked to construct and then deconstruct Moravian radicalism in the public sphere by attacking and then respecting the embodied piety, religious practices, and spiritual authority of common Moravian believers.
To common believers everywhere who animate the world with meaning.
Acknowledgements

I have accrued many debts during my graduate career, many of which I fear I will never be able to fully repay. First and foremost, I thank my dissertation advisor Professor Marilyn J. Westerkamp for her endless historical knowledge, her patience as I stumbled through the process of learning how to function as an academic, and most of all her candid guidance and unyielding support over the course of so many years. My dissertation, my career as a historian, and my passion for history would not exist without her. Associate Professor Gregory O’Malley has also been a wonderful mentor, critic, role model, and friend. I also thank the enthusiastic and dedicated staff in the history department at the University of California Santa Cruz.

In my travels for research on both sides of the Atlantic, I have had the benefit of meeting and working with incredibly talented and knowledgeable archivists, archive assistants, and research staff who have pointed me toward new and interesting documents and primary material. Dr. Rüdiger Kröger, director of the Unity Archives in Herrnhut, Germany (UAH), and Dr. Paul Peucker, director of the Moravian Archives Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (MAB), have both guided my thinking about Moravian history and taught me to read early modern Gothic German script. The late-afternoon cappuccinos and conversations with Dr. Kröger in the ‘Zinzendorf Zimmer’ at the UAH always brought my scattered thinking about Moravian missionaries into focus. I also thank the assistant archivists and research staff at the UAH, MAB, the
Moravian Archives Winston Salem, North Carolina, the Franke Foundation Archive in Halle, Germany, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, especially Olaf Nippe, Tom McCullough, and Lanie Graf, for their assistance with documents, finding reading space, and informing me about archive resources.

None of these research trips to Pennsylvania, North Carolina, or Germany would have been possible without the fellowships and financial support from the United States Fulbright Commission, the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), the University of California, the Institute for Humanities Research, the German Historical Institute, and the Institute of European History Mainz. I am eternally grateful for their generosity and the opportunities to advance as an academic that their support has afforded.

Finally, I thank my parents Michael and Kim Pietrenka, my sister Bethany Bohn, and my lovely wife Zita Pietrenka, who I met on my first research trip to Herrnhut, for believing in me and providing inspiration, encouragement, and support when I needed it most. I work as hard as I can every day to make you proud.
In anticipation of her journey across the Atlantic Ocean, Johanna Rosina Mickschin composed a letter to the “Honorable and Dear Congregation of the Cross and Blood” in Marienborn, Germany because she wanted to be sure that her Moravian co-religionists had a clear sense of her “whole mind” and understood “the whole meaning with which I go to Pennsylvania.” She asked for their “constant thoughts before the Lamb” because she would be in perpetual need of spiritual support. Johanna believed that the expedition to the New World would strengthen her personal relationship with God and her connection to Moravians everywhere. “The Savior has made [his grace] clear to me” and “I bow in the dust before Him when I think of everything that I have been [up until now]. I cannot but thank him and his congregation [for such grace].” Johanna took up this mission in order to “to live for [Jesus] and his blood alone.” The Heiland (Savior) would “give [her] strength and [anything that was] necessary from his bloody wounds.” Christ’s blood and wounds became the primary drivers of her spiritual and worldly life. “Nothing can be known without the Heiland,” she wrote, “and I do not ask for anything else than what our
slaughtered Lamb will teach me. The doctrine of the Cross and the death of the Lamb are the elements by which my spirit lives and finds rest.”

Johanna’s words read like a sprawling and convoluted stream of consciousness, as if she was grasping to articulate something that could not really be captured in words. The complexity of divine grace, after all, lay beyond the ability of mere humans to fully comprehend. She acknowledged the influence of Moravian doctrine, but this letter presented Johanna with an opportunity to demonstrate piety and devotion to Christ in her own words and ascribe various spiritual meanings to her impending trip to Pennsylvania. She wrote to the congregation in Marienborn using the same language of gratitude, petition, supplication, discipleship, and praise that she would use to speak to God in prayer. The act of composing this letter allowed Johanna to express and, most importantly, practice her faith. Correspondence, in other

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1 Unity Archives Herrnhut (hereafter “UAH”) R.14.A.8, Letter, Pennsylvania, exact date unknown (though probably sometime in the mid-1740s), Johanna Rosina Mickschin to the Moravian Congregation in Marienborn, Germany; Theuere und Liebe Creutz und Blut Gemeine, Die Gnade die ich dir genosen ist mir sehr groß und wichtig und ich dankte demütigt vor alltreue und Pflege die ich bei dir theuren Creutz Gemeine genossen da sie mich als ein armes Kind getragen und erzogen hat und so viele mühe an mich gewendet die ich nicht wert bin und auch manchmahl nicht so erkennet und eingesehen der Heyland hat mir es aber jetzt klar und groß und wichtig gemacht in meinen Hertzen daß es mich in staub vor ihm beugt wenn ich an alles daß Dencke waß ich gewesen hab und auch nicht anders kan als ihm und seiner Gemeine davor Dancken ich gehe jetzt nach Pensylvanien nach den Sinn und willen unsers theuren Aeltesten zu was er mich da brauchen wird weiß ich nicht mein Sinn und gantzes Hertz gehet aber da hin da zu stehen zu seinen gebrauch zu waß und wie er will mir selbst und meiner allen Nathur zu sterben und ihm gantz allein zu leben und von seinen Blut zu zeigen wo ich Gelegenheit dazu habe wo zu er mir selbst Kraft und was mir nötig ist aus seinen Blutigen Wunden geben wolle und noch selbst Täglich lehren was ich noch nicht verstehe und weiß den ich bin ein armes Kind daß nichts can noch weiß ohne den Heyland und ich verlange auch sonst nicht zu wissen als was mich unser geschlachtet Lam lehren wird und die Lehre von Creutz und Tod des Lammes ist mein richtig Element wo mein Geist Lebt und ruhe findet ich will von nichts mehr wissen als Daß ich gantz zerrissen und Elend in mir bin und alles Daß von gantzen Hertzen müssen waß mich nicht bloß zum nichts sein führet hin nun theuere und liebe Creutz Gemeine Da hast da einem gantzen Sinn mit diesen gehe ich nach Pensylvanien unter den gebiet unsers theuren Aeltesten und seiner schutz here bitte mir aber Daß beständige Andencken vor den Lam von dir aus den ich habe es sehr nötigst unterstützt zu werden und bleiben vor dir und den Lam eine arme Sünderin und geringes Glied der theuener Creutz und Blut Gemeine Johanna Rosina Mickschin.
words, operated as a grassroots form of ritual worship that conferred upon common believers the power to produce and shape Moravian religious culture for themselves.

Historians tend to neglect the contributions of believers like Johanna Mickschin. In many ways, the history of the Moravian Church in the eighteenth century has become synonymous with the history and legacy of one man. Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf has dominated the attention of historians, apologists, and critics of Moravian religious culture alike since the earliest Pietist ruminings about the arrival of Czech refugees on his estate in the German-controlled region of Saxony in 1722. The intensive focus on Zinzendorf is at least partially justified. Zinzendorf was, at one time or another, a deeply devout Christian with a short temper, a political insider and, later, an outcast, a religious outsider and theological innovator, the successful leader of an alternative Pietist movement, the

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2 References to “Pietists” or the “Pietism movement” in this dissertation refer to a group of German Protestants that emerged and thrived within the Lutheran and Reformed Churches beginning in the late seventeenth century in Frankfurt and Leipzig, but then quickly spread to Saxony, Württemberg, England, and the New World in the early eighteenth century. A single, universally accepted definition of Pietism does not yet exist because of the diversity of the movement, but historian Douglas Shantz has concatenated the movement’s most important components as proffered by historians who have attempted to define Pietism since the 1960s. “The Pietism movement,” as Shantz and others have argued, “introduced a new paradigm to traditional German Protestantism, one that encouraged personal renewal and new birth, conventicle gatherings for Bible study and mutual encouragement, social activism and postmillennialism, and ecumenical cooperation — in contrast to the polemical Protestantism that gave rise to the Thirty Years’ War.” Douglas Shantz, An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 7. German Pietists migrated to Georgia and South Carolina beginning in the early 1730s and then migrated north in 1740s to Pennsylvania. The Moravians constituted the most radical wing of the Pietism movement, especially after they began to spread out in the Atlantic world in 1732 beginning with the Caribbean island of St. Thomas. In addition to Shantz, this definition includes insights from F. Ernest Stoeffler, The Rise of Evangelical Pietism (Leiden, NL: Brill, 1965) and idem, German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century (Leiden, NL: Brill, 1973), Dale Brown, Understanding Pietism (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1978), Jonathan Strom, Harmut Lehman, and James Van Horn Melton, eds., Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820 (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), Johannes Wallmann, “Was ist Pietismus?,” Pietismus und Neuzeit 20 (1994): 11-27.
failed advocate of a pan-Protestant ecumenical movement, and the progenitor of one of the first Protestant mission enterprises that touched all four Atlantic world continents. Zinzendorf is credited with the establishment of Herrnhut and the renewal of the Moravian Church. The famous “Brotherly Agreement” and the bylaws of Herrnhut, formulated according Zinzendorf’s Pietist inclinations, established the Moravian Church as a voluntary association modeled on a Philadelphian ideal “consisting of ‘brethren’ living in unity with the ‘children of God’ in all denominations.”3 After assuming ecclesiastical leadership over the Moravian Church, Zinzendorf instituted what would become the Moravian global mission in 1732. A few years later, the court in Dresden banished Zinzendorf from Saxony for heretical statements and for challenging the supremacy of the Lutheran Church, so he founded new Moravian settlements in Herrnhaag and Marienborn in the Wetterau region of central Germany. These settlements became the new center of Moravian culture and administration in Europe from 1736 to 1751. Zinzendorf’s ideas about social structure and communal economy became the norm in Moravian settlement communities on both sides of the Atlantic and his outspoken aversion to manufacturing almost led to financial ruin for the Moravian Church as a whole by the early 1750s. Zinzendorf also dedicated and named the fledgling settlement of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania during a

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short visit to the region in 1741. Bethlehem would grow to become the headquarters of the Moravian Church in the Atlantic world, easily surpassing the influence of Herrnhut, Marienborn, and Herrnhaag. And it was Zinzendorf who challenged “the prevalent Western Christian Trinitarian theology that taught the Father as creator, the Son as redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as sanctifier.”

To these brief examples, many others could be added. Zinzendorf’s general influence on the Moravian Church and Protestant religious culture in central Europe, both during his lifetime and after, cannot be questioned. His influence, however, has completely overshadowed the myriad contributions to Moravian religious culture made by common believers like Johanna Mickschin in the eighteenth century.

The present study challenges that imbalance. It operates on the premise that missionaries and the people in the pews, the vast majority of whom were common believers in Moravian religious culture, exerted significant influences upon the structure and content of Moravian beliefs, practices, and ceremonies. These believers also made meaningful contributions to Moravian church policy, inter-congregational

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5 I define the term “common believers” to include the population of ordinary people who participated in and otherwise engaged with the regular worship services and devotional schedules present in Moravian communities as well as Moravian missionaries in the mission field. Members of these two groups, with very few exceptions, did not possess nor require traditional theological training and thereby remained “lay” members of the Church. I also, at various points, employ the term “common” in reference to beliefs and practices that were accepted, familiar, and otherwise prevalent among the vast majority of Moravian believers. As such, it is a term that purposely complicates the boundary between clerical practices from those of the believers, though Moravian ministers and other members of the Church leadership often engaged in common devotional practices that were not officially designated as such; for example, personal and travel diary writing as a practice of individual piety.
and community relations, and even the thought and actions of Zinzendorf himself. They did so by constructing religious and social identities that were oriented outward toward the Atlantic world. These identities were built through the communication of spiritual and worldly experiences using varied mediums of transatlantic correspondence. Histories of the Atlantic world mostly focus on the great European imperial powers, the designs of empire and their effects upon African and Indigenous peoples, and the larger institutionalized Christian confessions and denominations.

This view leaves out significant colonial ventures in the New World conducted by the Swedish, Swiss, Italians, Scottish, Irish, Danish, Norwegians, and Germans, as well

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as transnational millenarian groups, persecuted Old World religious refugees, and
exiled radicals. My dissertation enhances our understanding of European knowledge
formations by reconstructing a significant and far-reaching segment of the early
modern German Atlantic. The chapters that follow document important
transformations in German culture in Europe wrought by the colonial world while
also providing new insight into the influence and experiences of Germans in
Pennsylvania, New England, North Carolina, Georgia, the English Caribbean,
Greenland, and Suriname. In the process we come to a more holistic and nuanced
understanding of the European colonial project because so many settlers, like the
Moravians, did not hail from Old World countries that labeled their homelands on
maps. The correspondence network that connected Moravian settlements over vast
distances became an engine of cultural knowledge production that demonstrates how
extended exposure to a wide variety of Atlantic world ethnicities and cultures
reinforced their embrace of radical religious beliefs and practices, including blood
and wounds piety, love feasts, public confessions, and notions of gender and race, that
made the Moravian Church a threat to the balance of power in the plural religious
environment in colonial America. Thus, this dissertation connects Moravian
communities across the Atlantic basin, which are normally studied in isolation, with
competing European narratives of gender, race, ecclesiastical authority, and the
evangelical body in British North America.
My primary historiographic intervention investigates the influences exerted by ordinary believers in the development of Moravian institutions and religious beliefs. In what ways did the religious experiences and practices of common believers (i.e. religion as it was lived in daily life) on the margins of the Atlantic world directly influence official belief structures, ecclesiastical institutions, and theological discourses? Historian Elisabeth Sommer pointed out in the introduction to her *Serving Two Masters* that Zinzendorf “seems to have considered the ‘lower social orders’ superior in spirit.”\(^{10}\) Sommer does not, however, pursue this issue and proceeds with a characteristically Zinzendorf-centric overview of the origins of the Moravian Church as a coherent spiritual community in Herrnhut. Zinzendorf valued the spiritual influence of believers and the Moravian Church responded by institutionalizing this notion through the expansion of an informal, though exceedingly consequential, transatlantic network of correspondence and knowledge transfer. Transatlantic communication became a medium for believers to express and circulate personal religious experiences, especially those involving Moravian blood and wounds piety. Devotion to the blood and wounds of Christ was a central facet of both personal and collective Moravian worship that has been erroneously associated with the crisis of

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\(^{10}\) Elizabeth W. Sommer, *Serving Two Masters: Moravian Brethren in Germany and North Carolina* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 6-7.
piety known as the “Sifting Time” in the 1750s. Through the lens of communication, blood and wounds piety emerges as a much wider (meaning not exclusive to Zinzendorf and other prescribed items of collective worship, such as Moravian liturgies and the hymnbook), more enduring, and transformational element of Moravian religious culture.

Moravian cultures of communication developed in tandem with the founding and expansion of the mission program in the early 1730s. The extant scholarship characterizes Zinzendorf’s early life trajectory as leading, inevitably, to conceiving, founding, organizing, and administering the early mission program. In the traditional story, Zinzendorf attended the coronation of Christian VI in Denmark in 1731, where he recorded in his diary that he received “a clear conviction that God has a secret purpose in this journey which will come to light in His own time.” After

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11 The “Sifting Time” refers to a crisis of piety that occurred in a few Moravian congregations in the 1750s. Paul Peucker, the foremost historian of the Moravian Sifting Time, defines it as a localized reaction to a “gender changing ceremony” held on December 6, 1748, where Moravian men in the congregation in Herrnhaag, Germany briefly “[n]o longer considered themselves men, but…would all pass as ‘sisters,’” during the worship service that day. See, Paul Peucker’s A Time of Sifting, 1-2 for the quote and his argument about the nature of the Sifting Time. While this dissertation engages with the time period encompassed by the Sifting Time, Moravian notions of gender, as well as many other issues that have subsequently (though falsely) been associated with it, references or allusions to a “Sifting Time” do not appear in any of my sources. I also do not see Moravian blood and wounds piety as a direct product or outcome of the Sifting Time, nor do I understand it as exclusively connected with Moravian notions of marriage, mystical or otherwise (though mystical and worldly marriage are certainly two ways in which one can view it). As such, this dissertation only obliquely engages with the Sifting Time. In addition to Peucker, another good resource for the problems associated with interpreting the Sifting Time can be found in Craig Atwood, “Interpreting and Misinterpreting the Sichtungszeit [Sifting Time],” in Neue Aspekte in Zinzendorfforschung, ed. by Martin Brecht and Paul Peucker, in the series Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Pietismus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).


13 Hutton, A History of Moravian Missions, 15.
arriving in Copenhagen he met an African slave named Anthony Ulrich who worked for Christian’s Master of the Horse. Zinzendorf engaged in long conversations with Ulrich and interpreted his stories about his family and other Africans on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas, who longed to hear the Gospel, as “a genuine message from God.” As a result of these conversations, Zinzendorf arranged to have Ulrich visit Herrnhut where his story inspired David Nitschmann and Leonard Dober to become the first Moravian missionaries to the New World. And, thus, Ulrich’s influence on Zinzendorf, occurring as the result of a chance encounter in a foreign land, gave birth to the Moravian mission program.

Through close readings of various mediums of Moravian transatlantic correspondence, this dissertation will take seriously the words and actions of the believers who worked to implement Zinzendorf’s vision in the Atlantic world during the eighteenth century. Common believers and pastoral missionaries, I argue, fashioned the pioneering transatlantic correspondence network into a critical element of Moravian lived religious experience and practice. In addition, this correspondence network functioned as a medium for believers to articulate nonconformist spiritualities, communicate new standards of moral conduct, and advocate alternative gender and racial hierarchies. Communications culture, thus, provides unique access to both the construction and maturation of Moravian personal and collective identities.

\[14\] Ibid, 16.
The modern Zinzendorf paradigm in historical scholarship can be traced to J. Taylor Hamilton’s *A History of the Church Known as the Moravian Church* (1900)\(^{15}\) and especially J.E. Hutton’s *A History of the Moravian Church* (1909),\(^{16}\) which contains four parts: 1) The Bohemian Brethren, 1457-1673, 2) The Revival under Zinzendorf, 1700-1760, 3) The Rule of the Germans, 1760-1857, 4) The Modern Moravians, 1857-1908.\(^{17}\) Indicative of how pervasive Zinzendorf would become in subsequent literature, Hutton dated the beginning of the Moravian “revival” from Zinzendorf’s birth in 1700, not the establishment of Herrnhut in 1722 or the actual renewal of the Moravian Church in 1727. Zinzendorf’s death in 1760 has also evolved into a temporal equinox that separates the period of Moravian religious and social innovation from the beginning of their transformation into a conforming member of the Protestant denominational community.\(^{18}\)

\(^{15}\) J. Taylor Hamilton, *A History of the Church Known As the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Church in America, 1900).

\(^{16}\) Depending on how one defines the historiography of the Moravian Church, the focus on Zinzendorf could be traced all the way back to the period between 1740 and his death in 1760, when the Moravian Church was at its most controversial. Paul Peucker has assembled a wonderful overview of nineteenth century histories of the Moravian Church in his *A Time of Sifting*, 34-37.

\(^{17}\) J.E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church* (London: Moravian Publication Office, 1909), table of contents (the bold text is my addition).

\(^{18}\) Apologetic and antiquarian histories of the Moravian Church in the twentieth century after Hutton conformed to this periodization up to the late 1960s when more scholarly histories of the Moravian Church began to appear. These early histories focused on Moravian Church institutions, especially those instituted by Zinzendorf, and generally portray the Moravians as insular radicals who only conformed to mainstream Protestantism when forced by the circumstance of Zinzendorf’s death. These studies examined the economic, geographic, and social isolation of the most prominent Moravian communities that began to stabilize and thrive in eastern Germany in the late-1720s as well as southeastern Pennsylvania, the Shenandoah Valley region in northwestern Virginia, and the Carolina Piedmont in the 1750s and 1760s. See, J. Taylor Hamilton & Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Church of America, 1967); also, Hans-Christopher Hahn, *Zinzendorf und die Herrnhuter Brüder: Quellen zur Geschichte der Brüder-Unität von 1722 bis 1760*. Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1977.
Though still organized around the administration of Zinzendorf and the Moravian Church leadership, Beverly Smaby’s *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem* initiated a new era of scholarship on the Moravians that straddled the sacred pre- and post-Zinzendorf divide by tracking the official transformation of the Moravian Church from a communal to a private economy in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Smaby’s now-standard study of the Moravian ‘choir system,’ where family members lived apart from each other in “choirs” organized according to age, gender, and marital status, reignited historical interest in Moravian institutions during the communal period. Moravian choirs existed in all major Moravian settlement congregations that possessed the population and resources to construct and support them, including Herrnhut, Marienborn, Herrnhaag, Bethlehem, and Wachovia, some smaller congregations, like those in Christiansfeld and Nazareth, and even at some mission stations like the one in Greenland. Choirs operated as the primary site of religious education and social interaction for believers during the communal period (which lasted until just after Zinzendorf’s death in 1760), and recent research has shown that choirs developed in regionally specific ways as a result of Moravian interactions with local Indigenous peoples and as a result of the dictates of local commercial markets.

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More recent critical histories have studied the religious, economic, and (to a much lesser extent) racial dynamics and contributions of the early modern Moravian Church. All important contributions to a historical field that remains relatively small, these studies have begun to incorporate the transatlantic dimensions of the Moravian presence in places like Pennsylvania, but remain focused on the religious and secular machinations of the Moravian Church leadership, especially Zinzendorf, at the expense of ordinary believers. In addition, these works generally do not operate at an analytical level where communication, in its various forms, becomes a significant factor in the development of early modern Moravian culture.

Recovering the expansive significance of writing and correspondence in Moravian religious life encapsulates my second historiographic intervention. Historians who study correspondence in the early modern world have typically concerned themselves with the dialogic quality of letters and letters written and

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exchanged by members of the social elite, including (but not limited to) politicians, scientists, scholars, noblemen, artists, and theologians. Members of this group who formed extensive correspondence networks in Europe and North America came to be known as the “Republic of Letters” beginning in the seventeenth century. Though instrumental in establishing current academic interests in the phenomenon of network formation in early modern history, whether inter-personal, inter-community, international, and/or transatlantic, these histories are typically only concerned with the intellectual elite and, thus, notions of high, usually intellectual, culture.

Taking a more expansive view, recent historians have investigated the increasing volume of epistolary correspondence in the Atlantic world as evidence of a widespread, reflexive notion of “self” in the early modern period. This literature focuses on the letter writers themselves, as well as the mechanics and practice of letter writing. Clare Brant argued that epistolary practices are “self-fashioning,” and letter writing became a performative practice that had consequences for the individuals’ perception of his or her personal and public character. The ‘self,’ in this literature, manifested in letter writers writing from the guise of different personae,

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25 Janet Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1982).
such as writing as a lover, or as a criminal, or a citizen, or a Christian. Brant asked: Who does one become when writing a letter? Who does one become when one reads a letter? Konstantin Dierks answered these questions by arguing that writing letters in early America affected “what people imagine[d] themselves able to do in the world” and involved the “taking of action and the making of meaning.” Composing a letter, then, involved constructing a narrative of self and the capabilities of ones’ self through an internal process of negotiating who one “is,” who one wants to be, how one wants to be seen, and how one thinks others view him- or herself. The most recent studies of epistolarity have situated letter writing as a critical practice of identity construction and historians of religion have also started to pick up this trend.

Scholarship on the role of correspondence in the construction of Moravian identity is scarce, indeed. Gisela Mettele argued that Moravians developed a common identity through the composition and circulation of official publications sanctioned by the Moravian Church, such as congregational diaries, community-centered periodical reports (Gemeinnachrichten), and auto-/biographies of deceased members of Moravian congregations (Lebensläufe). Other historians of Moravians have used

30 The Moravian Lebensläufe were personal memoirs composed by elderly congregants toward the end of their lives. They were usually only partially autobiographical because local Moravian ministers or prominent members of the congregant’s choir house usually appended comments to the end of the text detailing the spiritual circumstances of the final days/moments the deceased’s life.
correspondence to talk about prominent individuals and inter-denominational
connections, and as ancillary primary material in larger works. This study will
connect personal, inter-personal, and collective written communication to both larger
and more subtle transformations in how Moravians conceptualized and practiced their
own religious culture. The following analyses of Moravian mediums of transatlantic
correspondence demonstrate the ingenuity of believers and their ability to adapt and
modify traditional Moravian beliefs and practices to fit their immediate
circumstances. Believers ascribed situated meanings to their religious culture based
on their experiences in diverse geographic locations as well as in response to
environmental and social factors that changed over time.

Blending the concerns of common believers and Moravian cultures of written
correspondence requires the adoption and extension of recent methodological
innovations in the growing academic field of ‘lived religion’ as my primary mode of
analysis. The believers practicing their religion that are assembled in this study
challenge prevailing historical narratives, even in many recent church histories, that
subsume the religious beliefs and practices of common believers under a rubric of

universality and unchanging continuity as a result of influences from clergy, ecclesiastical institutions, theology, or church leaders like Zinzendorf. Prior studies that engage Moravian religious practices are premised on a traditional “trickle-down” model that has governed church histories for some time. In older church histories, members of the male (usually) educated elite — whether theologians, devotional writers, charismatic leaders, or trained and ordained clergy — produced theologies, devotional tracts, liturgies, hymnbooks, sermons, prayers, and tracts on pious behavior (the traditional evidentiary basis of church histories) that believers are uncritically assumed to have followed uniformly. Believers, therefore, are stripped of any agency with regard to the larger forces that shape the religious cultures in which they participated. In order to avoid the focus on hierarchies and gradations of belief associated with a method of church history known as “popular religion,” a concept originally adopted by historians of the Reformation who were interested in how believers consumed and translated early Protestant theology into practice, the present study will adopt a bottom-up approach by placing common believers and their thoughts, beliefs, practices, and experiences at the center. As David Hall explains, historians of popular religion are responsible for a general “questioning of

boundaries, a sympathy for the extra-ecclesial, and a recognition of the laity as actors in their own right,” but the history of lived religion broke new ground by attempting to eliminate “the distinction between high and low that seems inevitably to recur in studies of popular religion.” Histories of ‘lived religion’ over the course of the last twenty years, in other words, do not operate on the basis of an inherent opposition between vague notions of high and low religious cultures. The present study seeks to improve upon the lived religion paradigm by perpetuating the rejection of an elite/popular oppositional binary and stipulating that Zinzendorf and the Moravian Church leadership exerted a high degree of influence upon Moravian believers. This study will add the idea, and operate on the assumption, that believers also exerted significant influences upon Moravian religious practices, church administration, and inter-community relations. Meredith McGuire has argued, from a sociological perspective, that religiosity does not confine itself to influence from official doctrines, mediated rituals, theologies, or even attendance at church, but exists as an active process rooted in the rhythms of daily life. Through various mediums of

communication, common Moravian believers demonstrate this principal from a historical perspective in the early modern period.\textsuperscript{37}

Revising previous assumptions about early modern Moravian identity construction constitutes the third historiographic intervention made in this dissertation. Theories of Moravian identity have evolved from notions of religious and social continuity based upon geographic isolation and insularity, especially with regard to places like Herrnhut and Bethlehem, toward a model that has increasingly embraced the Moravian presence on all four Atlantic world continents. Carola Wessel and Peter Vogt provide limited, but tantalizing, examples of Moravian communication practices as evidence of the “internal uniformity and coherence” and the generalized importance of inter-community connections in establishing the Moravian Church as an Atlantic world presence.\textsuperscript{38} These studies, however, remain focused on communication merely as evidence of inter-community connections, not as a formative element of cultural knowledge production. Some posit communication practices as fostering a “distinct Moravian identity,”\textsuperscript{39} but even these are so focused

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\textsuperscript{37} In addition to Hall et al’s \textit{Lived Religion in America}, see Robert Orsi, \textit{The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) and his \textit{Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), Manuel A. Vasquez, \textit{Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the Americas} (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 2003), as well as titles by Janet Lindman, Martha Finch, and Heather Kopelson, which will be subsequently be cited in the literature about early America with regard to concepts of the body.


\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
on proving that a Moravian transatlantic identity existed that they fail to appreciate how communication and dialogic strategies actually played a significant role in producing the Moravian religious beliefs and practices which fostered that identity over time. I argue that Moravian cultures of communication, in the form of circulating reports of Gemeintag services, travel diaries, and epistolary correspondence, operated as implements of personal and collective identity construction that made significant impressions on Moravian religious and social culture.

Operating on the further assumption that the concept of ‘identity’ is inherently unstable, this dissertation demonstrates how Moravian believers simultaneously constructed and represented their constantly evolving identities through transatlantic communication as a medium of cultural performance. My analysis of Moravian communication resists the dichotomies proffered by older anthropological theories of performance. Whether in the form of a circulating transcript, a diary that was copied and distributed, or a missionary letter read aloud to a congregation, this dissertation demonstrates how mediums of communication depend upon both oral and written practices, private and public audiences, and both sacred and secular traditions, simultaneously. Catherine Bell argued that these older binaries fail to convey how ritual activities are actually experiences and that the goal should be to de-dichotomize ‘doing and thinking’ for performance theory. Until recently, the tendency in

40 Judith Butler articulated the theoretical foundations of this model of identity in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
historical and anthropological scholarship has been to value thinking over and above doing as the basic site of cultural production for any given society. A focus on performances, as anthropologists Stanley Tambiah, Ronald Grimes, and Milton Singer have argued, correct this tendency because they are composed of “scattered, improvisational instances” which “involve doing things, even if the doing is saying,” and are “organized and transmitted on particular occasions through specific media.” “Performance,” as John Warren has argued more recently, constitutes “a way of seeing identities and culture,” while “performativity [is] a way to see human action,” and this “necessitates extending the research and theory of the performance of everyday life.” I read the mediums of communication utilized by Moravian believers, the Moravian Church, and their opponents as personal and collective performances that enact, dramatize, and reproduce everyday, commonplace occurrences in ways that produced religious meaning and cultural value.

Moravian identities depended less upon negative assessments and reactions to peer groups that surrounded them, such as the German Lutherans and Halle Pietists, and more upon a collective yearning to remain connected with one another despite the vast geographic distances that often separated them. Missionaries and members of

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Moravian settlement communities pursued these connections through the rhetorical relation, and subsequent circulation, of stories pertaining to their personal religious experiences. They developed a language of piety that worked to established close religious associations and fostered a distinct sense of community. The content of the Moravian’s pious rhetoric emphasized the physical aspects of Moravian religious devotion. Accordingly, the body became a rhetorical trope that injected generalized religious meaning into the compartmentalized, situation-specific items of discussion in any single piece of correspondence.

My fourth historiographic intervention obtains from a significant reshaping of current historical knowledge about Moravian notions of the body, gender, and race. As a method for studying the history of religious practice and experience, the body has become a valuable category of analysis. Older scholarship tended to focus on

the mind/body dichotomy and reduced the bodies of believers to tangible symbols or material objects. Carolyn Walker Bynum, drawing on Victor Turner’s notions of ‘narrative’ and ‘dominant symbols’ and Arnold van Gannep’s definition of ‘liminality’ as “dominant symbols that can only be understood in the context in which it is experienced,” argued that bodies act as physical conduits for articulating religious symbols because they use, feel, and know them in context.\textsuperscript{46} Bodies, in this scholarship, articulate and facilitate religious culture originating in the mind of theologians.\textsuperscript{47}

More recent historical scholarship has broadened the scope of earlier studies by exploring the concept of “embodiment” as a method of examining the variety of ways in which bodies express religious experience and religious authority. Janet Lindman described the reciprocal relationship between notions of the body/physicality and the religious practices of evangelicals through the lens of the Baptist Church in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{48} Bodies, in this formulation, both articulated and experienced evangelicalism, but evangelicalism also exerted a measure of control and determination on the bodies of the believers. Martha Finch showed how separatist groups in seventeenth-century New England understood the body as a means of communication with God and a physical space where believers


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{47} Carolyn Walker Bynum, \textit{Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{48} Janet Moore Lindman, \textit{Bodies of Belief: Baptist Community in Early America} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).}
learned divine lessons through experiences of illness as punishment for moral offenses.\textsuperscript{49} Heather Kopelson explored the roles bodies took in shaping ideas, conversations, and colonial laws that involved issues of race and religion.\textsuperscript{50} The present study explores the ways in which bodies and the embodied nature of Moravian beliefs and practices produced the way believers experienced, exercised, and articulated their religious culture and identity. Bodies, in this formulation, do much more than simply express religious culture and act as a conduit for personal engagement with the divine. Bodies defined the parameters for how religious culture operated in the physical world. Bodies, in other words, largely dictated what the mind was able to comprehend.

I employ the term “embody” in this dissertation on three different levels. First, “embodied” religious practices are physical acts of piety and devotion, whether traditional (prayer, singing, worshipping, etc.) or innovative (letters, diaries, and reports). Second, Moravian believers participated in a process of religious “embodiment” where they visualized, articulated, and reflected upon their religious beliefs and practices and their immediate circumstances in terms that implicated physical bodies, whether the mystical body of Christ or other human bodies, in various ways. Third, Moravian believers “embodied” their interior mystical piety and religious devotions by writing about them and, thus, gave physical, tangible form to


elements of piety that would have otherwise remained sequestered in the mind.

Embodiment and various notions of physicality operate within practical, conceptual, rhetorical, and substantive frameworks for analyzing how followers and enemies of the Moravians alike understood, appreciated, expressed, performed, constructed, and re-produced religious culture.

Language that alludes to mystical and physical bodies in Moravian transatlantic communications also reveals notions of gender and racial hierarchies that simultaneously supported and challenged the traditional norms of society in Europe and, especially, British North America. The analytical category of gender in histories of colonial America has played a key role in deciphering the ways in which historically and culturally situated femininities and masculinities permeated the early modern mind, how Europeans framed projects of imperial expansion and colonial settlement and reacted to the alternative social hierarchies of non-Western peoples, and how the cultural meanings attached to human sexuality and the historical body
shifted over time.\textsuperscript{51} Through written communications, Moravians demonstrated that
gendered renderings of the bodies of Jesus, the other two persons of the Holy Trinity,
and people in the world (including themselves) constituted a process of attribution
that worked to attach deeper religious meanings to personal and collective
experiences.\textsuperscript{52} This dissertation deploys the category of gender to analyze femininities
and masculinities from the perspective of a radical Protestant religious group and the
Europeans who stood in opposition to them. Moravians performed their progressive
(by eighteenth-century standards) beliefs about social gender hierarchies, the high
status of women and non-European converts in relation to God and the Church, and

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{51} The scholarship on gender in colonial America and the Atlantic world is both vast and growing. The
following is a representative, though necessarily incomplete, list of texts that have influenced my
thinking on this issue. On gender and religion, see Marilyn Westerkamp, \textit{Women and Religion in Early
America, 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions} (New York: Routledge, 1999), and her
“Engendering Puritan Religious Culture in Old and New England” (1997); Susan Juster, \textit{Disorderly
Women: Sexual Politics & Evangelicalism in Revolutionary America} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University
Press, 1994). On gendered constructions of the body and human sexuality, see Kathleen Brown, \textit{Foul
Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Kirsten Fischer,
\textit{Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina} (Ithaca: Cornell University
Press, 2002); Sharon Block, \textit{Rape and Sexual Power in Early America} (Chapel Hill: University of
North Carolina Press, 2006); Thomas Foster, \textit{Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man: Massachusetts and
the History of Sexuality in America} (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006); On gender and empire, see Linda
Colley, \textit{Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850} (London: J. Cape, 2002); Kathleen
Wilson, The Island Race: Englishness Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century (New York:
Routledge, 2003). On gender, law, and politics in the British colonies, see Jane Kamensky, \textit{Governing
the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999);
Cornelia Dayton, \textit{Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789} (Chapel
“The Anglo-Algonquian Gender Frontier,” in Nancy Shoemaker (ed.), \textit{Negotiators of Change:
Historical Perspectives on Native American Women}. New York: Routledge, 1995: 26-48; Carroll
\textit{Gender and History}, Vol. 5 (1993): 177-195. On the interconnections between gender and race, see
Jennifer Morgan, \textit{Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery} (Philadelphia:
University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), and her “‘Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder’: Male
Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology,” \textit{The William and Mary Quarterly,
Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia}. Chapel Hill: University of North

\textsuperscript{52} My use of the term “religious attribution” is based on Ann Taves, \textit{Religious Experience
Reconsidered: A Building Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things}
\end{footnotesize}
even the gender of God him-/herself in casual, everyday writings about their religious experiences.

Gender and racial ideologies in discourses of civility also converge in new cultural histories of the rhetorical and physical body. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has become a key figure in this debate over race and gender as social constructs, the confluence of the categories of race and gender, and their implications for power structures and social relations. Echoing Judith Butler’s call to destabilize culturally situated notions of gender identities, Higginbotham called on academics to recognize the ways that language about gender reinforces language about race in terms of social relations. Delineating the gendered tropes of “civilization” has become a key feature of the debate over how gender and race shaped European imperial aspirations. The Moravian believers in this study did not engage in high discourses of civilization. But they did implicitly challenge and reinforce many of them through internal avenues of communication. Allusions to gendered constructs also reinforced a larger transformation in how Moravians conceptualized the body through descriptions of interactions with African and Indigenous peoples. Pastoral missionaries concerned with the bodily behavior of the converts in their care used the language of

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53 Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” Signs, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Winter 1992): 251-274. Though Higginbotham grounds her argument in the racialized and gendered nature of the master-slave relationship, her call to take seriously the “metalanguage of race” speaks directly to how gendered language reinforces language about race. Kathleen Brown’s, Foul Bodies (2009) also addresses the confluence of gender and race in British America through the lens of early modern notions of cleanliness as it variously related to European and non-European bodies.
benevolence on the surface to describe these interactions, while unconsciously
expressing their acquiescence and concurrence with traditional racial biases against
peoples not of caucasian European descent. Observations of physical behavior slowly
replaced references to the mystical body of Christ as Moravians became more
experienced and cultured missionaries toward the end of the eighteenth century. By
the late-1760s, the Atlantic world was becoming less mystical and mysterious because
missionaries and settlers had spent decades writing, communicating, and otherwise
learning about transatlantic travel conditions, the health risks associated with regional
climes, the logistics of establishing settlements in foreign lands, the socio-political
dynamics in places as diverse as Greenland and the Caribbean, and, most importantly,
the cultural idiosyncrasies of diverse African and Indigenous peoples of varying
social status that they encountered.

This dissertation will challenge prevailing interpretations about how gender
and race operated in relation to the construction of notions of religious radicalism in
the early modern period. The confluence of embodied religious beliefs and practices,
egalitarian re-imaginings of gender subjectivities, and the oppositional nature of
Moravian notions of race, based on an apparent separation of body and soul, provided
their opponents with powerful evidentiary substance to portray them as dangerous
radicals. Opponents of the Moravians articulated these issues at a time when British
colonial society was engaged in a momentous cultural debate over the new forms of
preaching and embodied worship that had begun to emerge in the 1730s with the
Great Awakening. Moravians and the Moravian Church came to be seen as archetypal symbols of early modern religious and political extremism provoked by the Great Awakening. My examination of precisely how notions of gender and race modulated antagonistic constructions of Moravian religious culture points to countervailing conceptions of religious and social bodies as the most salient factor in framing the Moravians as radicals.

My final historiographic intervention reverses conventional thinking about early modern Protestant radicalism by shifting the focus away from the peculiarities of the group/s deemed radical and toward the outsiders who actually felt threatened by them. Modern definitions of early modern religious radicalism tend to paint a negative portrait of the radicals themselves, especially those involved in the German Pietism movement. Early scholarship emphasized institutional issues, in addition to issues of separatism and mysticism in their attempts to holistically define radical Pietism. These definitions characterize the older generation, when the field of Pietism studies was still in its infancy and historians worked to define the parameters of the movement as an alternative to the Lutheran establishment in terms of doctrine.

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and geographic scope. Ernest Stoeffler defined radical Pietists in terms of their level of devotion to emerging forms of Protestant mysticism. The “radical” Pietists became too invested in the mystical devotional and theological writings of Jacob Böhme and Gottfried Arnold and, by definition, wanted to separate from the Lutheran Church. Hans Schneider, representing the second generation of scholars working on German Pietism, defined the radicals in political terms: “Both separation (i.e. the refusal to attend church, confession, and the Lord’s supper) and heterodoxy represented a break from the system of social control. The radicals generally adopted a new, alternative system of even stricter social control by their like-minded friends in the conventicles or radical communities they established.” For Schneider, radicals had to be separatists, but he emphasized alternative internal institutional and social organization as salient characteristics that distinguished them from mainstream wings of the movement in places like Halle and Württemberg.

More recent scholarship has assigned additional parameters to the term “radical Pietist.” Douglas Shantz adds that radicals often lived a “migratory lifestyle” and experienced a sense of “homelessness in the world,” both physically and theologically. The radicals, for Shantz, lived “between the paradigms” of being involved with the state churches and simultaneously critiquing them. Ryoko Mori obliquely connected the concept of radical Pietism to notions of lay ecclesiastical

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agency in the form of Pietist conventicle culture in the late-seventeenth century. In these private religious meetings, Mori showed how “each participant was permitted to speak and interpret texts of the Bible,” and this new found agency effectively “undermined the exegetical monopoly of the pastors.” Non-clerical Pietist believers exerted an important influence upon the institutional authority of mainstream Pietists in Halle, Frankfurt, and elsewhere and constituted a new and non-traditional pressure group.

Moravians have always been considered, at best, radicals and more often an extremist wing of the radical Pietism movement. Dietrich Meyer emphasized the distinctiveness of Moravian religious culture, in terms of Zinzendorf’s influence on Moravian marriage practices, devotional paradigms, and the development of the mission program, in contradistinction to other radical Pietist groups like the Mother Eva Society, the New Baptists, the Inspirationists, and other separatist groups in Wittgenstein, the Wetterau, and Frankfurt. Aaron Fogleman characterized Moravian radicalism in terms of the threat they allegedly posed to traditional concepts of gender through the deployment of women preachers as a method of compensating for the scarcity of qualified preachers in Lutheran, German Reformed, and other churches in colonial America.

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62 Aaron Fogleman, Jesus Is Female (2007).
Fogleman’s attention to the category of gender represents a much needed addition and corrective to previous scholarship on the topic of radical religion in colonial America.\(^{63}\) He correctly concluded that conflicting concepts of social gender roles and alternatively gendered interpretations of the Holy Trinity played decisive roles in how critics perceived and argued against the Moravians. Unfortunately, his pre-occupation with uncovering instances of “religious violence” and literal readings of anti-Moravian polemical pamphlets constrain his analysis to inter-denominational conflict for which, he believes, the Moravians themselves are responsible.\(^{64}\) Also, while Moravians did employ women as preachers, administrators, and spiritual counselors, and while a couple of the more obscure polemical pamphlets do mention women preachers,\(^{65}\) Fogleman overstates their overall influence when he argues that their opponents saw the Moravians as living among “uncontrolled female power.”\(^{66}\) Also, Moravians, from Zinzendorf himself to the most humble of common believers, did not believe that Jesus was female. In addition, women could not rise to the level of bishop in the Moravian Church hierarchy. Thus, the Moravians were not considered radicals only because of the additional power they accorded to the female

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\(^{63}\) Also, see Katherine Faull for additional information on the influence of women in Moravian religious culture. For a useful overview of gender and the larger Pietism movement, see Ulrike Gleixner, “Pietism and Gender: Self-modelling and Agency” in *A Companion to German Pietism, 1660-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 423-471.

\(^{64}\) Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female*, 217.


\(^{66}\) Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female*, 66, 95.
sex. They were considered radicals because of the way they deployed alternative femininities and, even more importantly, masculinities in their constructions of mystical and physical bodies that disrupted the traditional masculinities associated with Protestant religious authority, whether originating with the clergy, denominational Church hierarchies, or the Trinity itself. This created a peculiar circumstance where opponents found themselves trying to feminize Moravian religious beliefs and practices, in part, by attacking they way Moravians hyper-masculinized Jesus and his followers.67

Furthermore, the Moravians, aside from Zinzendorf perhaps, did not think of themselves as religious radicals. The Moravians believed they possessed the key to true and correct Christian faith. That idea, of course, was nothing new. All Christian groups, whether Protestant or Catholic, believed they were the true Christians in one form or another. To study radical Protestantism, however, by searching only for the components of radicalism that may or may not have existed inside the radical groups themselves artificially imposes a religious ethic that purports to locate a Protestant mainstream. Some Protestant groups must be deemed the “right,” “true,” or “good” Protestants in order to define groups like the Moravians as radicals, or as deviating from a Protestant “norm.” The Lutheran establishment and the Church Pietists, in other words, have to represent the mainstream for the Moravians to be considered radicals. All of the scholarship that attempts to delineate the parameters of radical

67 My analysis of this dynamic appears in chapter five.
Pietism, from Albrecht Ritschel in the 1880s to Ernest Stoeffler, Hans Schneider, Ryoko Mori, and Aaron Fogleman look inside the groups considered radical and define them as “people who were either separatists or heterodox, or both.”\(^{68}\) The Moravians, however, were not conventional separatists. The Moravian Church never separated itself from the Pietism movement. They constantly found themselves defending their Pietist bonafides. And, while the Moravians did criticize the formalism of the prevailing Lutheran Orthodoxy, they did not advocate for any kind of mass rejection or departure of the current members of the Lutheran Church. In fact, Zinzendorf and the Moravians are considered pioneers of the early modern ecumenical movement. Peter Vogt has convincingly shown that Zinzendorf and the Moravians espoused a “Philadelphian ideal, the belief that God’s children from all churches are called to join together in brotherly love,” a belief that was meant to “transcend any geographical, cultural, and confessional boundary.”\(^{69}\) God’s true children remained perpetually connected through their mutual love of Christ and artificial boundaries of Protestant confession could not alter that reality. Strictly speaking, official separation from competing denominations was not necessary according to Zinzendorf’s ecumenical thinking. Additionally, the Moravians can only be considered “heterodox” if we accept that the Lutherans and the Church Pietists constituted the “correct” or “orthodox” Protestants. In either case, to define religious

\(^{68}\) Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*, 147.

radicalism solely in terms of the radicals themselves is to impose an artificial confessional hierarchy and necessarily normalize one denomination or confession over another.

This dissertation will suggest that the parameters of Protestant religious radicalism did not consist solely in the actual content of the beliefs and practices of groups deemed radical. Radical religion inhered in and originated with those Protestants who took offense to groups like the Moravians and who, subsequently, constructed the contours of Protestant and Pietist radicalism themselves. The German Pietists, Reformed, and Lutherans, as well as the Anglicans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Methodists who wrote denigrating letters, polemical pamphlets, and newspaper articles against them constituted the cohort of framers that transformed the Moravians into religious radicals.

In addition, constructions of radical religion in public forums constitute a reflection of the contemporary ecclesiastical and political climate of the period in question, not some inherent quality of the group or groups in question. The Moravians, largely because their presence in various regions of America and the Atlantic world, placed in striking relief the beliefs, values, attitudes, morals, and character of the broader eighteenth-century Protestant public. They briefly came to embody the antithesis of how other, more populous German and British Protestant groups perceived their own religious culture. Therefore, a detailed analysis of precisely what the opposition said about the Moravians, how they said it, and the
underlying logic behind their statements is crucial for understanding Protestant identities in the early modern Atlantic world more generally.

Ordinary believers mattered in the process of constructing Moravian radicalism. The pervasive fear of the authority the Moravian Church accorded to ordinary believers comprised an extension of the larger rationalist reaction against reviverist “experimental religion,” which worked against traditional models of formal, sacramental worship by “cultivat[ing] a spontaneous, direct, and individual religious experience.”

The opponents of the Moravians perceived them as taking the new experimental religion too far by placing an absurd emphasis upon the bodies and physical behaviors of the laity in the formulation of Moravian religious beliefs and practices. As a result, polemicist criticisms worked backward by citing instances of embodied religious beliefs and deviant physical behaviors supposedly perpetrated by the Moravians as a method of constructing a larger meta-narrative of the radical Moravian body. Therefore, the beliefs and practices of ordinary believers and constructions thereof contain the key to understanding an essential facet of early modern religious radicalism.

Chapter one examines the controversy between Lutheran Pietists in Halle and the Moravians in Herrnhut, Germany during the decade following the renewal of the Moravian Church in 1727 after surviving as an underground religious movement in the wake of the Thirty Years’ War.\textsuperscript{71} Drawing on recent secondary literature on early modern radical German Pietism and utilizing primary source letters written by influential Halle Pietists, Moravians, and others, this chapter argues that common believers became a central topic of concern in the ecclesiastical politics and discourses surrounding the issues of proper Pietist religious beliefs and practices, spiritual fellowship, and denominational proximity, both physical and theological. More established Pietist and Lutheran groups in Germany initially defined the nature of Moravian religious radicalism through the rhetorical deployment of these issues in their epistolary correspondence.

Chapters two through four are each organized around a specific mode of Moravian communication and address various methods the Moravians used to perform their cultural identities and cope with their status as religious outsiders. As such, these chapters explore Moravian morality, religious devotions, rituals, piety, and mysticism through meticulous analyses of Gemeintag services, travel literature, and epistolary correspondence. Chapter two addresses the confluence of Moravian worship and communication practices from 1738 to 1746 through the lens of the

\textsuperscript{71} Questions remain, however, regarding the precise continuity between the Brethren movement that existed in the Czech lands in the seventeenth century and the religious migrants that settled on Zinzendorf’s estate beginning in 1722. See, Craig Atwood, \textit{The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius} (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009).
*Gemeintag* (‘Congregation Day’) service and the circulating, inter-community reports of these services called the *Gemeintagsnachrichten* (‘Reports of the Congregation Day’). Instead of relying on a singular message delivered exclusively by Moravian ministers, the calculated structure and content of *Gemeintag* services and the circulation of the *Gemeintagsnachrichten* reinforced core (but often controversial) elements of Moravian culture by integrating various mediums of communication and skillfully mobilizing ordinary Moravian believers from various Atlantic world locations, including Europe, Greenland, the Caribbean, and British North America, to articulate the Moravian message. Thus, *Gemeintag* services reveal how Atlantic world expansion, correspondence as a form of spiritual testimony, and Moravian blood and wounds mysticism became integral aspects of Moravian religious identity.

Chapter three utilizes personal and travel diaries from 1735 to 1765 to identify the ways in which ordinary Moravians appropriated and began to transform prescribed notions of spirituality. While *Gemeintag* services communicated notions of spirituality and proper religious behavior from the top down, Moravians who made the journey across the Atlantic, both to and from the New World, found themselves reinterpreting many of these teachings based on new and exotic experiences. In the songs, poetry, and descriptions of religious ceremonies they recorded in their diaries, Moravians articulated material concerns about their bodies, including issues of cleanliness, health, nourishment, protection, inter-personal relations, survival, and religious experience through the language of blood and wounds mysticism. In this
way, keeping a diary became a form of personal religious devotion and a method of honoring God in the absence of one’s home congregation. However, this new form of common religious devotion also became a subtle and highly personal mode of social protest that reveals how Atlantic world travel prompted Moravians to challenge more traditional European notions of gender and racial hierarchy through descriptions of interactions with non-Moravians and especially non-Europeans whom they met while in transit. At the conclusion of these journeys, the Moravian Church collected the diaries, commissioned scribes to painstakingly copy them, and then circulated the copies to congregations in Europe, British North America, and the Caribbean as a method of promulgating these altered sensibilities and elevating the religious authority of ordinary believers.

After Zinzendorf’s death in 1760, the Moravian Church leadership began requiring more frequent and detailed reports from the various mission fields. The content of these reports exhibit the persistence of blood and wounds piety, albeit in a form that was less grounded in mysticism than in previous decades. Chapter four tracks the decline of Moravian blood and wounds mysticism from 1760 to 1790 in Moravian missionary correspondence from the mission fields in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Barbados, Antigua, and Jamaica. As Moravians interacted with more African and Indigenous peoples, their use of blood and wounds piety to explain their circumstances shifted from being mystical in character towards language that utilized empirical observations of nature and the physical human body. Moravians proclaimed...
their commitment to an ethic of tolerance by emphasizing the superiority of universally save-able souls over the worldly circumstances of the bodies they inhabited. Unconsciously, however, the missionary correspondence illustrates how latent racial prejudices, demonstrated through detailed observations of bodily behavior, began to modulate the treatment Native American and African converts received in these regions.

Cultures of interpersonal and collective transatlantic communication fostered by Moravians in the eighteenth century had a palpable impact on the nature of public allusions to the radicalism of Moravian religiosity in British North America. Chapter five challenges our understanding of anti-Moravian polemics in colonial America by tracking how Moravian experiences in the Atlantic world and rhetorics of the body and physical behavior drove the polemical discourse that circulated in colonial pamphlets and newspapers in New England, Pennsylvania, New York, North Carolina, England, and Germany. In pamphlets and articles printed for and against the Moravians from 1745 to 1790, gender and the body became rhetorical tropes used to express practical anxieties about living in the plural religious environment in colonial America. The denigration and pejorative feminization of Moravian religious culture was, at least in part, motivated by the empowerment of the Moravian laity, not simply aversion to women preachers (as previous scholars have proposed). As such, the experiences and identities of Moravian believers in the Atlantic world become a
critical component for understanding the contours of religious and social radicalism in colonial America.
Chapter One

Ecclesiastical Intrusions and the Politics of Vagueness:
Radical Pietist Beginnings in Europe and Early America

On June 26, 1736, Gotthilf August Francke sat down at his desk in Halle, Germany to compose one final letter to his former friend and Pietist colleague Count Nicolas Ludwig von Zinzendorf. Nine years had passed since the death of his father, the beloved and transformational figure of the German Pietism movement, August Hermann Francke. Nine years had also passed since the renewal of the Moravian Church on Zinzendorf’s estate in eastern Saxony in 1727. With a seemingly heavy heart, Francke explained how he had received reports from various places about a “cabal formed against you [referring to Zinzendorf] and the congregation in Herrnhut,” whose purpose was to “persecute and profane you.”¹ These disingenuous words, however, would only fall on deaf ears. For as he wrote, both he and

Zinzendorf knew that Francke himself was a member, if not the instigating leader, of the burgeoning epistolary campaign against the Moravians.2

Herrnhut and the Moravians had become prickly thorns in the side of the Halle Pietists who, for decades, attempted to walk a fine line between espousing the Pietist ‘heart religion’ while also trying to curry favor with the Lutheran Church establishment and the German nobility in Leipzig and Dresden and their Pietist allies at the royal court in Copenhagen. Zinzendorf himself had been an infamous figure in secular and ecclesiastical circles in Saxony since the mid-1720s. By the early 1730s, as the Moravians embarked upon a program of expansion into the Atlantic world, their sphere of influence was becoming too large to ignore.3 Looking back on the controversy that had developed between Halle and Herrnhut beginning in the 1720s, Francke asked Zinzendorf, with polite condescension, to “judge for yourself or ask other neutral people to judge, whether…we have cause to complain about the unjustified accusations and blasphemies against each other?”4 In reality, of course, both sides still thought they did have cause.

Francke’s use of the term “cabal” to describe those opposed to the Moravians in Herrnhut aptly captures the coded aura that shrouded this controversy and

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represented a disingenuous attempt to distance himself from this opposition. The split between Halle and Herrnhut and the initial portrayal of the Moravians as religious radicals has almost exclusively been portrayed as the result of theological differences and personal animosities between members of the Halle Pietist leadership, especially the Franckes, in Germany, Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg in Pennsylvania, and Zinzendorf. However, Gotthilf August Francke inadvertently revealed a significant, but almost completely ignored, aspect of this controversy when he referred to the cabal against “the congregation in Herrnhut”: the underlying argumentative role of ordinary believers.

This chapter will draw on epistolary correspondence between and about Halle and Herrnhut in order to demonstrate how pragmatic concerns, whether real or imagined, regarding the loyalty and spiritual welfare of ordinary believers became a significant issue that operated just below the literal surface of the larger polemical discourse. The controversy, as it operated within the Pietist epistolary network, was less about formal theology and religious doctrine, as previous scholars have proposed, than about inter-denominational influence and anxieties about ecclesiastical

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reputations and strategic regional alliances that depended upon wide allegiance and ever-increasing support from ordinary believers. To be clear, ordinary believers did not personally engage in this discourse themselves. The active participants in this dispute — trained Halle Pietist clergy, allies of the Pietists and Moravians among the European elite, and important Halle Pietist and Moravian Church administrators — skillfully invoked concerns about ordinary believers in order to convey a sense of urgency regarding the ecclesiastical threat posed by the opposition. Drawing attention to the rhetorical and communicative strategies employed by the active participants in this dispute in order to underscore the cultural value they ascribed to common believers adds a new dimension to our understanding of the ecclesiastical politics that defined the boundaries between acceptable and radical Protestantism in mid-eighteenth-century Germany.

The limited historical scholarship that focuses on the estrangement of the Moravians from the Halle Pietists generally points to theology as the decisive factor that separated them. More specifically, fundamental theological differences between the Franckes and Zinzendorf have become the main culprit. August Hermann Francke and subsequent Halle Pietists, including his son Gotthilf, preached the doctrine of Bußkampf (meaning “penitential struggle”) to describe the process of conversion. In similar fashion to the Lutheran and Reformed churches, both in Germany and other European countries, a believer had to engage in a process of reflective spiritual

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struggle for an undetermined period of time before coming to a profound realization that he or she possessed a sinful nature. Achieving this new awareness gave the believer cause to ask God for forgiveness, which made her or him a true convert. In contrast, Zinzendorf believed that conversion could happen very quickly, even instantaneously for some believers. The period of reflection and struggle was not a necessary component. As such, Zinzendorf criticized the Hallensian notion of *Bußkampf* because a penitential struggle implied a reliance on pious living in order to obtain and retain salvation (i.e. justification by works), whereas Moravians believed one needed only God’s grace to be saved, no matter in what form nor how quickly it was obtained.

The Hallensian leadership and Zinzendorf have influenced the research on this controversy in other ways as well. Hans Schneider blamed Zinzendorf and his willful temperament, his personal opposition to both Lutheran and Hallensian doctrine and practice, and his associations with other radical Pietist groups such as the Inspirationists and the Euphrata Cloister in Germany and North America for the estrangement of the Moravians from Halle. Schneider also (rightly) faults Zinzendorf’s mission program for stoking the fires of opposition because the Hallensians viewed Moravian missionaries as competitors in the search for new

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believers in the Atlantic world. The mission field of North America, in particular, became a flashpoint of competition between Moravians and the leadership of the Halle Pietists, especially with regard to the Salzburger emigrants, whom the Pietists worked so hard to assist and minister to in the course of their migration to the colony of Georgia in 1735. Craig Atwood made an important contribution to the transatlantic dimensions of the Halle/Herrnhut controversy by moving past the personal animosity between Henry Melchoir Mühlenberg, a Lutheran Pietist preacher who migrated to Pennsylvania in 1741 in order to organize and establish the Lutheran Church in that region, and Zinzendorf and their famous meeting in December 1742 by tracking Mühlenberg’s opposition to the Moravians in Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Tulpehocken after Zinzendorf’s return to Europe. In similar fashion, this chapter will move beyond the traditional focus on surface issues and personal animosities

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between Zinzendorf and the Franckes in analyzing the nature of the controversy between Herrnhut and Halle.

The traditional focus on Pietist theologians, devotional writers, and influential clergy has bred another trend in the larger scholarship on the German Pietism movement, which consists of characterizations of Pietist radicals in terms of their relative position in relation to the early modern Lutheran establishment. Even ‘Church Pietists,’ such as those in Frankfurt or Halle who pushed for reforms to the Lutheran Church without advocating separation, still rejected the formal statements of faith offered and advocated by the Lutheran Orthodoxy, as the foundation of belief, in favor of a more Gospel-centered, inward-facing individual piety. Pietist conventicles, small gatherings of lay Lutherans (and some dissenting clergy) who supported the Pietist reform movement, directly confronted the authority of the Lutheran clergy by promoting lay knowledge of the Bible and critiquing accepted methods of Protestant devotion and spirituality. Governmental councils in the German territories and the Lutheran Church itself perceived the dangers of Pietist conventicles early on, arguing that they constituted a “threat of separatism that would undermine the state churches.”

The Treaty of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years’ War in 1648 expressly prohibited the official recognition and toleration of religious groups other than the accepted confessions of the Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic Churches.

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This provision of the treaty gave German territorial authorities in the Holy Roman Empire the expressed power to regulate and disrupt Pietist conventicles. As such, even before separatist Pietist groups began to emerge in the eighteenth century, the Church Pietists of the late-seventeenth century were considered radicals as a result of their perceived embrace of lay piety and the perceived spiritual authority of common believers.

Separatist Pietist groups, the “radicals,” could only exist in places where this provision of the Treaty of Westphalia was not strictly enforced. The region of Wittgenstein and the city of Bad Berleburg, for example, both in the modern west German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, became home to the Society of Mother Eva von Buttler (Buttlarsche Rotte) and the Schwarzenau Brethren, known as the Neutäufer or ‘New Baptists.’ The Community of True Inspiration, also known as the ‘Inspirationists,’ was founded in the region of Hesse, a center of radical Pietism near Frankfurt, where the nobles were, themselves, Pietists and granted them refuge. Further east, the Czech Brethren migrated north to the German territories, Poland, and as far north as the Netherlands in response to persecution from the Catholic Church. Some of these migrants would settle on Zinzendorf’s estate in Saxony beginning in

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14 Hans Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, trans. Gerald T. MacDonald (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007), 60. Schneider identifies the Labadist followers of Jean de Labadie as the only coherent separatist Pietist group that existed in the seventeenth century.

15 Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, 61.


17 Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, 61.
1722 and become the renewed Moravian Church. Pietists in Halle avoided the “radical” label by officially rejecting any association with smaller groups the established Lutheran Church considered a threat to its own religious authority. In doing so, Hallensian Pietists existed as a non-separatist wing of the larger Pietism movement.

The Moravians, however, earned the scorn of both the Lutheran Church and the Halle Pietists because of associations with these smaller radical Pietist groups. The associations consisted of Zinzendorf’s known personal contacts and correspondence with many of the leaders and believers of these radical groups as well as perceived cooperation and collaboration with them. In addition, the ‘choir system,’ the ordination of women preachers, and unorthodox Christian beliefs and practices represented alternative religious and social structures that became associated with a wing of the Pietism movement that extended beyond even the separatist radicals. Zinzendorf’s ecclesiastical vision consisted of an ecumenical church that eschewed inter-denominational differences in favor of assembling one “true” pan-Christian church of the faithful based on Philadelphian ideals. Zinzendorf and the Moravians espoused the Philadelphian notions of a church consisting “of all

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regenerate believers, regardless of their ecclesiastical affiliation,” and that the “‘fall’ of the church, that is, the degeneration of the pure apostolic community into various institutional churches” was only the first step in the larger millenarian process of “the church’s glorious renewal and restitution at the time of Christ’s second coming.”

Even further, Zinzendorf’s ecumenical vision fueled his desire to spread his message all over Europe and across the Atlantic in the New World. Zinzendorf’s ecumenism constituted a formal rejection of traditional Protestant confessionalism. The Lutheran Church could not tolerate the further spread of this unacceptable competition and challenge to its core religious values. Moravian ecumenism, however, also implicitly rendered unnecessary the program of reform that the Hallensians advocated for the Lutheran Church.

This overview of the ecclesiastical political climate captures the importance of the split between Halle and Herrnhut with regard to the political forces and conditions necessary to categorize certain Pietist groups as radicals. However, it only reveals part of the story. Gaining a greater understanding of the process of religious radicalization requires deeper treatment of the chronology and ground-level discourses that shaped the events and circumstances which produced Moravian culture as a radical element of the larger German Pietism movement.

Zinzendorf fomented a cloud of suspicion around him in multiple centers of German society from the time he left Halle in 1717 and his problems with the court in

Dresden in the early-1720s. Until 1727, Zinzendorf’s stubborn and headstrong (or perhaps ‘heartstrong’) presence and personality was merely a nuisance to German political and ecclesiastical authorities because of his noble status as a Count. His extensive correspondence with European dignitaries, however, allowed German authorities to observe and keep tabs on this man they considered an ecclesiastical miscreant. Religious authorities in Halle kept an especially close eye on Zinzendorf because of his widely known association with the Pietism movement there. As such, when Christian David arrived on Zinzendorf’s estate in Upper Lusatia with a large contingent of Bohemian Protestant believers intent on settling there, those connected with the Franckes and the Halle Pietists were among the first to take notice.

The role of believers, operating within the context of associations of Zinzendorf with nefarious dealings (by Church Pietist standards), is palpable even in the early letters about the arrival of these Czech Brethren on Zinzendorf’s estate. A letter written in 1727 by David Korte, a missionary book printer stationed in Copenhagen, informed a local group of Halle-educated Pietist pastors, all of whom had served as missionaries in the Pietist mission to Tranquebar (in the modern state of Tamil Nadu, India), of the increasing numbers of Czech Brethren in Saxony. “A Bible was printed two years ago in the Vogtland,” Korte wrote, “in which Count Zinzendorf has also fomented the preface and summaries. You might know of this Count, in part, from Halle, who has already received on his estate in Upper Lusatia over 300 of the
Bohemian Brothers from Moravia and given them farmland because they have been persecuted and expelled from Moravia...To what end, I do not know.”

All German Pietists had a deep appreciation of the Bible. And yet, the Bible could also function as a lighting-rod of controversy as a result of its immense complexity, the accuracy of the translations, and where to place the emphases in explanatory interpretations and exegetical commentaries. Pietists from many areas of Germany had been producing alternative German translations and commentaries on the Bible since the late-seventeenth century. Korte immediately linked Zinzendorf with radical Pietist sects by associating him with the Berleburg Bible (via the reference to the “Vogtland”), an eight-volume German translation of the Bible produced from 1726-1742 in Bad Berleburg as a radical Pietist alternative to Martin Luther’s translation. Though Zinzendorf eventually traveled to Bad Berleburg in September 1730, at the personal invitation of the Count of Berleburg-Wittgenstein, and corresponded with radical Pietists located there, Korte probably prefaced his comments in this manner in order to remind his Pietist colleagues about Zinzendorf’s


24 Shantz, An Introduction to German Pietism, 206-207.

25 Schneider, German Radical Pietism, 151-153.
association with other radical Pietist Bible translation projects. Zinzendorf was known to have participated in the production of the *Ebersdorff Bible*, an alternative translation he jointly produced in the northern Bavarian town of Ebersdorf in collaboration with a Lutheran pastor named Johann Andreas Rothe. In any case, to be associated with the Berleburg Bible was to be associated with the “mystical and millenarian ideas of the Philadelphian sympathizers who worked on it.” These Philadelphian sympathizers emphasized the faith and intrinsic connections between “true believers,” regardless of confession or denomination, which undermined the clergy and ecclesiastical authority of the institutional Churches.

Halle Pietists had also been involved in Bible translation and interpretation projects. They possessed a deep respect for Luther’s Bible, but they also believed that further improvements and clarifications could be made. In fact, August Hermann Francke himself began publishing the *Observaciones biblicae* (Biblical Observations) in 1695, a monthly periodical dedicated to pointing out inaccuracies in the Luther Bible, which often angered Orthodox Lutheran theologians. On the other hand, the Berleburg Bible and Zinzendorf’s contributions to the Ebersdorf Bible, especially the exegetical commentaries, represented radical departures from both the Luther Bible and the Hallensian translations. Lutherans and Pietists feared these radical

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27 Shantz, *Introduction to German Pietism*, 209.
28 Ibid, 208.
translations, that seemed to emphasize the spiritual authority of believers over that of the clergy, would exert more influence over the pool of believers in the German territories and elsewhere than their own.

Korte’s letter transitioned very quickly from the Berleburg Bible to Zinzendorf’s connections with Halle before discussing the presence of the Bohemian Brethren in Herrnhut. His vague language associating Zinzendorf with radical Bible translations contrasts sharply with the much more precise language he used to describe the arrival of these Czech believers. In addition to specifying the number and their exact location, Korte clearly viewed these Bohemian Protestant’s decision to go to Herrnhut as a threat to the credibility of the Pietism movement because he immediately tried to defame their character by suggesting that they had been forcibly expelled from their homeland. While all Protestant clergy had been expelled from Bohemia 100 years earlier in 1624 by Emperor Ferdinand and Counter-Reformation Catholics, these Bohemian Brethren left voluntarily and had not been officially evicted by Czech authorities. 29 By accepting farmland from Zinzendorf, these religious refugees became directly associated with Zinzendorf’s reputation, the Berleburg Bible, and other radical Pietist groups, in spite of the fact that these

religious migrants were neither Pietists nor Lutherans upon their arrival.\textsuperscript{30} To Pietist allies like Korte, who were not necessarily members of the leadership in Halle, news of rapidly increasing numbers among Halle’s perceived competitors was deeply troubling. Alerting the recipients of his letter to the increasing population of believers in Herrnhut, as a method of raising the alarm about the spread of radical Pietism, points to the issue of competition for believers as among the substantive dangers (in spirit, if not reality) to the stability and credibility of Halle Pietism. The exact nature of the danger the Moravians posed, however, remained ambiguous for some. Still, it was a matter worthy of mention, even as far north as Copenhagen, that Zinzendorf and the Moravians had been gaining strength in Saxony, ‘for reasons unknown.’

Not all the reports from centers of Pietist influence outside of Halle about the arrival of these Czech Brethren were negative. A few years later, in the early 1730s, opinions of the Moravians had become partially divided. As Moravians spread further afield from Herrnhut, Pietist ministers and their allies from all over Europe began reporting Moravian movements in their respective regions to Halle. In September 1731, Gotthilf August Francke received a letter from a Pietist pastor in Switzerland, named Christoph Balber who reported that, “the dear and honorable friend Christian David, the carpenter from Herrnhut,” who originally lead the Czech refugees to

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 6-12; These Bohemian Protestants consisted of a contingent of underground members of the Czech Brethren movement, who traced their spiritual heritage back to the Czech reformer Jan Hus and the pre-Lutheran Hussite Reformation in the fifteenth century. Thus, they considered themselves Protestants, but not Lutherans. Jan Amos Comenius and (later) the Moravians called them the “Hidden Seed” because they were believed to have preserved the traditions of the earlier Czech Brethren during the religious wars of the seventeenth century.
Zinzendorf’s estate, had recently been in Schwarzenbach, near the city of Zurich.\textsuperscript{31}

He also reported that he had “heard and read many good [things] about the person and institutions of the Count von Zinzendorf.”\textsuperscript{32} The brevity of Balber’s report about the Moravians points to the fact that while their movements were worthy of note, Moravians were not yet perceived as an existential threat by all who encountered them. In fact, there was a potential audience in the European ecclesiastical community for the Moravian message.

Christoph Balber’s opinion of the Moravians became more mixed over time, however. In another letter to Johannes Mischke, a Pietist minister in Saxony who had been appointed inspector of German schools in Halle in 1730, Balber reported that “2 Moravian Brothers have been in Zurich several times for the edification of many hearts, and through their own narrative of godliness, have left behind much wonder and amusement in [people’s] minds about Count von Zinzendorf and [his son] Christel [von Zinzendorf].”\textsuperscript{33} Initially, the words Balber used to describe this incident sound eminently positive. These Moravian preachers had “edified many hearts”

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{31} For an overview of Moravian activities in Switzerland, albeit through the lens of Zinzendorf, see W.R. Ward, \textit{The Protestant Evangelical Awakening}, 185-191.
\item \textsuperscript{32} FS AFSt/H C 357 : 5, Letter, Schwarzenbach (Switzerland), September 7, 1731, Christoph Balber to Gotthilf August Francke, pp. 4. “Der Engel dass Angesichts Gott es sege aller Orten indem Segen met und über Ihn: In unserer Statt er teuersten die lieben Freund Christian David, den Zimmermann aus Herrnhut, von welchen in der 2te geistlichen Fama ein weitläufiger schöner Brief stehet: Ich habe den Zeither von des Zweln Grafen von Zinzendorf Person und Anstalten vieles gutes gelesen und gehört, und habe dabei oft gedacht ob dieser Her mit denl. Hsl. Theolog. und Lehrern zu Halle auch in Vertrauter Freundschaft und Korrespondenz stehe.”
\item \textsuperscript{33} FS AFSt/H C 357 : 6, Letter, Schwarzenbach, Switzerland, 1731 (exact date unknown), Christoph Balber to Johannes Mischke. “Die in eben demselben schreiben gemeldete 2 Mährische Brüder, sind in Zürich etliche tag zur Erbauung vieler Herzen gewesen, und haben durch ihre erzähl und eigen von der Gottseligkeit dass Herzen Grafen von Zinzendorf und der Christel Anstalten zu Herrnhut viele Vergnügung und verwunderlich in den Gemütern hinterlassen.”
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through “narratives of godliness,” which caused “wonder and amusement.” But his vague-yet-polite language also operated as an encoded critique and warning to Francke about the influence these Moravian preachers had been able to exert on the “minds” of otherwise loyal Pietist congregants in Zurich. The wonder and amazement, after all, came as a result of the Moravians spreading “their own” narratives of godliness, not those favored by the Halle Pietists.

Wariness about the dispersion of Moravian preachers and believers was only compounded by the sudden loss of one particularly important Pietist communicant, which caused great consternation in Halle. August Gottlieb Spangenberg would become a symbol for the nefarious power of Moravian influence. Educated in Jena, a major Pietist center and ally of Halle in the German region of Thuringia, Spangenberg taught for two years in the Faculty of Theology in Halle as a personal appointment made by Gotthilf August Francke. Following his dismissal in 1733, Spangenberg joined Zinzendorf and the Moravians and became a leader of the Moravian Atlantic world mission program in addition to becoming an ordained bishop of the Moravian Church in 1744. University faculty and clergy in Halle began to suspect Spangenberg of disloyalty to the Pietist cause in the early 1730s when they observed his opposition to Halle Pietist doctrine, the concept of ‘doctrine’ more broadly, and his propensity to obliquely advocate separation from the Lutheran Church. Spangenberg’s participation in clandestine communion services in Halle, in subtle protest of those held by Halle Pietist preachers, and his developing relationship with Zinzendorf only confirmed
their suspicions. The Faculty of Theology gave him the option of apologizing for these actions and severing his ties with Zinzendorf, or allowing the regional German king to decide whether or not he could remain in his position. Opting for the latter, the king terminated Spangenberg and expelled him from Halle in April 1733. Given Spangenberg’s resistance to Halle Pietist doctrine, rejection of Hallensian religiosity as too formal and worldly, and his participation in conventicles, Zinzendorf immediately recruited him.  

Responding to the Spangenberg issue in January 1733 (before his expulsion), Heinrich Schubert, a Halle-educated Pietist preacher at the Holy Spirit Church in Potsdam on the outskirts of Berlin, wrote to Gotthilf August Francke that the “Zinzendorfian spirit [referring to an alleged perversion of the “Pietist spirit”] is a tough, defiant, inflexible, and proud spirit.” The Halle Pietist’s notion of the “Zinzendorfian spirit” lies at the heart of this controversy and encompassed numerous meanings and connotations that each evoked and pursued separate, though interconnected religious and ecclesiastical agendas. Schubert, however, only partially referred to this particular Pietist spirit. He qualified his statement by pointing out that he meant to refer only to the “impolite” spirit of Zinzendorf, as opposed to the more traditional and “polite” Pietist spirit advocated by men like Philipp Jakob Spener and August Hermann Francke. The impolite Pietist spirit belonged only to Zinzendorf

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himself and, as such, he was subject to condemnation as “tough, defiant, inflexible, and proud.” These terms evoke notions of imperviousness and implacability toward the traditional Pietist spirit, which could not be tolerated if the Halle Pietists wanted to maintain the purity of their status as a non-separatist group within the established Lutheran Church. Zinzendorf, though possessed of a Pietist spirit, had deviated from the polite kind with his unconventional disposition and open criticisms of the Halle Pietist system. In the minds of the Hallensians, Zinzendorf’s spirit constituted a confused and potentially dangerous version of their own.

But Zinzendorf himself was not the only problem. Schubert’s modification of the proper noun “Zinzendorf” into the adjectival “Zinzendorfische” (meaning “Zinzendorfian”) implicated rank and file Moravian believers as a constituent and functional element complicit in the Zinzendorfian spirit. The literal emphasis remained on Zinzendorf as the most visible perpetrator of this spiritual confusion, but his growing circle of followers symbolized the plausible adoptability of his message to the common believer and represented the possibility of more and more of these believers, like Spangenberg, being persuaded by the Zinzendorfian spirit and enticed away from the Halle Pietist fold. Thus, church politics informed Schubert’s notion of the “Zinzendorfian spirit” in a way that made Zinzendorf and the Moravians subversive radicals, while still remaining loyal to Halle Pietist religious principles. Spangenberg, as a believer who had fallen into the snare of this spirit, metaphorically transformed into a symbol for the common believer, despite his status as an academic
and theologian in Halle. As if speaking with a fellow pastor about a wayward congregant, Schubert implored Francke to “look into how Mr. Spangenberg is doing with the [Zinzendorfian spirit], and if he is affected negatively, then we have to do something about it.”

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In this period, Pietist letter writers often remained quite vague on the reasoning behind their ways of thinking about Zinzendorf and the Moravians. Ambiguity became a rhetorical strategy used by members of the anti-Moravian network to malign the Moravians without actually taking responsibility for overtly critical positions, all while conforming to the conventions of polite society with regard to public speech. The semi-public nature of this epistolary correspondence meant that their words took on new meanings and, often times, deliberately double meanings so that all competing interests could be satisfied.37 For his part, Schubert wished that Spangenberg was different and that he could have been able to resist the Zinzendorfian spirit, but he also recognized that this evil spirit must be removed immediately once it had been introduced or it would quickly spread beyond their

36 Ibid; “Sollte nun derselbe sich auch an Herr Spangenberg, so wie wohl alle Liebe zu versuchen…”
37 While the writer and addressee of these letters are quite clear, copies of these letters often surface among the papers of other Pietist and European dignitaries. Though these letters were never made public, in the sense that they appeared in a newsletter or were read aloud to groups of people, the text of these letters was often made available to other interested parties. This point will become more clear in subsequent sections of this chapter.
control. Schubert told Francke exactly what he wanted to hear in terms of condemning the influence of Zinzendorf, while also maintaining a neutral and even distressed stance with regard to Spangenberg and his departure from Halle. In his role as a symbol for the common believer, Spangenberg represented an unambiguous sense of loss, but also the more equivocal and menacing possibility of ecclesiastical threat, especially to the credibility of sacred Lutheran doctrines like the Augsburg Confession. If a committed and revered Pietist like Spangenberg could be lured away from and be turned against Halle by the spirit of Zinzendorf and those who follow him, how much further could their influence extend?

On the surface, the meaning and practice of the Augsburg Confession, the standard articles of faith for the Lutheran Church and one of the most important documents produced by the Reformation in the early sixteenth century, became an important issue of contention in the correspondence concerning the Moravian Church. Letter writers professed the value of learning the Moravian’s position in relation to the Augsburg Confession. Johann Wilhelm Schröder, a member of the royal Privy Council in Copenhagen, raised the issue in 1734 upon receiving word that two...
Moravians had arrived in Denmark. According to Schröder, a publication named “Old and New in the Kingdom of God” had raised the question of whether or not the Faculty of Theology at the University of Tübingen believed that the Moravians properly ascribed to the Lutheran articles of faith as laid out in the Augsburg Confession. His interest in this question stemmed from rumors about Christian David and Spangenberg’s recent mission trip to Greenland. As a member of the royal court in Copenhagen, Schröder was worried about protecting Danish interests in Greenland. The Danish government had been sending Protestant missionaries there with financial support from the Royal Mission College since 1721 and also supported Moravian missionary efforts in New Herrnhut and Lichtenfels. And yet, the presence of Moravians in Greenland had the potential to poison the well of Inuit converts if the Moravians did not maintain a proper allegiance to the tenets of the Augsburg Confession. In reality, however, the Augsburg Confession functioned as a credible diversion from the real issue of competition for believers in a new and expanding mission field. Raising the spectre of the Augsburg Confession and the question of whether the Moravians adhered to it fortified the bond between the cities of Halle, Augsburg, Tübingen, and Copenhagen as harbingers of the Lutheran Protestant

40 FS AFSt/M 1 F 3 : 68, Letter, Copenhagen, April 20, 1734, Johann Wilhelm Schröder to G.A. Francke.
tradition, strengthened the epistolary connection among themselves, and against the rising “threat” posed by the Moravians.\footnote{FS AFSt/M 1 F 3 : 68, Letter, Copenhagen, April 20, 1734, Johann Wilhelm Schröder to G.A. Francke.}

By 1735, suspicion of the Moravians among the Pietist leadership in Halle had reached a boiling point. Early that year, they began to receive reports about Moravians arriving in the New World and rumors began to spread that Zinzendorf was making plans to go there himself. Gotthilf August Francke sent reports to his ministers working in the Pietist mission in Madras, India that “the Lord Count Zinzendorf together with Mr. Spangenberg and some Moravians have decided to go to the West Indies. The latter [“some Moravians”] are already on the way and Mr. Spangenberg has already arrived in England. The Count will follow soon after.”\footnote{FS AFSt/M 2 G 7 : 19, Letter, Halle, January 17, 1735, G.A. Francke to Benjamin Schultze, Johann Anton Sartorius, and Johann Ernst Geister. “…denn das der H. Graf von Zinzendorf nebst den H. Spangenberg und einigen Herrnhutern nach West Indien zu gehen entschlossen ist. Die letztern sind schon auf den Wege und H. Spangenberg ist bereits in England angekommen, der H. Graf aber wird allen warum nach bald nach folgen.”}

Feeling compelled to inform Pietist missionaries half a world away in India about the movements and motivations of Moravian missionaries arriving and going in the opposite direction across the Atlantic to the Caribbean points to both the level of threat the Halle Pietists thought the Moravians posed to their mission program and the level of integration that facilitated the mission program itself. In fact, Francke knew that his report of Moravian movements in this letter would find its way back to other important members of the Pietist network in Europe. Johann Ernst Geister, one of the addressees of Francke’s letter, was a known informant of Christian Ernst von
Stolberg-Wernigerode, a politician and Count of the House of Stolberg who ruled the county (Grafschaft) of Wernigerode in Brandenburg-Prussia (near Berlin). Stolberg was also an important privy councillor and political advisor to his cousin, the reigning Danish King Christian VI. By sending this message to India via Geister and Stolberg, Francke was able to simultaneously inform multiple nodes of the Halle Pietist correspondence network about Moravian activities.44

A month later in February 1735, Francke raised the alarm about Moravian incursions into the newly organized colony of Georgia. He sent a letter to Johann Martin Boltzius and Israel Christian Gronau, the leaders of the Pietist mission in Georgia, commanding them to minister to the German immigrants who had recently arrived in Savannah from the Austrian region of Salzburg. The story of the Salzburg emigration to the New World in 1733-1734 contains many tantalizing points of ecclesiastical and political intrigue and a brief explanation of a few particulars will suffice to put in proper relief the importance the Halle Pietists accorded to the plight of the Salzburgers.45

44 Biographical Data (Biografische Angaben) for “Johann Ernst Geister” and “Christian Ernst von Stolberg-Wernigerode,” ‘Database on the Individual Manuscripts in the Historical Archives.’ Franckesche Stiftungen, 2016, GND 1024597032 & GND 117286427, respectively.
were small farmers of Lutheran faith living among a majority-Catholic (though increasingly Protestant) population in the region of Salzburg. In the early eighteenth century, these Lutherans largely avoided violent persecution because of a political climate that sought to appease Protestant populations as a method of sustaining Habsburg rule over Austria due to the relative power of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI to the local Protestant princes and their invocation of the terms of the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, which did not allow for the expulsion of Protestants from Catholic territories.46

Disregarding these political conditions and thumbing his nose at the ambitious Catholic Bishop of Salzburg, Count Leopold Anton Eleutherius von Firmian signed the Edict of Expulsion (Emigrations-patent) on October 31, 1731 and expelled all Protestants from the region. Traveling north to Augsburg, the forced emigrants from Salzburg encountered further opposition from Catholic leaders, who “feared that the presence of the Salzburgers would usher in a demographic shift, one that might transform Augsburg into a Protestant enclave.”47 However, Revered Samuel Urslerger, the rector of St. Anne’s Church, the most prominent Protestant church in Augsburg, came to their aid. In addition to his duties at St. Anne’s, Urslerger was a protégé and friend of August Hermann Francke during his university days in Halle, he was a founding member of the Francke Foundation, and he was also an important

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affiliate of the English Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (the ‘SPCK’). Given his educational pedigree as a strong advocate for the Pietist cause and his rank and stature in the Augsburg and larger Protestant community, Halle viewed him as an important and trusted allies. So when Urlsperger took up the cause of the Salzburger emigrants upon their arrival in his city, the Pietist leadership in Halle gave him their full support.48

Urlsperger negotiated the transfer of the Salzburger emigrants first to Brandenburg-Prussia and then to England, where they hoped to remain because of the hardships they experienced on the overland journey on the European continent and the rough seas they encountered while crossing the English channel. The voyage across the English Channel gave many Salzburgers a moment of pause about the righteousness and feasibility of their plan to cross the Atlantic ocean and establish a settlement in the New World that they hoped would develop into a new “city upon a hill” in the service of God. Why would God put so many obstacles in their path and subject them to such frightening hardships if they were truly executing His will? Luckily, Urlsperger’s connections with the English SPCK came through with an abundance of material support for their trip across the Atlantic in the form of cash and three months worth of provisions to sustain them on their sea voyage. The encouragement from the SPCK, orchestrated by Urlsperger, convinced the Salzburgers that God had, indeed, sanctioned the Atlantic crossing and they set sail

48 Ibid, 9-13; See also George Fenwick Jones, The Salzburger Saga, 9, 18.
for British North America on January 8, 1734.\textsuperscript{49} Their survival against the hardships placed in front of them would be all the proof they needed that they had indeed embarked on a divinely sanctioned pilgrimage.

The physical and spiritual condition of the Salzburg migrants after their arrival in the New World became an important issue in the Halle Pietist’s epistolary campaign against the Moravians. Landing in Charles Town harbor on March 5th, the Salzburgers travelled down the Savannah River to the capital and then to a small village called Ebenezer, which James Oglethorpe, the current governor of Georgia, had designated as their destination.\textsuperscript{50} Halle had been preoccupied with establishing a Pietist beachhead in the New World by trying to organize small enclaves and networks of financial support for Lutheran congregations in the North American deep south in the 1730s. As a group of people sympathetic to the Halle Pietists who resided outside of Halle, the Salzburgers represented ecclesiastical expansion and the extension of Pietist influence overseas.\textsuperscript{51} They also exemplified Philip Jacob Spener’s vision of \textit{ecclesiola in ecclesia} (Latin for “little church within the Church”) and its implied critique of Lutheran orthodoxy and church function. As such, Pietist leaders both inside and outside of Halle had a strong incentive to ensure the safety and success of the Salzburger migration to Georgia.

\textsuperscript{49} Herz & Smith, “Into Danger but also Closer to God”, 20.  
\textsuperscript{51} Dietmar Herz and John David Smith, “Into Danger but also Closer to God,” 3.
Moravian interest in the British colony of Georgia began with the expulsion of the Schwenkfelders from Saxony by the royal court in Dresden in 1733. A group of Schwenkfelders living in the village of Berthelsdorf, just north of Herrnhut, asked Zinzendorf to assist them in relocating to Georgia after hearing that James Oglethorpe was trying to recruit religious refugees from continental Europe to populate the region. Surviving on provisions provided by the Moravians, the Schwenkfelders made it all the way to Holland, where they decided to accept an offer of passage to the British colony of Pennsylvania instead. The land that the Trustees of Georgia had originally allocated for the Schwenkfelders was subsequently granted to the Moravians. The first group of ten Moravian migrants arrived in Savannah on April 6, 1735. They spent the next year cultivating the land and building shelters in anticipation of the arrival of a second group of 25 Moravians. Poor diets, a harsher climate than in Europe, internal disputes, and political pressure to bear arms from the colonial Georgia government, however, eventually caused the Moravian migrants to abandon the Georgia settlement in 1740 in favor of heading north to Pennsylvania.52

Still, with both Pietists and Moravians interested the same region of Georgia, the issue of denominational proximity began to bifurcate and take on an entirely new meaning. In addition to drawing theological and ecclesiastical distinctions, the Pietists

now had to contend with the Moravians encroaching on their geographic territory.

Resistance to the Moravian presence in Georgia, however, came even before the Moravians had left Europe to go there. In early 1734, Gotthilf August Francke heard about a ship bound for the Carolinas that carried letters and parcels of goods for Boltzius and Gronau, but also carried August Gottlieb Spangenberg. “Spangenberg and some Moravians” were currently en route to the Carolina coast, he wrote.

Expressing his extreme distrust of the Moravians in general and his consternation that they were trying to gain a foothold in this burgeoning land of good Halle-brand Pietism in the vast southern wilderness, Francke told Boltzius and Gronau that he could “no longer hide that I am worried and distressed because these incorrigible people will be near you.” Admonishing them of this circumstance, Francke cautioned that they should not be alarmed “that some confusion may be brought about by them in your area.” Zinzendorf himself, however, had also recently declared his intentions to travel to America, so the confusion and discord would only become worse with time.53 Francke viewed Zinzendorf’s decision to send Spangenberg as a personal snub to himself and the Pietists in Halle. As such, he summarily rejected Zinzendorf’s most recent plea to end the opposition against him and his followers.54


Moravians sowing the seeds of heresy among the Pietist flock was now drifting across the Atlantic.

Boltzius and Gronau spread these accusations about the Moravians sowing the seeds of spiritual corruption among the masses back across the Atlantic from Georgia in an April 1735 letter to Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen, the court preacher at St. James Chapel in London, a place where Germans went to worship during the Hanoverian dynasty. The purpose of the letter was to report the activities of Spangenberg and the Moravians in Ebenezer, Georgia. King George II and James Oglethorpe, at the urging of Samuel Urlsperger and the SPCK, granted the Salzburger emigrants permission to settle on this site. Confirming that Spangenberg had, indeed, become a spiritual victim of Zinzendorf and had been truly lost from the perspective of the Halle Pietists, Boltzius now accused Spangenberg of being “fully Zinzendorfian” (völlig Zinzendorfisch”) and that Spangenberg himself had been defending Zinzendorf and his views in that region. Any doubts that lingered about the possibility of Spangenberg learning the error of his ways after his departure from Halle were now put to rest. But the bigger issue in this letter implicated the wavering religious allegiances of common believers more directly by reporting on Spangenberg’s plans to spread the Moravian message from Georgia to Pennsylvania and then to the Caribbean islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix.

56 Ibid, 58.
Perhaps most troubling for Boltzius and Gronau in Georgia was the news that the Faculty of Theology in Tübingen had recognized the Lutheran orthodoxy of the Moravians despite what he had personally observed of Moravian beliefs and practices. Boltzius and Gronau cited and explained numerous biblical inaccuracies they had allegedly witnessed Moravian believers espousing and practicing, including the characterization of a bleeding woman that Jesus healed in the book of Matthew 9:21 as a “fanatic.” These supposed perversions of biblical doctrine constituted disqualifying remarks that the respected theological faculty in Tübingen should have recognized. This letter forcefully conveyed the implication that Zinzendorf and the Moravians had the ability to lie and deceive convincingly about their Lutheran orthodoxy in public while remaining secretly beholden to heretical beliefs and wanting to spread these heresies to the Pietists, the Salzburgers, and others. The combination of Spangenberg’s behavior and complete spiritual transformation and the inexplicably scandalous power Moravians possessed to influence otherwise respectable members of the community of Pietists in Germany made the Moravian Church as a whole a clear and present danger to both the Pietist spiritual enterprise and their often tenuous relationship with the larger Lutheran Church.\footnote{Francke himself was aware of and most likely had a chance to read the correspondence between Boltzius and Gronau and Friedrich Ziegenhagen and the}

\footnote{I suspect this “observation” about the bleeding woman was a misunderstanding of Moravian blood and wounds piety in one form or another.}

\footnote{Ibid, 62.}
In a reply to Boltzius and Gronau later that year in November 1735, Francke reported that he had “seen, among other things, how Mr. Spangenberg has visited Ebenezer and was testifying there.” Despite these intrusions, Francke derived encouragement from the fact that “the most worthy Mr. Boltzius…has been more troubled than pleased by the coming of the Moravians in that region.”

Reports about Spangenberg and other Moravians preaching and testifying in and around the region of Ebenezer compounded the troublesome nature of rumors that Philip von Reck, one of the other original architects and organizers of the Salzburger emigration to Georgia, had succumbed to temptation and joined the Moravians. “I am increasingly concerned,” he confessed to Boltzius, “that Mr. [Philip] von Reck is secretly attached to the Zinzendorfian party because others think he is not free of them.” Even though he had visited Halle several times and accompanied Salzburgers across the Atlantic on at least two occasions, Philip von Reck had spent some time in Herrnhut in 1734 and was known to have discussed the possibility of helping Zinzendorf get more Moravians to British America.

Regardless of his true sympathies, Reck was not an outspoken critic of Zinzendorf

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59 FS AFSt/M 5 A 3 : 8, 48, Letter, Halle, November 19, 1735, G.A. Francke to J.M. Boltzius and I.C. Gronau; “Francke ist das Schreiben von Boltzius und Gronau an Ziegenhagen vom 7. Mai übermittelt worden.” The source of this German quotation is the Franckesche Stiftungen description of the contents of this letter from their online database.

60 Ibid; “…und habe ich daraus unter anderen ersehen, wie der Herr Spangenberg dieselben in Ebenzer besucht und sich daselbst bezeugt hat. Mir ist recht lieb gewesen, dass der werteste Herr Boltzius ihnen condate eröffnet hat, dass sie durch die Ankunft derer Herrnhuter in ihrer Gegend mehr bekümmert als erfreuet worden.”

61 Ibid, 51; “Ich sorge mich immer H. von Reck hänget der Zinzendorfischen Partei Heimlich an, wie denn auch andern es dafür halten, dass er davon nicht frei sei.”

and Moravian religious culture like Boltzius and Gronau. Consorting with the Moravians tarnished Reck’s reputation and transformed him into another symbol of overt Moravian ecclesiastical aggression. Francke held him up as another example of the Moravians sowing discord and confusion among the Salzburger emigrants.

Moravians extending their sphere of influence even further in the New World had become a pressing concern once again. Samuel Urlsperger confirmed the suspicions about Reck in a March 1736 report on the current condition of the Salzburger emigrants in Ebenezer. He received word directly from Reck that Spangenberg had recently traveled to Pennsylvania and David Nitschmann had left for the Danish Caribbean islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix, which seems to point toward Reck’s loyalty to the Pietists in his reporting on the movements of prominent Moravians. Yet, Urlsperger also reported that Reck “sent us word…that he wanted to visit us once more in Ebenezer. However, he hesitated because he could probably notice that we disapprove *verbis et factis* [in words and deeds] of his and his Herrnhut Brethren’s obvious separation from the Lutheran church [sic] and their scorn, yes, downright contempt of the ministerial office, and that we can well do without such people.”

Regardless of whether Reck actually “hesitated” in his plan to visit the Salzburgers in Ebenezer, and leaving aside the spurious accusation that the Moravians had somehow “separated” from the Lutheran Church, Urlsperger used this report to

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warn the Pietists in Halle that the Moravians were spreading. In the process, he burnished his reputation as an important point of connection between the Lutheran Church and the Church Pietist movement. The disavowal of Reck demonstrated that disloyalty to the ecclesiastical institutional structure would not be tolerated.

Urlsperger implicitly motioned toward what would become a familiar criticism of the Moravians: accusing them of reckless individualism in rejecting any sort of religious authority structure. A common accusation lobbed at Pietists since the late-seventeenth century by mainstream Lutherans, “heart religion” connoted the rejection of any form of clerical support structure in the practice of Protestant religious culture. Church Pietists in Halle saw this as a valid, but not insurmountable, critique of legalistic faith statements espoused by the Lutheran Orthodoxy in the eighteenth century. Far from individualism, the Church Pietists viewed the Protestant faith as consisting of more than formal declarations affirming and confirming one’s acceptance of various fundamental issues of Christian faith, such as the authority of the Bible, the nature of the Holy Trinity, and the means of attaining God’s grace.

Urlsperger continued in his report:

These [Moravians] openly despise the ministry, the preaching of the Divine Word (i.e. the Holy Scripture in the Bible), the use of the Holy Sacraments and especially of the Holy Communion, which they distribute among themselves; and they have probably been trying to stir up animosity in others against us ministers in Ebenezer and our office. We will leave it to others to judge whether one can believe these people without sinning against his conscience and the truth, or whether he might not rather clearly recognize a crude hypocrisy in such unfounded claims. Meanwhile we
let them go their way, since they do not respect our office. We have already told Mr. Spangenberg that which was most urgent.  

Urlsperger’s statement palpably shifted the focus away from Zinzendorf and toward the influence of Moravian believers. His words also expertly shielded Pietists from allegations of anti-clericalism by accusing the Moravians of something even worse: not being Christians at all. After stating these broad charges in no uncertain terms, he disingenuously attempted to occupy the moral high ground by “leav[ing] it to others to judge” whether they could be believed.

The animosity that Boltzius, Gronau, and Urlsperger harbored toward the Moravians really turned on this issue of “respecting” their office, meaning their station as Lutheran Pietist ministers. For the Halle Pietists, it was more than a rejection of clerical authority. That could be understood and even commended, in certain contexts. The real issue was that they perceived the Moravians as perverting one of the core doctrines that the Halle Pietists held dear: the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The Halle Pietists derived their understanding of this doctrine from the theological writings of Philip Jacob Spener in his *Pia Desideria*, which argued in favor of a priesthood of all believers, “where believers encourage one another in living a holy life.” Spener also “encourage[d] laypeople to read the New Testament” and to talk about what they read at “‘apostolic gatherings’ [conventicles]…where people meet at certain times of the week, outside

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church services, for mutual instruction and edification.” Simply put, believers should have a say in how religion was practiced and experienced, but they should not retain final control over the outcome. This argument was derived from the larger Protestant critique of the Catholic Church, stating that access to the divine could be achieved through prayer and without the intercession of ordained clergy. Halle Pietists perceived the Moravians as taking this one step further by introducing a literal interpretation of this doctrine, effectively eliminating the need for an ordained clergy altogether. Accusations of disrespect for clerical office stemmed from this, ultimately mistaken, conclusion. The Moravian heresy emanated from the seemingly paradoxical Pietist belief that the clergy played an important role in the administration of an inwardly focused Protestant Lutheran spirituality that emphasized the agency of believers. Ministers like Boltzius and Gronau linked this notion to the encroachment of the Moravians and, thus, perceived them as a threat to their very existence as official church ministers since their offices would be rendered effectively meaningless and unnecessary by their understanding of Moravian ecclesiastical culture. All of this added up to a rhetorical coupling of the dangers that both theological/ecclesiastical proximity and physical proximity posed by the presence of the Moravians. Zinzendorf, though certainly dangerous, was not the only problem. The Moravians constituted a collective threat.

Direct accusations of collective menace developed, in subsequent years, into a more consistent stream of reports involving common Salzburgers and other German immigrants having distinctively negative experiences with Moravians in various capacities. On February 3, 1737, Urlsperger reported that a German immigrant in Ebenezer by the name of Johann Jacob Helfenstein from the Rhineland, “sent his son to Savannah so that he might learn the cobbler’s trade with the Herrnhuters [Moravians].” Johann quickly became disappointed because, according to Urlsperger, “the cobbler there does not know his trade.” The bigger issue, however, was that his son would be in close proximity with Moravians on a daily basis. Urlsperger speculated that, “the Herrnhuters would have caused much disgust and repulsion in the boy with their slanderous remarks regarding the [Pietist/Lutheran] preachers at Ebenezer, whom, I understand, they call any number of vile names.”

Urlasperger reported that the boy’s parents told him “much of what their son had told them regarding the different and peculiar arrangement of [the Moravian’s] worship; but one cannot believe everything [the Helfersteins] say.” Urlsperger did not believe that the Helfersteins were lying about what the boy saw while in the presence of the Moravians. Their stories could not be trusted because, despite being both first- and second-hand witnesses to Moravian heresies, “Mrs. Helferstein has now agree[d] with [the Moravians] to place her son as an apprentice with their cobbler for three years” anyway. Even worse, Anna Helferstein had “become very familiar with the

Herrnhuters in London.” As such, Urlsperger washed his hands of the situation, declaring that “[h]er boy is not worth much, and he has bad habits and manners.” In addition, Anna Helferstein “is much too lenient with him, and I have had much occasion to remonstrate with her on this point.” Urlsperger made his point quite clear: proximity to the Moravians was a dangerous proposition and willfully consorting with them became grounds for social ostracism. Urlsperger’s dislike of the Moravians was so great that he could not help but reframe this otherwise innocuous case of a boy seeking training as a shoemaker by projecting vague, unsubstantiated rumors originating with the anti-Moravian correspondence network onto the situation. Real world examples of ordinary Pietist believers being led astray by Moravian believers, including humble cobblers, made the enormity of the threat they posed more concrete to Pietist authorities in Europe.

In addition to the then-common criticism of Moravians working to further the “conversion of the savages,” Francke composed another letter to Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen criticizing Zinzendorf’s ordination as bishop of the Moravian Church in 1737 by Daniel Ernst Jablonski. Though ostensibly taking issue with Jablonski, a Reformed preacher of the Northern European Brethren movement, and his lack of authority to make an extra-denominational episcopal appointment, Francke was

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68 Ibid., 15.
69 FS AFSt/M 2 G 15 : 22b, Postscript Letter, Halle, October 12, 1737, G.A. Francke to Johann Ernst Geister; Zinzendorf’s consecration as the second bishop of the Moravian Church led to the official recognition of the Moravian Church by Friedrich Wilhelm I, the current King of Prussia and Elector of Brandenburg that same year. See Patrick M. Erben, A Harmony of the Spirits: Translation and the Language of Community in Early Pennsylvania (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 52.
actually more concerned that this appointment represented the potential to promote
the legitimacy of the Moravian movement as a whole. “Some are already beginning to
see [Zinzendorf’s] impulsive nature,” Francke explained, “however, he and his
followers wreak havoc wherever they go and are in many cases disruptive [to Francke
and the Halle Pietists, of course].” Jablonski and Zinzendorf represented high
profile symbols of the larger danger of radical Pietist influence spreading even further
than it had already, to the discredit of the Pietists.

Epistolary convention also worked subtilely to disparage the Moravians. In
that same letter, Francke feigned ignorance about Moravian activities and denied that
he had treated Zinzendorf and the Moravians unfairly. He even went so far as to say
that he “wanted to enter into a closer connection” with Zinzendorf and the Moravians
despite his reservations about them, but that it was actually “the Count [who]
terminated” this possibility. In fact, “the Count also accused me [Francke] of writing
letters and persecuting him and his followers. But I answered according to the truth
that I knew myself innocent therein.” Retaining his characteristically willful

70 Ibid; “Es beginnen aber schon einige daselbst sein treibendes Wesen einzusehen, und möchte er mit
der Zeit schon mehr bekannt werden…Indessen richtet er und seine Anhänger, wo sie hinkommen,
mehrteils Zerrüttungen an, daher wohl zu wünschen, dass Gott dem Steure wolle.”
cann aber mit Grunde der Wahrheit versichern, dass ich so wohl in Ansehen das Herrn Grafen als derer
die es mit ihm halten jederzeit alle moderationgebraucht, und gegen dieselben nie agiert, vielmehr
mich um ihre Dinge fast ganz unbekümmert gelassen, außer daß als der Herr Graf und die Gemeinde
zu Herrnhut vor einigen Jahren schriftlich von mir begehrten, daß ich mit ihnen in eine nähere
Verbindung treten möchte, ich denen selben was ich dabei für Bedenken hätte, aufrichtig, doch mit
aller moderation eröffnet auf welches aber der Herr Graf bald abstrahiert hat.”
72 Ibid, 4; “Indessen hat der Graf mich hin und wieder auch in seinen an mich geschrieben Briefen
beschuldigt, dass ich ihn und seine Anhänger lästerte und verfolgte, darauf ich aber nach der Wahrheit
gesagt habe, dass ich mich darinnen unschuldig wisse und den Beweis erwarte, ihm aber wohl
dergleichen aus seinen Briefen dar tun könnte.”
vagueness, Francke failed to specify the actual charges Zinzendorf had allegedly
leveled at him. In any case, it was Zinzendorf who had “been very much deplored in
the letters which have been communicated to me [Francke] from various places.”

Vague language, in this and previous letters, gave him license to both defame
Zinzendorf and his followers for behaving in unacceptable ways and then plead
ignorance about their affairs. It allowed him to maintain the aura of statesmanlike
prudence while preserving the whisper campaign against the Moravians.

Zinzendorf responded to Francke by listing “a dozen circumstances” in which
he and the Halle Pietists maligned the Moravians in their writings “of which I
[Zinzendorf] do not recognize a single one as true.”

Charging Francke and the Halle
Pietists with being disingenuous and manipulative, this list is among the most detailed
and scathing indictments in existence of Halle Pietist activities against the Moravians.

Hochgräflicher Gnaden haben Sich zeithero in dero Briefen, die mir von verschiedenen Orten her
communicirt worden, sehr beklaget…”

74 UAH, R.18.A.7.b.96b, Letter, Schloß Ronneburg, July 17, 1736, N.L. von Zinzendorf to G.A.
Francke; “Ewer HochEhrwürden führen in dero iezigen Schreiben ein dutzend Umstände an, davon ich
nicht einen einigen für wahr erkenne.”
in this early period.\textsuperscript{75} In the spirited tone that made him famous and got him removed from the court in Dresden, Zinzendorf cleared the air by bringing the epistolary whisper campaign, as perpetrated by Francke and the Halle Pietist network, into semi-public view by declaring that the Pietists lied about having no qualms with himself the Moravians. While many of the charges and denials appear, on the surface, to only concern Zinzendorf and his behavior, the threat posed by the Moravian movement as a whole looms behind almost all of them. The second charge that addressed the supposed Moravian influence on “so many people” makes this quite clear. Charges four, five, six, ten, and twelve address the associations Moravians had with various Lutheran groups, which allegedly impacted the reputations of these groups negatively. Charges seven and eleven single out the Halle Pietists and the intolerance that continued to motivate the cabal. Zinzendorf even accused the Halle Pietists, in charges three and nine, of spreading false rumors that he participated in the cabal himself in order to gain sympathy for the Moravian cause. And charge number eight,

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid; An English translation of the list of accusations made in Zinzendorf’s letter: “1) They positively deny that they have a public controversy against me, [claim to be] guided by peace. 2.) They call the behavior notorious, which they falsely accuse me of, against so many people, and which I, however, deny. 3.) They accuse me, that I, in the letter to the Count of Wernigerode, wrote to you under the cabal described there, and I must confess it if I wished to be sincere. 4.) I should have, they said, sought after the conference, which I have disavowed straight away on the 20th of December with Mr. Abbot Steinmetz. 5.) I should have entered into a nearer community with them, and afterwards accuse them of your having given it to me. 6) The Conference at Strahlsund was best known to me (as they had expired, from which I myself have been credited), which apparently is said to mean that it had not gone well, or else went differently afterwards than I had hoped. 7). I should have had to enter the paths of innocence and purity as it had been taught to me in Halle. 8.) They would never have hindered/interfered with us in our place. 9.) I would have liked to try to improve them in my last letter by threats. 10.) The conference would have been waiting for Your Grace and Mr. Urlsperger to await him personally, and I should therefore undertake an arduous journey from Augsburg and Halle, if they had to deprive him. 11.) I had brought D. Sibethen prejudices against the University in Halle, which he himself made special. 12.) and concerning Tübingen and Stralsund, the congregations had nothing to do with Herrnhut.”
that Halle would have never hindered the Moravian cause in Herrnhut, reflexively extended this controversy beyond the person and behavior of Zinzendorf and reveals the potential for subversion that Moravian believers allegedly posed collectively to the Halle Pietist cause.

The stream of denials sent by Gotthilf August Francke to Halle Pietists and their allies, such as Georg Petermann, Samuel Urlsperger, Johann Boltzius and Christian Gronau, and Friedrich Ziegenhagen, in the years leading up to and following Zinzendorf’s letter confirm, at the very least, that these issues had been brewing in Halle Pietist epistolary circles for some time and that this controversy was about more than Zinzendorf. Previous scholarship that focuses upon theological differences that separated the Halle Pietists and the Moravians place too much weight upon Zinzendorf as the only relevant factor in this controversy. Dietrich Meyer argues that the Pietists feared for the future purity of their doctrine because Zinzendorf represented a “less dogmatically correct expression of the inner conviction of the heart.” Meyer is not wrong. From Halle’s theological perspective, Moravian religious culture did represent a perversion of their own conception of heart religion. But to come to that conclusion, the focus must be on Zinzendorf alone.

While Zinzendorf’s influence cannot be denied, to focus upon him exclusively misses the larger ecclesiastical influence of the Moravian movement as a whole. 

Outside of the theological examinations of Zinzendorf and his companions by

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theological faculties like the one in Tübingen, the epistolary record of this controversy rarely raises the issue of theology as a motivating factor for resisting the Moravians. And in the case of Tübingen, the real issue was not theological dissimilarity, but the subversiveness that their theological similarity to Lutheran and Pietist doctrine posed in persuading one of the most famous and respected theological faculties in central Europe to sympathize with the Moravian cause. Spangenberg also had theological differences with Halle Pietism, but the letters that mention him elevate him to a symbol of grassroots loss. Perceptions of association with radical splinter groups, like the Moravians, in the eyes of the Lutheran Church and competition for believers motivated this controversy just as much as personal animosity and opposition to Zinzendorf himself. Even many of the references to Zinzendorf as the leader of the Moravian movement emphasize his success at gaining followers, not his theological eccentricities.

To conclude, theological considerations did loom large in the background of this controversy. But as a matter of practical ecclesiastical politics, the Moravian threat consisted of more than the person and religious thought of Zinzendorf. Halle’s visceral fear, fostered by this controversy in the 1720s and 1730s, of losing or failing to gain followers bred a subsequent fear of the value that Moravians would come to place upon the experiences and practices of individual common believers because it undercut their own program, which emphasized a religion of the heart that was theologically and devotionally controlled by the Halle Pietist clergy and
administrative leadership. And despite the accusations and counter-accusations in the Halle-Herrnhut controversy, especially those condemning the spread of the Moravian’s “own narrative of godliness,” the Pietist leadership in Halle was not wrong on this point. The Moravians, as the following chapters will show, did accord great value to the beliefs and practices of ordinary believers.

77 FS AFSt/H C 357 : 6, Letter, Schwarzenbach, Switzerland, 1731, Christoph Balber to Johannes Mischke.
Chapter Two

Bringing the New World Home:

Gemeintag Services and the Rise of Ordinary Believers in Early Moravian Religious Culture, 1738-1746

On October 14, 1744, Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf stood to address the Moravian congregation in Marienborn, in the Wetterau region of central Germany, at a special monthly service called the “Gemeintag” (“Congregation Day”). He began with a short prayer and then read the daily Losung aloud to the congregation:

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Look, you wound holes,
You little bundles of the living!
We deliver all our souls to you.
1 [Book] Samuel, 25, 29

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1 A Moravian Losung, meaning ‘biblical watchword,’ was (and still is) a Bible verse chosen at random and designated for each day of the year. Every year in the spring time, the Moravian Church leadership in Herrnhut charged one person, either a man or a woman, with the task of choosing the Lösungen that would be designated for each day for the year that came three years from the present. For example, the Lösungen chosen in 1755 would take effect in the year 1758. The Moravian Church compiled them, printed them in the form of booklets, and distributed them to all Moravian congregations. As the Moravian Church expanded, the Lösungen booklets were translated into dozens of languages to accommodate non-German speaking congregations. For a more detailed explanation of the Losung, see Hans Dieter Betz, et al, eds. Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft, Band 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 519.

This *Losung*, though loosely based on the passage cited from the first Book of Samuel,\(^3\) alters the biblical language in order to more personally convey its message of comfort, protection, and trust to the congregation.\(^4\) Drawing on the intimate and complex Moravian devotion to the blood and wounds of Christ, it anthropomorphically ascribes divine qualities to the bodies of believers, who become “wound holes” that are collectively bound together in worldly life. The side wound of Christ, opened by the lance of the Roman soldier at the crucifixion, operates as a symbol of the Incarnation, a central Christian doctrine that posits the corporeality of Christ’s body, which simultaneously retained its divinity. The blood that poured out of Christ’s body, implied in this instance by the existence of the wound, delivered God’s grace and salvation to repentant sinners and represented new life paradoxically begot by the death of Christ. As Christ’s ‘wound holes,’ the *Losung* enlisted believers as both the divine receiver of souls, in a reflexive metaphor for the reception of God’s grace, and the souls, themselves, to be delivered. Believers obtain divine qualities but retain their servile humanity, upholding the egalitarian Pietist notion of the priesthood.

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\(^3\) In the original text of the Luther Bible, 1 Samuel 25, 29 reads: “Und wenn sich ein Mensch erheben wird, dich zu verfolgen, und nach deiner Seele steht, so wird die Seele meines Herrn eingebunden sein im Bündlein der Lebendigen bei dem HERRN, deinem Gott; aber die Seele deiner Feinde wird geschleudert werden mit der Schleuder,” which translates into English as “And when a man shall rise up to persecute thee, and stand according to thy soul, the soul of my Lord shall be bound in the covenant of the living among the LORD thy God; but the soul of your enemies will be hurled by the sling.”

of all believers. The first and second person plural pronouns emphasized the collective nature of serving God and reinforced a sense of community. For as he spoke to his devoted wound holes that day, Zinzendorf knew that he was preaching to a congregation that extended far beyond those in his immediate presence.

This chapter will address the confluence of Moravian worship and communication practices from 1738 to 1746 through the lens of the Gemeintag service and the circulating, inter-community reports of these services called the Gemeintagsnachrichten (‘Reports of the Congregation Day’). Gemeintag services blended traditional forms of Protestant devotion and public worship — the prayers, Bible readings, hymns, liturgies, and sermons — with forms unique to the Moravians in this period, such as excerpts of letters, reports, diaries, and absentee testimonies composed by Moravian diaspora workers, Atlantic world missionaries, and African

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and Indigenous converts. Moravian ministers employed a variety of rhetorical and organizational strategies to integrate these aspects of Gemeintag services, revealing how they increasingly came to appreciate and feature the religious experiences of common believers. Reading the testimonies of ordinary believers aloud at public worship services points directly to the cultural value the Moravian Church, as a religious institution, accorded to the genre of individual piety, not as a counterpoint to pastoral preaching, but as a method of supplementing traditional clerical religious authority. To be clear, Moravian ministers retained control over the religious content of all Moravian worship services, even the Gemeintag. But, as this chapter argues, by allocating Moravian believers and missionaries a limited public platform to articulate Moravian beliefs and practices — especially blood and wounds piety — through the medium of correspondence, Gemeintag services transported experiences of the New World eastward across the Atlantic to Europe and elevated the ecclesiastical status of believers in Moravian religious culture. In this way, Gemeintag services obliquely contributed to the larger metaphysical reorientation of traditional Protestant authority structures initiated by the contemporaneous emergence of evangelicalism and the transatlantic awakening movements.7

Detailed analyses of the content, organization, and language included in the Gemeintagsnachrichten demonstrate that the use of non-traditional instruments of

worship and devotion did not reduce the liturgical and symbolic complexity of the Moravian and Pietist lessons being promulgated at Gemeintag services. Gemeintag services came to feature affective blood and wounds piety as the primary language of devotion and also provide unique insight into the presence of both traditional and alternative religious and social hierarchies that co-existed in Moravian culture. Thus, the pages of the Gemeintagsnachrichten expose how Moravian religious and social identities concentrated on the spiritual and worldly experiences of individual believers while simultaneously implicating larger inter-community and transoceanic connections.

As an integral, yet almost completely overlooked, aspect of early eighteenth-century Moravian culture, identity formation, and Atlantic world communication practice, Gemeintag services skillfully articulated Moravian spirituality in new and innovative ways. Historians have only recently begun to pay attention to Moravian communication practices, the connections they created among Moravian and non-Moravian communities alike, and their place among early modern European cultures of print. Carola Wessel and Peter Vogt cite Moravian communication practices as evidence of the “internal uniformity and coherence” and the generalized importance of inter-community connections in establishing the Moravian Church as an Atlantic
world presence. Building on these ideas, Gisela Mettele’s history of the Moravians as an emerging global presence in the nineteenth century utilizes various forms of communication to track how Moravians maintained a shared identity over vast distances, which, as she argues, increasingly reflected the influence of post-Enlightenment modernization. Dieter Gembicki, arguing against Mettele, focuses on the Moravian ‘Gemein Nachrichten’ (the subsequent non-liturgical, newspaper version of the Gemeintagsnachrichten, which began circulating weekly in 1747) as a Moravian information system that functioned in the context of a competitive early modern media market. Robert Beachy, also writing about the Gemein Nachrichten, views this particular form of Moravian communication as a “communal devotional organ,” which worked toward “counter[ing] the phenomena that accompanied Enlightenment print culture.”

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9 Gisele Mettele, Weltbürger oder Gottesreich. Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine als globale Gemeinschaft, 1727-1857 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009). While Mettele’s sustained attention to the importance of communication in the maintenance and evolution of Moravian identity is, in one sense, groundbreaking and encouraging, her history reads less like an integrated narrative and more like a series of compartmentalized case studies of the different methods of Moravian communication with little connection between them.


Analyzing the structure and content of communication practices allows us to observe how the Moravian devotion to the blood and wounds of Christ transformed into a central tenet of personal religious expression and public identity. Histories that address the role of the blood and wounds of Christ in medieval and early modern Christian culture usually do so through the lens of theology and a generalized sense of Christian ritual praxis. Carolyn Walker Bynum’s sweeping history of Christian blood devotions in late-medieval Germany represents the most detailed and comprehensive treatment of the subject. However, her theoretically sophisticated narrative subsumes the thoughts of ordinary believers under the aegis of elite theological debates about the nature of the blood of Christ and the larger context within which the blood of Christ functioned in Christian religious practices. In similar fashion, albeit in the context of the early modern history of the Moravian Church, historians Paul Peucker and Craig Atwood have produced wonderful studies about what blood and wounds piety meant to Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf. However, these histories also


reduce Moravian blood and wounds piety to the thought of Zinzendorf and neglect how ordinary Moravians thought about it, practiced it in their daily lives, and utilized it in their communications with their counterparts in other places.

These two literatures, one on Moravian communication practices/networks, and one on the intricacies of Moravian religious culture, do not engage one another. The religious institution of the *Gemeintag* service and the circulating *Gemeintagsnachrichten* represent an opportunity to observe how these two aspects of Moravian culture were inextricably intertwined, interacted with one another, and infused old pieties with new meaning that would have a lasting impact on the structure and content of the Moravian movement as it spread out and stabilized in multiple regions of the early modern Atlantic world. As an interconnected whole, *Gemeintag* services and the *Gemeintagsnachrichten* became powerful nodes of the Moravian transatlantic communication network and symbolized a new egalitarian ethos where the religious sentiments of believers in the New World acquired new spiritual authority in the Old World.

FROM THEIR INCEPTION IN 1738, *Gemeintag* services promoted a sense of shared community. Growing out of a tradition started by Zinzendorf in Herrnhut in
1728, this special service brought Moravian congregants together about once a month in order to share spiritual fellowship among themselves and with Moravian congregations elsewhere. On the Gemeintag, Moravians all over the Atlantic world gathered to listen to special sermons delivered by their local minister who offered illuminating commentaries on the Moravian Losung. Following the sermon, ministers read aloud excerpts from select pieces of correspondence sent to the local congregation over the course of the previous month. Hymns and verses from the Moravian Gesangbuch (hymnbook) preceded, followed, and were incorporated into the sermon and also were sung in between the reading of letters. Each component of Gemeintag services reinforced the religious lessons being taught by the others.

Moravian ministers intentionally structured these services in the form of a dialogue between the minister and the congregation. The two ‘discussants’ engaged in an allegorical conversation where the exegetical duties were symbolically shared and biblical truths jointly revealed. Singing and hymnody facilitated these highly orchestrated exchanges between the Moravian minister and the local congregation, a


15 The community building power of the Gemeintag did not stop with at the end of the service. An official scribe, specially selected by the Moravian church elders, took meticulous notes during Gemeintag services and then produced a full report of the service that included the text of the sermon, the content and references to Biblical verses read aloud, the hymns and verses sung, and the text of the correspondence that was narrated to the congregation. After compiling the full report, the scribe submitted it to the community elders who marked it up with textual edits, substitutions, and deletions as they saw fit. Scribes then produced the final draft with the edits incorporated in to the text. The final draft was then painstakingly copied by hand in manuscript form and circulated to Moravian communities all over the Atlantic world.
practice that grew out of the common liturgical structure of Protestant worship services where the minister voiced creedal statements and the congregation “answered” with short verses confirming those statements. On the Gemeintag in Marienborn, Germany on August 13, 1739, the congregation commenced the service by singing a series of hymns. “[H]is entire suffering, cross, and pain” they sang, “that is the clockwork of the congregation. O Jesus Christ hear me!” After finishing the hymn, the congregation fell quiet for a moment of silent prayer, then sang, “O you honorable worthy bridegroom,” a reference to Jesus as the “husband” of the Moravian Church in mystical marriage. Singing this particular verse after a moment of silent prayer reaffirmed the centrality of the mystical relationship between the community of believers and Jesus. At the conclusion of this second hymn, one member of the congregation, holding a Bible in his hands, stood and read aloud Psalms 19-21, Ezekiel chapters 20, 24-26, 32, and 40-42, and 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verses 13, 18, 22, and 23. Taking these passages from scripture as his themes, Zinzendorf then delivered a long sermon, which filled over twenty of the fifty-one pages of the Gemeintagnachrichten, on “the great forbearance and prolonged courage the Savior had toward the people.” This particular sermon probed scriptural parallels between the predictions of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel, whose message of hope for the

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future of the Jewish nation was predicated upon its inevitable destruction, with Jesus’s inexorable triumph over evil in the Gospels. “So we walk in the light, as He is the light,” he said in closing, “we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. He is faithful and just and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.” The congregation responded with approval, “Him I have locked in me. Newly shall I show thanks for such.”

Zinzendorf invoked the cleansing metaphor with regard to the mystical character of Christ’s blood in order to accentuate the sense of belonging that should be felt by all Moravians whose faith had disinfected them from the filth of sin.

The biblical battle between good and evil was a recurring theme that drove most Gemeintag services. On January 10, 1739, the Moravian congregation in Herrnhut began the Gemeintag by singing “We bow out of countenance before the Lamb, You bloody redeemer.” In response to Martin Dober’s opening prayer, the congregation sang: “You bloody redeemer, we know not what to say. O Lamb, you have overcome.” “As a result of this song,” the Gemeintagnachrichten reports, Dober delivered a short, but stirring sermon about the battle between God and Satan in chapter twelve of the Book of Revelation. “Satan has lost and the Savior has won,” he

said, “by taking power [away] from the Devil so that all who believe in [Christ] are free.” “The preachers [meaning ‘believers who spread the word of God’ here] overcome,” he continued, “by the blood of the Lamb, and thus one is invincible. And that makes us all united, blissful, and free…We have escaped the cunning and power of Satan as soon as we all believe in the Savior.” To this, the congregation responded by singing, “Oh let us from time to time [overcome the power of Satan].” The short hymn verses sung by the congregation in response to the content of the sermon symbolically transform the members of the congregation into righteous participants, struggling alongside God in the battle between the forces of light and darkness. Dober likens the “blood of the Lamb” to a spiritual shield that blocks malevolent corruptions from without, while at the same time acting as a heavenly shroud that tied believers together in mutual safety.

Stories from scripture at Gemeintag services always found their way back to some aspect of the Gospel stories, the birth, teachings, passion, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. These common Christian narratives provided the biblical superstructure that ordered Gemeintag services. In a departure from German Lutherans and many other Protestant groups who generally focused more on the

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celebration of Jesus’s resurrection and ascent into heaven, Moravians focused much more intently on the suffering and death of Jesus because these aspects of the passion story, for Moravians, contained within them the genesis of redemption from sin. Stories of the suffering and death of Jesus also emblematically represented the practical and spiritual struggles congregants faced in their daily lives in order to convey the larger message that hardship constituted an intrinsic element of worldly life. The blood of Christ managed these difficulties by cleansing believers, collectively, of their sins and secured them in the communal amity of their fellow congregants.

The more traditional elements of Gemeintag services propagated a sense of communal fellowship in other ways, as well. One method was to read aloud reports and transcripts of common religious services held in other Moravian congregations, including Singstunden (Singing Services), Abendmahls (Communion Services), Liebesmahls (Love Feasts), and, especially, other Gemeintag services. In December 1739, the Moravian minister in Marienborn read a copy of the Gemeintagnachrichten from Jena (a Pietist city located on the outskirts of Thuringia) aloud to his congregation. This Gemeintagnachrichten included a “Report of the Love Feast held in Jena by 32 Associated Brothers on 17. November 1739.” For Moravians, the love feast served as a religious bonding agent among fellow congregants in

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commemoration of annual events in the Moravian liturgical year as well as other significant local occasions, such as birthdays, the arrival of visitors, those departing on trips, new marriages, the completion of new buildings, etc.; many of the same events commonly reported in epistolary form at Gemeintag services. The Gemeintagnachrichten reports that the thirty-two men who attended this love feast constituted a rather diverse group in terms of occupational and social demographics, consisting of academics from Jena, prominent members of congregations outside of Jena from as far afield as Weimar, university students, farmers, a tanner, and at least one apprentice shoemaker.20

These men gathered to celebrate what “the Heiland [Savior] had done here and there to their own souls and those of others.”21 After eating their meal, Brothers Brumhart and Hüfner of the Jena congregation each sang a short hymn. The remaining thirty brothers then each sang a pre-selected verse from Hymn #575 in the Moravian Gesangbuch, a fifty-four verse hymn about God caring for believers collectively.22 Up until this point, the program of the love feast had been similar to any other Moravian love feast in terms of content. What happened next made this one worthy of inclusion in the Gemeintagnachrichten sent to Marienborn. All Moravian

20 UAH R.19.B.g.3.c, GTN, Jena, Liebesmahl, November 17, 1739, unpaginated.
21 Ibid; “Vor dem Essen wurde das Lied gesungen: Verliebter in die Sünderfeld p. Unter demselben brachten die Brüder vieles vor zur Erbauung, was etwa hier und da der Heiland an sich und andern Seelen getan hatte.”
Brothers in attendance “sung short verses for known [Moravian] congregations and persons.” In this context, “known congregations” meant nearly all of them. They sang at least one verse each for no less than sixty Moravian congregations from all over Germany, Holland, Greenland, the Caribbean, British North America and beyond. The report of this love feast in the Gemeintagnachrichten included the names each of the cities that contained Moravian congregations and a short excerpt of the verse/s they sung for those congregations. For Herrnhut, they sang “He dives down into the blood and into the water”; for Jena, “We see a glimpse of the garden of the Father”; for Marienborn, “O when they do not merely consider the grace”; for Halle, “Sinners! Think about God’s grace”; for their brothers in Greenland, “Bless them! Bless them! By your free desire”; and for Peter Böhler and August Gottlieb Spangenberg, they sang, “Pull them to you, heightened friend [referring to Jesus]."

The laborious process of choosing meaningful hymn verses for over sixty separate Moravian congregations, sitting for the love feast that probably lasted upwards of three hours, and then producing a record of the event for other Moravian

\[\text{\small{23 Ibid; “Als denn wurden denen uns bekannten Gemeinen und Personen Versgen gesungen…”}}\]
\[\text{\small{24 The congregations named are: Lobada, Jena, Großstein, Halle, Marienborn, Herrnhaag, Herrnhut, Pilgerruh, Herndyék, Amsterdam, St. Thomas, Ebersdorf, Erfurt, Grätz, Gotha, Langensalz, Ronneburg, Grönlandischen Brüder, Berlin, Suhl, Saalfeld, Magdeburg, Görlitz, Naumburg, Weimar, Ditschendorf in the Vogtland, Beltzig, Appolita, Cöstritz, Wereingeroda, Sultze, Trackendorf and Sölnitz, Sundhausen, Meinungen and Sultzfeld, Vierzichen Heiligen und Ketschau, Albrechts und Häyn, Staßfurt and Straßfurt, Schmoone, Mark and Schloß Vippach, Mermsdorf, Oberreissen, and Weihe, Ebisbaum, Ruprechtshof, and Naundorf, Lobenstein, Krautheim, Buttelfäld, Söllnitz, and Sünderstädt, Darmburg and Dörndorf, Bolitz, and Rothe, Neustadt an der Orte, Kahle and Allendorf; They also sung verses for “a shepard from Freiburg,” Peter Böhler, and August Gottlieb Spangenberg.}}\]
\[\text{\small{25 UAH R.19.B.g.3.c, GTN, Jena, Liebesmahl, November 17, 1739, unpaginated; (Herrnhut) “Er taucht sie ins Blut und ins Wasser hinunter, p.”; (Jena) “Wir sehen einen Blick von Vaters Garten p. p. 1019, 1-5”;}\]
\[\text{\small{(Greenland) “Seegne [:] seegen sie aus freym Trieb p.”; Böhler & Spangenberg) “Zeuch sie hin, erhöhter Freund.”}}\]
congregations to read out loud reveals an intense commitment to the integration of the Moravian Atlantic world network. The blood of Christ, in this early example from 1739, remained a relatively unremarkable element of traditional collective worship, which merely noted the spiritual vitality of one among many Moravian congregations.

In addition to emphasizing the spiritual well-being of their counterparts in Europe, congregants at Gemeintag services listened to reports concerning practical, day-to-day occurrences in the lives of their sisters and brothers in the mission fields. After singing verses from the Gesangbuch at the Gemeintag in Jena in September 1739, Zinzendorf himself gave a “short speech [about] his compendium plan for all congregations.” The Gemeintagsnachrichten from this service includes summaries of Zinzendorf’s reports about fourteen different regional congregations, including Herrnhut, Congregations on the East Sea, Greenland, St. Petersburg, St. Thomas, St. Croix, Guinea, Surinam, Georgia, Capo (near modern-day Cape Town), Pennsylvania, England, Holland, and the Wetterau. In a rare instance of light criticism directed toward his co-religionists, Zinzendorf reported that while the “[c]ongregation in Herrnhut standeth in such good circumstances as ever” because congregants there “know nothing of persecution,” those in Holland “are in a state of great persecution,
because the Brothers want to bring the teachings of grace into decadence.”

Even further abroad, missionaries Christian Prott and Georg Schmidt began to “work deep into the [Guinean] countryside” and “began to convert Hottentots” on the South African Cape of Good Hope, respectively. Listening to short reports of hardship, sacrifice, and triumph from Moravian settlements on all four Atlantic world continents in rapid succession at Gemeintag services suggests that Moravian associational identities extended far beyond the confines of the local congregation and community.

New World Moravian congregations also figured quite prominently in Zinzendorf’s “compendium plan” and constituted a strong source of good news and progress. The mission in Greenland “show[ed] 9 [new] awakened souls,” but these native Greenlandic converts had been resistant to learning the German and Danish languages spoken by the Europeans in the mission field of New Herrnhut and the surrounding area. Communicating with the native Inuit populations of Greenland had been, and would continue to be, a serious issue for Moravian missionaries in this region. The Moravians found it particularly difficult to communicate the concept of a

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“creator god” to people whose animist religious culture did not include one. Reporting that the missionaries gained nine new converts, however, despite the language barrier, subtly communicated to Zinzendorf’s audience in Jena the larger message that God recognized Moravian perseverance and modest success in pursuing his work in Greenland.

The *Heiland* was also quite busy in the mission fields of the Caribbean. On the island of St. Thomas, Zinzendorf briefly reported that, “[t]here are 100 Brothers, not counting the children of the blacks.” Reporting missionary successes on the island of St. Thomas in this way emphasized the importance of familial association and the Moravian notion of maintaining spiritual maturity. Only baptized converts who had demonstrated their loyalty to the faith by living a proper Christian life, to the satisfaction of the leaders of the Moravian mission, could be considered “brothers.” Reaching spiritual maturity, however, meant becoming a part of the Moravian spiritual family, which transcended geographic and ethnic distinctions.

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27 UAH R.19.B.g.3.c, GTN, Jena, September 20, 1738, unpaginated; (Greenland) “Grönland zeigt 9 erweckt Seelen. Die Brüder sind der Sprache bald mächtig. Die Dänische Sprache und die Deutsche Sprache des Landes widerstehen Ihnen. Nun haben sie noch endlich in ein Schiff bekommen zu den Heiden zu sehen.”; The mission station of New Hermhut was located on the south west coast of Greenland, which would become the city of Nuuk, the capital of the country of Greenland. For an excellent analysis of German/Inuit missionary interactions and the issue of inter-culture communication, see Thea Olsthoorn, “‘Wir haben keine Ohren’: Kommunikationsprobleme und Missionsverständnisse bei der Verbreitung und Rezeption des Christentums in Grönland und Labrador im 18. Jahrhundert,” *Pietismus und Neuzeit*, Band 39 (2013): 47-86.

28 UAH R.19.B.g.3.c, GTN, Jena, September 20, 1738, unpaginated; “St. Thomas. Der Heiland ist unter Ihnen geschäftig. Es sind die 100 Brüder ohne die Kinder der Schwarzen.”

29 It is unclear from this quote whether the term “Brother” refers to both African men and women converts, or only men. Moravians often used the more androgynous term “Geschwister,” meaning “sibling,” to refer to groups consisting of Moravian men and women. Though, *Geschwister* was also used to refer to groups of consisting of only men or women, as well.
Of course, successes in the mission field did not come without problems. On the island of St. Croix, Zinzendorf noted that “there are also many Brothers [here], but the worker reports [about the progress of the mission] [were] not reliable.” As such, “Brother Weber will go [to St. Croix] because he knows quite well the circumstances there.” Up until that point, there were “only 2 white Brothers there [on St. Croix],” and “the [Church] Conference consist[ed] mainly of blacks.” These statements betray hints of arbitrary racial hierarchy and a subtle distrust of the growing presence and influence of Africans in the mission congregation. But Zinzendorf also reports that “[t]wo of the workers,” African converts from a nearby plantation where Moravian missionaries preached to African slaves, “have been sold on the [neighboring] island of St. John.” He “hope[d] to hear soon that a fire has been lit by them there.” Whatever wariness the Moravians may have harbored toward Africans gaining influence in their own congregations, as members of the Moravian Christian family, they could still be spiritual ambassadors for the faith; leaders informally dispatched by the Moravians to light the fire of Christian belief in new places. Though Moravians in the New World, like many other Europeans, had few

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30 Moravian mission stations had three different “conferences” or administrative groups, composed of different members, that dealt with issues that arose within these congregations. The “House Conference” consisted of both Moravian men and women and excluded non-Moravian converts. The “Mission Conference” consisted of men who dealt with the work of the mission and excluded both Moravian women and non-Moravian converts. The Church Conference (which Zinzendorf refers to here) included both Moravian men and women as well as delegates from local congregations, including local native or African converts.

moral qualms with the institution of slavery in its capacity to relegate Africans to commodities that could be bought and sold.\textsuperscript{32} African souls could be saved from sin through the grace of God the same as Europeans.

\textit{Gemeintag} services also included generally positive reports on the progress of nascent missions to Native Americans in British North America. By 1739, Moravians had “divided the area of Georgia into two parts. Four [missionaries] have gone among the wild heathen in the Tomachachi region…and the others went into the Savannah [region].” Though the missionaries who went to the area controlled by the Creek Chief Tomochichi caused him to “fear these missionaries [being] together with his subjects,” Zinzendorf reported that any problems which might have arisen were mitigated by the fact that the missionaries there “were very well provisioned and able to help others with their provisions.”\textsuperscript{33} Even better, Zinzendorf reports that the Moravians were beginning to make in-roads toward the establishment of a new mission station in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania does not normally enter into the history of the Moravian Church until late 1741, with the founding of Bethlehem and Zinzendorf naming it after the town in the Holy Land where Jesus was born. But the \textit{Gemeintagsnachrichten} reveals that as early as 1739, Moravian missionaries in British North America already “expect[ed] someone to piece together a [real]

\textsuperscript{32} More detailed analysis of Moravian notions of ethnicity and race will appear in chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{33} UAH R.19.B.g.3.c, GTN, Jena, September 20, 1738, unpaginated; “In Georgien haben sie sich in 2 Theile geteilt. 4 sind unter die Wilden gegangen in Tomochachi: gebiet, der sich denn mit seinen Untertanen erstaunlich vor ihnen fürchtet, wenn sie einmal was getan, und sich wohl ja damit entschuldigt, dass ihnen ihre Bruder die anderen Christen verführt. Die andern sind in der Savannah und so wohl versorgt in äusseren, dass sie nach anderen davon gutes thun können.”
congregation in Pennsylvania. Everything befit for a large congregation.” Positive messages of progress took precedence over any substantive engagement with problems associated with their presence in these regions in the Gemeintagsnachrichten.

Among the primary purposes of the Gemeintagsnachrichten was to memorialize and circulate these reports so that Moravians living in other places could symbolically experience and participate in these small successes as a method of promoting a sense of internal collective unity. Factual reports from the mission fields, like these, only became coherent narratives about individual mission stations over time. Listening to these reports over a period of years provided congregants with important information on the piecemeal development of emerging and established Moravian congregations and an instructive education on the practical affairs that accompanied the construction of an ecumenical church that touched all four Atlantic world continents. But their underlying purpose was to serve as supporting evidence that God had sanctioned their foreign and overseas efforts. And it was the integration of epistolary materials into Gemeintag services that performed this function to the greatest effect.

Over time, Gemeintag services, and especially the Gemeintagsnachrichten, increasingly focused on the spiritual testimony of ordinary believers and de-

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34 Ibid; “In Pennsylvania erwarten sie einen, der die Gemeine Zú sammen macht. Es schickt sich alles Zu einer Großen Gemeine.”
emphasized traditional forms of ritual worship. Sermons became shorter, hymns abbreviated, and liturgies compressed in order to allow more time and space for reading letters and documenting the spiritual testimonies of an expanding cross-section of ordinary Moravian believers. In turn, these services increasingly featured blood and wounds piety because the mystical language Moravians used in these letters increasingly drew on this particular Moravian devotion in greater and more intimate detail. Letters sent by Moravians from established congregations, diaspora congregations in Europe, and mission stations in the New World constituted the hallmark that made Gemeintag services unique. Hearing about the practical progress of Moravians in outlying regions, however, provided visceral support for the second, increasingly more important and frequent, purpose of publicizing the spiritual experiences of ordinary Moravian believers.

In the late-1730s, blood and wounds piety appeared only sporadically in the pages of the Gemeintagsnachrichten dedicated to correspondence. It remained primarily an element of collective worship that was implemented by the spiritual authority of the minister and the collective local congregation. Early instances in the epistolary content took the form of spiritual testimony but retained the abbreviated ambiguity that characterized invocations of blood and wounds piety through the more traditional channels. A short excerpt of a letter written in 1738 by Herr [Mr.] von Wippach from the Moravian congregation in Herrnhut beseeched the congregation of Marienborn to pray for his general spiritual well-being: “I want to be worthy of the
bloody sweat of our crucified love [referring to ‘Christ’].” The very next letter read at this Gemeintag service came from a woman named Christina Eleonora Vogtin, who wrote that the “true Savior has me in a good work. I only want to live for Him and the congregation. My transgressions penetrate me very deeply, but I find rest in his wounds, because he has bought me.” The practice of condensing the content of these letters into a few short sentences in the early Gemeintagnachrichten transcripts meant that subsequent congregations who listened to these excerpts did not hear the portions of these letters that might have explained why Mr. Wippach felt unworthy of Christ’s ‘bloody sweat” or which transgressions caused Christina Vogtin to seek mystical solace and comfort in Christ’s wounds (or whether these explanations existed in the letters at all). The Gemeintagnachrichten purposefully kept these early excerpts brief and vague in order to allow listeners an opportunity to more easily relate their own personal spiritual circumstances to them. As such, the letters and their absentee authors symbolically took over the ministerial duties during this portion of Gemeintag services, and the blood and wounds piety preserved its generalized nature as a metaphor for purification and redemption. The scarcity and vagueness of these allusions to the blood and wounds, with regard to describing instances of personal

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spirituality, also reflects the fact that this particular Moravian devotion was still tied to more traditional devotional forms. Still, the more graphic references to Christ’s “bloody sweat” and figuratively occupying the side wound of Christ as a refuge from sin point towards the effusive emotionality that would come to characterize this particularly Moravian devotion.

The majority of blood and wounds piety in the epistolary content read at early Gemeintag services, however, addressed the collective spiritual health of the Moravian Church from the perspective of the Moravian Church leadership. In 1739, Leonhard Dober wrote a letter to Herrnhut declaring his approval of reports he had received about the piety of the congregants there. “My spirit is eager to remain in the community of Jesus,” he said, “and to sink deeper [in it]….Through the blood of reconciliation, we have come to” a good situation in pursuing God’s work. “I wish that the blood may seal the whole of the people in [mystical] marriage.”

Moravian Church leaders like Dober tended to talk about the blood and wounds of Christ in vague and totalizing terms, emphasizing their capacity to symbolically connect and unite Moravians over great distances while simultaneously and implicitly acknowledging the central importance of the mystical relationship between the individual believer and God.

36 UAH (no catalogue number), GTN, Herrnhut, February 7, 1739 (bound volume), pp. 65; “Mein Geist ist begierig in der Gemeinschaft Jesu zu bleiben und tiefer zu sinken. Es freuet mich, wenn ich höre, dass ihr in der Wahrheit treu wandelt…Ich wünsche, dass dieses Blut das ganze Ehe-Volk versiegeln möge.”
The structure of the *Gemeintagsnachrichten*, as the following examples of epistolary testimonies will demonstrate, increasingly emphasized more traditional social and ecclesiastical hierarchies, while *Gemeintag* services simultaneously accorded more spiritual authority to ordinary believers. As the Moravian “community of Jesus” spread further and further afield and the early Atlantic world mission stations founded in the early 1730s to 1740s in Greenland, the Caribbean, and British North America began to stabilize, *Gemeintag* services and the *Gemeintagsnachrichten* focused more and more on the spiritual testimony of ordinary believers and de-emphasized the traditional forms of ritual worship. The language of blood and wounds piety developed from generalized pronouncements communicated through ministers, Moravian Church leaders (like Zinzendorf, Leonhard Dober, David Nitschmann, etc.), or an entire congregation in the form of dialogic hymns, into graphic, detailed language explaining how individual believers, themselves, experienced the blood and wounds of Christ in their own words. By the mid-1740s, the blood and wounds devotion, and its expression through epistolary mediums, underscored the emergence of ordinary believers as formal propagators of Moravian religious culture.

Operating with the partial support of the Royal Danish College of Missions, Moravian mission stations in Greenland only functioned sporadically over the course of the eighteenth century. In fact, the missionaries could not successfully erect the first Moravian church building in the region until fourteen years after their arrival in
1747, and they only received official permission to settle in this area from authorities in Europe in 1749. Thus, these settlements do not figure prominently in the history of the Moravian Church in the Atlantic world. Yet ordinary Moravians in Europe in the early eighteenth century knew a lot about their counterparts in Greenland because they figured quite prominently in the correspondence read at Gemeintag services in the 1740s. By 1745, sets of seven to fifteen letters from Greenland were read at every Gemeintag service. One particularly compelling set of letters sent by female converts and their male ministers in Greenland, read at the January 13, 1745 Gemeintag in Herrnhaag, near Marienborn in central Germany, keenly demonstrates how blood and wounds piety became the primary language through which ordinary Moravian’s performed their spiritual and corporeal concerns. The Gemeintagnachrichten organized this language in ways that articulated and reinforced the success of the Moravian mission in Greenland, a sense of religious orthodoxy, and traditional European gender and religious hierarchies.

A letter by Moravian Pastor Christian Drachard to his colleague Friedrich Boehnisch, written in the Danish colony of Gotthaab (now the modern-day capital city of Nuuk) on the south-west coast of Greenland, opens this group of correspondence with a short report on new baptisms in the region:

I love Jesus and the truth because he loved me first. I now stand more often on the trail of the blood and wounds of Jesus and that Jesus alone loves me as a poor sinner. The people of Greenland, whom I baptized in the death of Jesus this winter, are Moses, Jonah, Enoch, Abel, Lydia, Arpa Naomi, Dinah,
etc. Jesus glorifies himself in them; his death and blood are also his highest gifts.37

Speaking with the authority of an ordained minister, Drachard uses the occasion of new baptisms in Gotthaab to softly illustrate three underlying pillars of Moravian blood and wounds piety: submission, uncertainty, and grace. His acceptance of Jesus is premised upon the reception of Jesus’s love. The “trail” Drachard finds himself on leading to the blood and wounds of Jesus evokes the path to righteousness that all believers must follow in order to live a truly Christian life. But the successful baptism of Indigenous peoples in Greenland confirms that the reception of God’s gift validates the spiritual and worldly journey of the believer because “Jesus glorifies himself in them.” The blood and wounds become both the path to salvation and the goal to be reached. Even the Christian names given to these new converts — Moses, Jonah, Enoch, Abel, Lydia, Naomi, and Dinah — invoke stories and themes in the Bible relating to struggle, hardship, searching, and martyrdom for the faith.38


38 Including the names of the converts also suggests that Moravians in Europe had a palpable interest in the details of missionary efforts in this region.
Drachard’s letter is the first of nine in this set of correspondence “aus Groenland” (from Greenland). Its placement and the language he uses subtly reinforce traditional European ecclesiastical and social hierarchies that endorse the power of the clergy over the laity and privilege male authority. In relation to God, Drachard is a “poor sinner,” establishing the authority of God over ordinary believers. But only missionaries, like Drachard, had the proper authority to baptize new converts, which places ministerial authority above that of the convert and common believer. But Drachard also casts Jesus in the role of the lover and himself (and, by extension, all “poor sinners”) as the receiver of God’s love. As the only lover of poor sinners, Jesus becomes the husband of believers, who themselves become brides of Christ, in mystical marriage. Jesus as husband and provider emphasizes his masculinity while the believer becomes the feminine dependent.

Jesus is also the more explicit provider of the “highest gifts,” grace, through a thoroughly noble and righteous, though difficult and bloody, death. The blood and wounds, as physical markers of death, thus take on masculine attributes and are invested with the power to provide salvation. As blood and wounds piety became a more specific aspect of personal religious devotion, it increasingly operated as an

39 UAH (no catalogue number), GTN, Herrnhaag, January 15, 1745, pp. 37; These collections were organized according to either the political or ecclesiastical position of the letter writer within their respective community or region (as in this case from Greenland), or whether the writer was a highly visible member of the overall Moravian Church, such as a Nitschmann or Spangenberg, for example. It is interesting to note that, aside from sermons and commentaries, correspondence by Zinzendorf does not appear in the Gemeintagnachrichten. Though there are certainly references to him in the correspondence that did make it into the report and he edited many of these reports himself.
organizer of ecclesiastical and gender hierarchies and provides clues to how Moravians thought, whether consciously or unconsciously, in these terms.

The next two letters from male missionaries in Greenland speak more directly to how Moravian blood and wounds piety operated in this context. Johann Beck, writing from New Herrnhut, proclaims, “The Lamb of God blesses you and abounds your soul with his blood. It [the blood] gives so much to me that I continue to ask for nothing but to have a steady feeling of the blood of the Lamb in my heart and to always speak the same with the heathen; for I know that without the blood of the Lamb, there is no life.”

Beck uses the blood devotion as an evangelical tool in the mission field. The blood plays a central role in the process of acquiring new converts. However, Beck’s words here are not really a commentary on Moravian progress in gaining converts among the native inhabitants surrounding New Herrnhut. By omitting the name of the addressee on the letter, the Gemeintagnachrichten directs Beck’s message, about the capacity of Christ’s blood to effectuate a traditional Christian life, toward Moravian congregations in Europe. In doing so, Beck reifies the same religious and gender hierarchies submitted by Drachard. Jesus represents the provider and the believer becomes the recipient, with Beck as the mediator of this message to the potential converts. And the blood of Christ actively flows over the

soul, takes up residence inside the heart, produces positive feelings, and revitalizes both potential converts and believers alike.

Renewal developed into a common theme that pervaded Moravian blood piety. But the underlying issue of blood as symbol in personal testimonies was the character of its movement: how it breached containment and crossed boundaries, both spiritual and physical. Blood had to be transported to the mission field and into the hearts of believers, either by God himself or through other authorized persons, in order for the mission in Greenland (and, more generally, outside of Europe) to be successful. Johann Schneider makes this connection in his short letter from New Herrnhut to another unspecified person, “I feel the blood of the Lamb in my heart; my misery weighs me down quite prostrate sometimes. However, I pray thee, my brother, that thou bring thy heart among us full of the blood of Jesus because you know how it is here in Greenland.”

Schneider feels the weight of the world bearing down on him. But despite his efforts in Greenland, he needs the blood of Christ to strengthen his resolve. Schneider finds himself in a highly vulnerable (prostrate) position even though he feels the blood of Christ inside of him. Only someone entering the community from the outside, whose heart is filled with Christ’s blood, can help to

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41 Ibid; “Von Joh. Schneider eben daher. Ich fühle das Blut des Lammes in meinem Herzen; mein Elend drückt mich allerdings zuweilen sehr darnieder, darum bitte ich dich mein Bruder, daß du dein Herz ganz voll von Jesu Blut mit unter uns bringst; denn du weißt wie es in Groenland ist.”; Though the intended recipient of this letter is not provided, the reference to “my brother” is directed toward this unnamed person. It is not a reference to God in this instance because the relationship between God and the individual believer was framed as a mystical, heterosexual marriage between Christ-as-bridegroom and believer(or the church)-as-bride.
diminish his sense of powerlessness over events in Greenland. The blood works simultaneously to alleviate the individual concerns of the believer and the collective afflictions of the community. Schneider himself becomes the passive recipient of the blood in his role here as the common believer. These first three letters convey the coded message that blood flows from the top down, with the male Jesus and the male clergy at the spiritual and corporeal apex.

Reinforcing that apex with a sense of credibility required the corroboration of those beneath it. In this instance, the Gemeintagnachrichten accomplished this by presenting testimony from women converts. Known to us only as Sara, Sara Simons, Juditha, Sophia, Rebecca, and Barbara, they each utilize the language of blood and wounds piety to communicate personal feelings about the state of their own souls. In doing so, they rhetorically confirm the hierarchies established by the male ministers, which, in turn, mitigated the radical nature of their being worthy of speaking and being heard by Moravian congregations. Taken together they demonstrate the complex valences and interconnection between blood as spiritual symbol and blood as bodily experience. Sara writes to “Br[other] Ludwig” [von Zinzendorf] about her spiritual anxieties:

I am so unfeeling of the blood of the Lamb in my soul. I have asked that he should give me this feeling, for I have no Savior other than the Lamb of God who can help me. Sometimes when I walk around, I feel the blood of the Lamb and that God is present in my spirit. When he has shown this in my heart, I thank him. Ludwig [von Zinzendorf], if the spirit of God gives you a feeling in your heart and shows you that you should send teachers, you should send them, because God loves us and died for us. Though we and you should have been lost [in sin], he [Jesus] has redeemed us and we recognize
that now. Sometimes I feel nothing good in me but rather complete ruin, though I look around often for him. But, nevertheless, Johann [Beck], my teacher, loves me and directed me toward the Lamb. Though I am very miserable, he does not despise me because he knows the spirit of God and his sense, so he takes pains to tell me. O Ludwig, the blood of the little Lamb of God blesses thee. Say to all of your brethren that I have very much love for them. Jesus have mercy upon the congregation.42

In contrast to her native animist religious culture that did not include a transcendental “creator,” Sara demonstrates an orthodox trinitarian understanding of the nature of the Christian God in references to the “Lamb of God,” the “spirit of God,” and subtle instances of a more ambiguous God (the Father) who “is present” and “loves us.” The very fate of her soul rests in the hands of all three simultaneously. But her fixation on Jesus in his role as the redeemer points directly to the influence of Moravian Christocentrism. The repeated references to Jesus as the savior authorize the “blood of the Lamb” to perform the spiritual work on her soul. Blood becomes the active agent that has the power to alter her spirit and this blood must be acquired through personal, mystical contact with God. But the work performed by the blood was not


limited to the soul. It also effectuated and altered physical sensations inside Sara’s body.

Scholars of late-medieval and early modern European philosophical and physiological theory maintain that blood contained inside the body was understood as feminine. Uterine blood from the mother was responsible for the formation of the fetus, and so the body (and the blood inside it) was gendered female and, as such, became the “seat [or container] of the soul.”44 The soul, in this period, was also understood as feminine because of its mystical marriage to the masculine Christ.45 However, Caroline Walker Bynum contends that the human body, formed by maternal uterine blood, was “animated by the blood or seed of the father…(All bodily fluids are some form of blood in medieval medical theory).”46 The body does not come to life without the blood (or seed) of the father. Animating blood that causes life, thus, becomes masculine. In this theoretical formulation, the blood inside the body takes on either masculine or feminine qualities depending upon context. Both have formative roles (maternal blood creates the body and paternal blood animates it), but masculine blood had to be introduced into the feminine body in order to form a whole, living human.

44 Bynum, Wonderful Blood, 161. The parenthetical is my addition to this quotation.
46 Bynum, Wonderful Blood, 158, 187.
Despite her Indigenous Inuit upbringing and culture, Sara’s letter draws on this distinctively European understanding of the gendered body and soul. The fundamental element, for her, is the movement of Christ’s blood from the outside to the inside. Bynum’s notion of animating blood as masculine becomes useful for unpacking Sara’s testimony. Sara makes it clear that the blood she desires in her heart (as the “seat” of the soul) is that shed by Christ at his death. It is the movement of Christ’s blood from outside to inside her body that breathes new life into her, just as God animated the body of Christ made in Mary’s womb. The actuating nature of Christ’s blood, in Sara’s formulation, marks it as masculine. It enters Sara’s heart, re-animates her feminine soul, and washes away the “ruin” and “pain” she experiences without it. Christ’s blood, physically separated from his body during the passion and crucifixion, thus provided access to the healing power of the divine.47

But the function of the blood, as Sara explains it, is not limited to the animation (or restoration) of her soul. It also had the distinct power to animate her physical actions, feelings, and state of mind. She wandered around in search of the feeling of the blood. She could feel the blood of the Lamb insider of her and the intensity of that feeling had the power to influence her emotions, whether hopeful, thankful, happy, full of love, or miserable. The blood, entering Sara’s soul and making itself felt in her heart, is active and energizing. The active, physical sensation of the blood, its movement from outside to inside, and the life-giving qualities that it

produces in Sara’s body, all of which operate as unconscious allusions to sexual penetration, also genders it masculine. Sara’s dependence upon this active, masculine blood for her spiritual and physical well-being produces her as the passive subject in this mystical relationship.

Sara’s gendered subjectivity translates to her social position in relation to male authority figures. She pleads, first, to Christ to give her the feeling of his blood, but then she appeals to Zinzendorf to send more teachers, like Johann Beck, to provide worldly guidance regarding her spiritual struggle as she wavers between states of uncertainty, happiness, and misery. Beck, her male teacher, also becomes a source of approbation when he does not reject her as she searches for spiritual clarity “because he knows the spirit of God and his sense.”

The other converts take on this same subject position as they search for instruction about the mystical power of Christ’s blood. Sara Simons grieved because her teacher, Friedrich Boehnisch, had been away for a year, and thus “no lesson [about Christ’s blood] was held for us.” Juditha declares that she was “very pleased”

48 UAH (no catalogue number), GTN, Herrnhag, January 15, 1745, pp. 38; “Manchmal fühle ich nichts gutes in mir sondern lauter Verderben, wiewohl ich mich fleißig nach ihn(m) umsehe, Johann mein Lehrer hat mich doch lieb, und weiset mich auß Lamm, ob ich gleich sehr elend bin, und mich wegen meines Elends nicht verachtet, weil er den Geist Gottes kennt und weiß seinen Sinn, so wendet er allen fleiß an mirs zu sagen.”


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when Boehnisch returned to the congregation. “It is very important to me,” she explains, “when, at the pleasure of the Savior, you [Boehnisch] should have returned to us and tell us a word about the blood of Jesus.” Rebecca asks her reader to witness “what the spirit of God has placed in my heart to testify among the heathen,” though she still “constantly ask[s] the Lamb” to “give me the gift of his blood in my heart.”

Though Rebecca was herself a native inhabitant of Greenland, she momentarily took on a paternal masculine subject position as advocate (i.e. provider) for Christianity among the unconverted “heathen.” But she does not break convention here because she only receives that role from the Holy Spirit in the context of her position as a follower of God. These messages contain an underlying subtext that only masculine spiritual authority figures possessed the proper knowledge and station to teach about God and provide spiritual counsel in setting people (whether converted or unconverted) on the path to righteousness, despite the fact that Moravians congregants received this message at the Gemeintag, quite literally, from female converts.

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51 UAH (no catalogue number), GTN, Herrnhaag, January 15, 1745, pp. 39; “Was ich alles erfahre, und was der Geist Gottes für einen Trieb in mein Herz gegen bei den Heiden zu zeugen, und wie oft ich mich deiner erinnert, und für dich gebeten, daß er dir mit seinem Blute durchhelfen und mich und dich in deiner Aufsicht erhalten und bewahren wolle, kann ich nicht genug sagen. Ich werde unaufhörlich das Lamm bitten, daß er mir sein Blut in mein Herzen schenken wolle.”

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The path to righteousness began with the sacrament of baptism. Barbara tells Friedrich Boehnisch:

Listen Boehnisch! In the year when you were not here, I was baptized in the death of Jesus with water and blood. And because I was still bad and miserable, I asked the Lamb to give me the gift of his blood. Though he made me feel my misery sometimes, I told Jesus that he should take it away, and now I want to constantly be attached to him, that I may learn the power of his blood to my heart. I love you, Jesus blesses you.52

Echoing Pastor Drachard, Barbara articulates her understanding of the sacrament of baptism in uniquely Moravian fashion. In a departure from most Protestants in this period, who were baptized “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” Barbara, and the Moravian Church, gave the “death of Jesus” pride of place as the foundation of her baptism. Baptism in the death of Jesus established the crucifixion as the quintessential element in the re-birth of the Christian soul, as opposed to being baptized in the totality of the Holy Trinity. Death, thus, came to symbolize and create life. The ‘water and blood,’ a clear biblical reference to the liquids that exited Christ’s body when pierced by the Roman soldier, both conferred God’s forgiveness (through contact with the baptismal liquids) and maintained that forgiveness as it washed away sin and cleansed the soul. Whereas outside blood ordinarily connoted violence, pain, pollution, and death, Christ’s blood signified their opposite. Thus, the death of Jesus

and the separation of the blood from his body engendered the power to purify the soul of the believer.

Baptism, however, was just the beginning. Sophia said, “Now Boehnisch…I was baptized this year,” but “[a]s a poor and miserable person, there is still a great deal of ruin attached to me. That is why you [Boehnisch] should pray that the Lord wash away all of my ruin with his blood.” Though baptism conferred forgiveness for sin, receiving the sacrament of baptism initiated a lifelong struggle against spiritual deterioration. Barbara found herself in the same circumstance following her own baptism when she still felt “bad and miserable” later on. In order to avoid impending destruction, Sophia only needed “a single drop of [Christ’s] blood [which] contains the power and might to carry away my sins.”

The potency of Christ’s blood stems from the particularity (a single drop) that contains within it the whole divinity of God. Each drop of blood that was separated from and existed outside of Christ’s body simultaneously remained united (inside) with the whole of Christ. Baptismal blood had the power to cure both the soul (from sin) and the body (from misery). Every drop contained the power of God and became an object of fascination about which


54 Medieval theologians going as far back as the twelfth century debated the nature and power of Christ’s blood as drops. See, Bynum, Wonderful Blood, 175-178.
these converts thirsted for more information in order to avoid relapsing into sin. But it was never enough.

Constantly wavering between periods of torment and happiness, the authors of these letters read at Gemeintag services illustrate the perpetual state of spiritual liminality that early modern Pietist and Moravian culture sought to both encourage and alleviate through inward self reflection. Blood and wounds piety became a way for Moravians to simultaneously communicate and navigate this liminal minefield. The blood of Christ washed away sin and alleviated feelings of ruin, but the joyful feelings that followed quickly faded, just as blood “could disappear, dissipate, [and] decay” both outside the body and inside the hearts of all believers. Herein lies the central importance of the blood of Christ in Moravian blood and wounds piety: blood represented restorative stability and balance in a precarious world characterized by uncertainty. The blood facilitated spiritual and corporeal survival. A life deprived of Christ’s blood could not be lived. As such, blood became synonymous with life itself. Johann Beck articulated this idea most clearly from New Herrnhut: “I know that without the blood of the Lamb, there is no life.” Blood strengthened the spiritual relationship with Jesus by periodically cleansing sin from the soul. Blood

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56 Precedent exists for this notion of blood-as-life going back to the late-medieval period in Germany. Bynum concludes in her study that the blood “was life and the seat of life” and “was thus equated with the spirit.” Caroline Walker Bynum, “The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages,” *Church History*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Dec., 2002): 706.
57 UAH (no catalogue number), GTN, Herrnhag, January 15, 1745, pp. 38. “…denn ich weiß, daß außer dem Blute des Lamms kein Leben ist.”
swept away worldly suffering and anxiety. Blood built and fortified relationships among people. And Christ’s blood carried within it the gift of eternal salvation. As both spiritual symbol and physical experience, blood became synonymous with life.

The *Gemeintagnachrichten* represents these letters concerning blood and wounds piety as honest spiritual testimony from actual converts in Greenland. Yet without explicit instructions that they are “letters, translated from the Greenlandic language, from the savages of Greenland,” one could be forgiven for confusing them with the spiritual testimonies of any German Moravian living in Europe in the mid-1740s. The statements made in these letters should be read critically because they contain very few indicators that they were personally written by actual Indigenous inhabitants of Greenland. However, the messages from Sophia and Barbara, which open with greetings in the imperative grammatical construction, do point toward the difficulty of translating the Greenlandic language into German when they open with the phrases, “Now Boehnisch!” (“Nun Boehnisch!”) and “Listen Boehnisch!” (“Hör Boehnisch!”). Sara also directed her comments to Zinzendorf in an uncharacteristically familiar fashion, using his first name (Ludwig) in the imperative form and not the more formal “Herr” (Mr./Sir/Lord), which native German writers used instinctively as an honorific title for communicating respect and subordination to one’s superior or elder. The grammatical imperative in German implies a cultural self-assurance that does not line up with the substantive content of these letters that

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58 Ibid; “Aus der Groenländischen Spreche übersetze Briefe von den Groenländischen Wilden.”
display a remarkable sense of deference to authority and draw on familiar gendered
tropes of traditional social and religious hierarchy. Accordingly, these discrepancies
suggest that Indigenous converts, whose native societies contained notions of social
hierarchy and speech patterns that differed quite substantially from that of the
Europeans, actually did play a significant role in the composition, though perhaps
not the German transcription and translation, of these letters.

PUT ANOTHER WAY, these female converts from Greenland spoke in ways that
Europeans would have expected willing converts to speak. The language contained in
Indigenous letters that found their way into Gemeintag services perfectly
complemented the spiritual rhetoric of the Moravian missionaries and masked any
practical problems they almost certainly encountered in the mission field. Therefore,
these excerpted letters provide little insight into the actual progress of the Moravian
mission in Greenland or the true thoughts and feelings of Indigenous converts there.
The Gemeintagnachrichten (the circulating reports of the these services) configured
the letters in a way that transformed them into apologia for the Christian messages
promulgated in the more traditional aspects of Gemeintag services. The letters evince
and perform social and religious orthodoxies that the Moravian leadership wanted

59 Thea Olsthoorn, “‘Wir haben keine Ohren’: Kommunikationsprobleme und Missionsverständnisse
bei der Verbreitung und Rezeption des Christentums in Grönland und Labrador im 18. Jahrhundert,”
their congregations to hear at Gemeintag services in Europe. Nevertheless, the fact that Moravian clergy incorporated these letters into regularly occurring rituals of public worship at all indicates an important shift in perceptions of proper religious authority in Europe away from the traditional clergy and toward ordinary believers. Religious experiences in the New World had become an important feature of Moravian worship services in the Old World. It was one thing to *preach* a doctrine of inward spirituality. But clerical sermons and pronouncements based on learned, homiletical adaptations of Bible stories would now be regularly supplemented with real life examples of grace, redemption, and spiritual struggle as communicated through the experiences of actual believers. Believers testifying about how the blood and wounds of Christ functioned in their daily lives now supplemented their more traditional representations in the 1730s as generic symbols of salvation and ritual purity. The Moravian Church had officially begun the process of taking the Reformation principle of the priesthood of all believers to its logical conclusion. Ordinary believers, despite the oversight exerted by Moravian pastors, now had a say in how the Moravian Church disseminated the messages contained in the Gospels.

By the mid-1740s, these nontraditional forms of public worship symbolically institutionalized ordinary believers as legitimate exhorters of God’s work in the world just as the evangelical revivals, and the nontraditional forms of preaching and worship that they had fostered separately, began to spread in British North America and Europe in the 1730s and 1740s. The more precise and emotional language
displayed in the later testimonies from ordinary Moravians also marks how blood and wounds piety transitioned into a much more personal religious devotion and the primary language of expressing the struggle to maintain an intimate relationship with God, rather than operating solely as a traditional liturgical and theological ideal.

Blood and wounds piety became a devotional and rhetorical medium through which believers demonstrated how they actually lived the Gospel stories beyond the relation of the stories themselves by Moravian preachers. Moravian ministers, as previously stated, retained a measure of control over the religious messages heard by their congregations because they chose which letters, and which parts of those letters, would be read aloud. Still, the inclusion of lay testimonies in formal religious services signifies the new importance that Moravians accorded to the spirituality of ordinary believers and their experiences all over the Atlantic world. Innovations in the development, structure, content, and practice of Gemeintag services, thus, constitute an important transformation in German religious culture in Europe wrought by the colonial world. The locus of Moravian religious and social identities came to be situated in the spaces between Moravian congregations and was not limited to the confines of the local community. In effect, Gemeintag services also sanctioned epistolary writing as a new form of religious devotion, which, as the next chapter will demonstrate, gave ordinary Moravians license to further refine their own visions of Moravian religious culture and practice.
Chapter Three

Bloody Bodies:

Spiritual Remembering and Embodied Moravian Piety in Atlantic World
Travel Diaries, 1735-1765

On a chilly afternoon in November 1756, Christian Henrich and Carl Schulzen set off on a fifty-four day journey from the Moravian settlement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania to a recently founded missionary outpost on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. At the behest of the Lämmlein (“little Lamb”)¹, the Moravian congregation in Bethlehem held a gesegnetes Abschieds-Liebesmahl (“blessed farewell love feast”) to honor and commemorate their dedication to the missionary cause and to collectively pray for their safe passage.² It proved to be a hallowed but somber occasion as Henrich and Schulzen felt a “tender love-pain” and cried “many tears” upon their departure.³ After passing through Easton and the tiny German village of Braunschweig, Henrich and Schulzen carried their belongings onto a merchant ship anchored in New York harbor, bade goodbye to the various Moravian brothers and sisters who accompanied them to the wharf with feelings of “warm love,” and sailed

¹ “Lämmlein,” which roughly translates to “little Lamb,” was one of many familiar and reverential names Moravians used to refer to Jesus in the mid-eighteenth century.
³ Ibid; “Nach demselben nahmen wir Abschied unter einen Zärtlichen Liebes-Schmerz und vielen Thränen.”
away toward their final destination just as the mid-Atlantic winter snow began to fall.4

Early in the morning on December 3rd, after two weeks at sea, it was all hands on deck as a result of the ship springing a leak in the hull, which required the sustained efforts of the entire crew. For two days the crew on board labored to pump the water out, but high winds and the onset of fatigue hindered their efforts to the point that the ship would sink if repairs could not soon be made. The captain decided to plot a course for the Atlantic island of Bermuda despite grumblings among members of the crew that the ship would not make it that far in its present condition with the winds blowing against them.5

Just when their situation began to seem hopeless they spotted the mast of another ship on the horizon. After a desperate effort to alert this foreign vessel to their distress by waving flags and firing their canons, however, the ship sailed by without so much as acknowledging their existence and left them at the mercy of “extremely harsh winds and high seas.”6 With their hopes for rescue dashed, the first mate informed the captain that the ship had taken on four and a half feet of water below deck and the ship’s water pumps were completely overwhelmed. Doing all they could to stave off sinking, the crew dumped the ship’s defensive cannons overboard, but it

6 UAH, R.14.A.35, Doc No. 22, 839, Diary of Christian Henrich and Carl Schulzen, December 4, 1756; “…aber es segelte uns vorbei; wir hatten außerordentl. harten Wind und eine Hohe See.”
wasn’t much help. And even though all seemed lost, the Moravians “still could not believe that we should be buried in the sea.”

Suddenly, as if by divine providence, and with Captain Blaw powerless to stave off the inevitable, a man below deck, who coincidentally also held the rank of captain, rose miraculously from his sickbed, refreshed the exhausted crew with drink, and heroically persuaded them to resume pumping water out of the ship as if their lives depended upon it (which it did). Early the next morning, Captain Blaw, perhaps out of spite for being passed over in the chain of command the night before, threatened to suspend the journey and abandon the occupants of the merchant ship “to the mercy of God” somewhere along their current route. “But soon thereafter, the other captain came into the cabin and said that [the hole in] the ship had been plugged, which [brought us] new courage, and that the [remaining] water would be pumped out in a few hours. Now that was a great joy [to hear].” Their lives saved through the heroic and benevolent efforts of this mysterious but steadfast and Christ-like savior, Henrich and Schulzen “thanked the Heiland with many tears for his amazing help and loyalty which he had given us to [strengthen] our calling.”

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7 Ibid; “Wir aber konnten es noch nicht glauben, dass wir in der See sollten begraben werden.”
9 Ibid; “…wir danken dem Heiland mit vielen Tränen vor seine erstaunliche Hülfe und treue, die Er an uns getan hatte, und unser Beruf wurde uns noch Besser.”
they continued to face high winds, “we sailed forward vigorously” and eventually arrived in Jamaica safely.\textsuperscript{10}

Reminiscent of the Apostle Paul's dangerous missionary expeditions through Asia Minor, the coastal cities surrounding the Aegean Sea, and as far west as Rome in the Book of Acts, Henrich and Schulzen’s travel diary artfully combines perilous circumstances with calls for divine assistance and unwavering faith in the face of worldly resistance in order to convey the message that God would not let them fail. The Book of Acts chronicled the initial spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire and Moravian travel diaries, in similar fashion, would operate as grassroots narrations of the Moravian Church spreading throughout the Atlantic world. In keeping a record of their experiences, Henrich and Schulzen dutifully followed Count Zinzendorf's explicit instructions that Moravian missionaries in Jamaica should “write often from your heart” while also advising them to “be humble” and not allow “gossip to direct His days.”\textsuperscript{11} Zinzendorf envisioned these diaries as raw, unadulterated evidence of God’s work and not the subjective, worldly interpretations of the Moravian believers who kept them. From the perspective of the Moravian Church leadership, Henrich and Schulzen’s diary contained God’s story, not their own. And yet, recording religious experiences in diaries evolved into a complex and heretofore

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid; “Die Geschwister waren etwas besser, wir waren sehr viel mit unsren Herzen in unserm liebe Bethlehem.”; “Continuirte der Wind noch so, und wir segelten stark fort.”

\textsuperscript{11} Quote from Zinzendorf’s instructions to the missionaries traveling to Jamaica can be found at Moravian Archives Bethlehem, Jamaica Papers, No. 29.2; as quoted in Paul Peucker, “Pietism in the Archives,” in Douglas H. Shantz, ed., \textit{A Companion to German Pietism, 1660-1800} (Boston: Brill, 2015), 400, n. 25.
unacknowledged practice of personal piety for the authors. Travel diaries afforded believers an opportunity to engage in a process of spiritual remembering that facilitated the ascription of new and subsequent religious meanings to important occurrences in the course of their travels.\textsuperscript{12} The significance of these personal ascriptions of religious meaning obtain from their nature as intersubjective performances of Moravian rhetorical and religious culture.\textsuperscript{13}

Historians tend to limit the utility of diaries to various reflections of the “self,” whether as “fragmented works of self-inscription,” self-representation, self-definition,

\textsuperscript{12} The diaries did much more than simply inform contemporaries and church leaders about notable incidents that occurred in the spaces between Moravian congregations. They also represented more than merely contributions to an archival record for the information and edification of a collective posterity. Historian Paul Peucker, the director of the Moravian Archives Bethlehem, argues that reports like these “served not only to inform contemporaries at home, but also future generations who would hear what had been done in the name of God.” Commissioning and collecting these reports allowed the Moravian Church to “create their own world,” after the fact, through the cultural technology of the archive. See, Peucker, “Pietism in the Archives,” in \textit{A Companion to German Pietism, 1660-1800}, ed. Douglas H. Shantz (Boston: Brill, 2015), 400, 393-420. Peucker also published a more extensive article on the topic of intentional erasures in Moravian archives in the late eighteenth century. See, Peucker, “Selection and Destruction in Moravian Archives Between 1760 and 1810,” \textit{Journal of Moravian History}, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Fall 2012): 170-215.

\textsuperscript{13} Sociologists and anthropologists define intersubjectivity as the study of “how people become social entities and how they attend to one another and the products of human endeavor in the course of day-to-day life.” “All constructions of reality, all notions of definition, identification, and explanation, all matters of education, enterprise, entertainment, interpersonal relations, organizational practices, cultic involvements, collective behavior, and political struggles of all sorts are rooted in the human accomplishment of intersubjectivity.” Robert Prus, \textit{Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience} (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 2, 9. I read Moravian diaries as individual negotiations of composite religious and social cultural formations that are only comprehensible within the context of community. Each diary entry represents a fragmented expression of some larger imperative deemed significant by the society in which the individual lived, whether that society consisted of a figurative conception of transatlantic association or people living together in immediate proximity.
self-examination, self-actualization, or self-determination. By focusing on the performative qualities of Moravian travel diaries, this chapter will demonstrate how diverse articulations of personal salvation actually reflect a much larger collective consciousness and cultural interdependence. The performative qualities of Moravian writing practices implicate diaries as important mechanisms of Moravian transatlantic identity construction.

Moravian travelers kept diaries in order to chronicle and reinforce Moravian successes in spreading the good news contained in the Gospels and perform the fact of their salvation, a duel purpose for diary writing that differed significantly from other early modern Protestants. Catherine Brekus argues that the point of Puritan and Congregationalist diaries was spiritual exploration. Puritans, such as Sarah Osborn, kept diaries as a method of repeatedly interrogating and questioning the state of their converted soul in futile attempts to gain knowledge of whether or not they were

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among God’s elect and predestined for salvation. Anglican, Methodist, and Baptist women used personal diaries as a method of “strengthen[ing] bonds of friendship while forming new religious identities in community.”

Moravian travel diaries, though certainly used for devotional purposes, were much more than narrative searches for assurance of the reception of God’s grace and insular means of fostering personal connections within the boundaries of the congregation. Moravians travel diaries consisted of stories and anecdotes about implementing and interacting with God’s work in the world, maintaining and developing relationships with the Heiland, and constructing new religious identities while outside the confines of religious community. Moravian believers kept travel diaries in order to preserve God’s grace in harmony with their distant co-religionists, not to seek it.

In tracking the emergence of this objective for diary writing, this chapter argues that the content and rhetoric contained in Moravian travel diaries became increasingly mystical from 1735 to 1765 and these changes signify the growing importance of diaries as instruments of personal and collective religious piety, the

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increasing religious authority of believers, and their capacity to foster transatlantic identities. The analysis that follows will focus on seven Moravian travel diaries kept by David Nitschmann, Abraham Kohn, Johann Frederick Cammerhof, Brother Kaskens (his first name is unknown), Mattheus Stach, Anna Johanna Piesch, and Peter Schwimmer. The content, structure, and purpose of these diaries reveal how Moravian believers increasingly came to conceptualize their daily lives in terms of gendered beliefs and embodied religious experiences and practices.

Though never uniform and always geographically situated, three broad themes emerge that, together, form the foundation for the collective utility of the travel diaries, the personal motivations for keeping them, and the transformation of their content over time. These three themes — converging bodies, ceremonial bodies, and mystical bodies — encompass the chronological progression of the content of the diaries and serve as the organizing principle for this chapter. First, the earliest diaries feature descriptions of religious encounters with other Europeans, other Moravians at points of departure and destination, and African and Indigenous peoples that demonstrate the significance of bodily convergence in Moravian religious culture. Reconstructsions of these meetings in the travel diaries invested the Christian mission with personal meaning and reinforced the larger success of the Moravian missionary

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17 These seven constitute a representative cross section of Moravian travel diarists whose diaries have survived and capture the diversity of content in the diaries themselves, the geographic reach of Moravian travelers, and the time period under study. In addition, Anna Johanna Piesch was not the only Moravian women to keep a travel diary. There are sporadic references to this fact in other travel diaries as well as references to diaries kept by women in Moravian congregational records. Unfortunately, very few have been preserved.
enterprise. Second, descriptions of religious practices, including (but not limited to) re-creations and modified versions of traditional collective Moravian religious ceremonies — the weekly Gottesdienst (worship service), Abendmahls (communion services), Liebesmahls (love feasts), Singstunden (singing hours), Viertelstunden (quarter-hour prayers), and Taufen (baptisms) — as well as narratives of intimate personal prayer, unaccompanied singing meditations, and the composition of religious poetry, began to invest the daily Moravian liturgical and devotional schedule with new meanings. The descriptions of these practices illustrate the centrality and mobility of bodily religious ceremony. Third, descriptions of mystical encounters with the divine, ranging from attributions of God’s divine power to worldly circumstances, to the operations of the blood and wounds of Christ, to direct one-on-one conversations between the diarist and the Almighty, signified the solidification of the devotional power of the travel diary and laid bare the sustained power of embodied mysticism in Moravian culture. In addition, peppering these descriptions with personal religious commentary with increasing frequency effectively transformed the physical act of keeping a diary into a devotional exercise and an external practice of piety in itself, much like praying, singing, and worshipping. Diary writing, in other words, gave material form to both the worldly and mystical experiences of the author. As a corollary, diarists articulated the various ways in which the persons of the Holy Trinity could be gendered as a method of ascribing alternative religious meanings to their immediate circumstances.
Upon arrival at their destination, most Moravians sent their diaries variously to Herrnhut, Marienborn, or Bethlehem, depending on the time period and the location of the destination. The Moravian Church had them copied and then distributed to congregations across the Atlantic basin so that the content could reach a considerably larger audience of believers. The believers who consumed these texts considered them important sources of religious education, spiritual edification, and even entertainment. They often contained tales of risk and physical danger occurring outside the context of the believer’s home congregation, as in the adventure story related by Heinrich and Schulzen. But the purpose was not to provoke feelings of amusement or titillation in the same way that a purely literary adventure story might. The Moravian Church hoped to foster feelings of comfort, well being, and contentment with the notion that no matter the circumstances, God would guide and protect them. Thus, the believers themselves, those who had personally experienced God’s grace in times of hardship and not exclusively the local ministers, propagated the Christian message in their own words. Believers who consumed these stories, regardless of whether or not they had personally experienced one of these journeys, could draw parallels to their own religious experiences and individual struggles to maintain their relationship with God. Taken as a whole, the pages of travel diaries became powerful, generative physical spaces where authors transformed personal

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18 The neat handwriting, even spacing, consistent date marking styles, lack of ink having bled through the pages (a characteristic marker of the original diaries), and the addition of a reflexive title articulated in the third person on the surviving copy of Heinrich and Schulzen’s diary, for example, all point toward the planning and labor of a professional scribe working on a stable surface for writing.
spiritual remembrances and thoughts about religious experiences into embodied mysticism that existed in the corporeal world and performed the cultural work of endowing ordinary believers with new authority. The stories preserved by believers in their diaries, however abbreviated and seemingly disconnected, constitute an important window into how believers both embraced and resisted conventional forms of Moravian piety and devotional practices.

**Converging Bodies**

Travel diaries, or “*Reise Diarium,*” emerged in conjunction with the Moravian transatlantic missions in the early 1730s, a decade that also witnessed the earliest rumblings of spiritual awakening in New England that would coalesce into the Great Awakening. As a written medium that would become central to the fledgling Moravian transatlantic communication network, travel diaries initially functioned as longer, more detailed epistolary correspondence. Moravians engaged in the practice of memorializing events that occurred in the course of long distance expeditions in and around the Atlantic as an extension of other, more established practices of daily record keeping. David Nitschmann, one of the original Moravian Atlantic world missionaries, kept the earliest surviving example of a Moravian travel diary by chronicling his journey from the short-lived Moravian settlement in colonial Georgia to Amsterdam in the Netherlands during the months of March and April 1736. In
contrast to the grandiose tale spun by Heinrich and Schulzen, which reflects later innovations in the discipline of Moravian travel diary writing, Nitschmann’s first travel diary reads like a common-place register of events. On his way to Amsterdam, Nitschmann recounted his travels through the Carolinas, Pennsylvania, and New York before getting on a ship that would take him back to Europe. Despite its pedestrian and informational style, Nitschmann featured personal encounters that he had with people he met in the course of his overland journey, encounters that reveal a visceral awareness of the larger spiritual and ecclesiastical importance of bodily convergence.

Instances of bodies converging took many forms in the pages of Nitschmann’s diary. Perhaps as unintended context for the relevance and relative randomness of bodies coming together, he demonstrated a remarkably consistent fear of the unknown, even after having survived no less than three voyages across the Atlantic by 1736. In order to remain true to the missionary task and overcome this fear, Nitschmann relied on a rhetorically deployed concept of “Stille” in his diary, which literally translates to “quiet calmness and/or tranquility,” in order to reassure himself of his personal safety. From the standpoint of German Pietist ecclesiology concerning the relationship between a believer and the Church, “Stille” constituted one among many important aspects of Pietist heart religion and the personal, mystical connection
to God that distinguished Pietism from other Christian confessions. Orthodox Lutheran critics would have understood “Stille” as proof of the dangers of “Quietist” tendencies inherent in Moravian and Pietist religious culture. To believers, however, “Stille” meant something much more complex and compelling. Hoping to stave off a looming threat of bodily harm while traveling through the Carolina countryside, Nitschmann prayed about his “desire [for a sense of] calmness [Stille] from the Savior, as [he] was among the wild animals.” After boarding the ship Acord, Nitschmann sailed away from the Carolina coast toward New York with four other passengers from New England who “spent their time according to their nature,” a subtle critique of English impiousness. Nitschmann, however, reported that he “felt quite calm” with the situation. Stille operated as both a mystical blessing that could be requested from God and bestowed upon the believer as well as a physical feeling of general contentedness.

In addition to assuaging spiritual and physical feelings of fear, Stille could also indicate a measure of understanding and/or approbation. On April 25, 1736, the

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19 A quiet soul or a spiritual state of solitude held the distractions of the world at bay and strengthened the personal connection between the believer and God. For a brief though useful discussion of the rhetorical deployment of the concept of “Stille” in German Pietist literature, see Priscilla Hayden-Roy, *A Foretaste of Heaven: Friedrich Hölderlin in the Context of Württemberg Pietism* (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), 162, n. 16, and (as cited in Hayden-Roy’s footnote) August Langen, *Der Worschatz des deutschen Pietismus* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1968), 177-183. See also, Barry Stephenson, *Veneration and Revolt: Hermann Hesse and Swabian Pietism* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), 233, n. 7.

20 UAH, R.14.A.35, Doc No. 1, 4, Diary of Brother David Nitschmann, April 12, 1736; “…wünschte mir Stille vom Heiland ich war wir unter den wilden Tieren.”

The captain of the *Acord* asked to join Nitschmann as he sat reading his Bible. Perhaps because he had also previously traveled to the Caribbean, the captain “began to speak of the West Indian life and asked me [Nitschmann] whether I, also, did not make such a life,” presumably in response to Nitschmann telling the captain that he had recently spent time on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas. In response, Nitschmann “suggested to him many ways in which the Bible deals with this matter and declared what I believe [these passages] mean.” Feeling slightly frustrated, perhaps because of misunderstandings or disagreements with the captain, Nitschmann then “tried to explain that,” far from taking to a life of sin in the Caribbean, he “fundamentally turned [his] whole life over to God,” in an effort to communicate the weight of the Christian message. “Upon hearing this,” Nitschmann reported that the captain “felt very calm [Stille].” From Nitschmann’s description, we cannot know for certain whether the captain’s newfound sense of calmness referred to his physical state, perhaps after a heated/contentious conversation about religion, or his emotional comportment. In fact, this brief interaction reveals little, if anything, about the captain at all. But Nitschmann perceived a physical change in the captain’s physical demeanor after hearing of his own commitment to the Christian faith. Nitschmann took this change as a measure of approbation and agreement with his own religious

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22 UAH, R.14.A.35, Doc No. 1, 6, Diary of Brother David Nitschmann, April 25, 1736; “Da mich der Captain sahe die Bibel lesen, hat er auch darin zu lesen begehrt, die fing er von der Westindische lebensart zu reden und fragte mich ob ich es nicht auch so machte, so schlug ich ihm viel Arte in der Bibel auf die von der Matter handelt und sagte ihm ich glaubte was darin Stünde und darnach suchte ich meine ganzes Leben durch die Grunde Gottes zu richten. Er wurde ganz Stille darüber.”
convictions. In any case, the interaction moved Nitschmann to memorialize it in his travel diary. For Nitschmann, the concept of Stille went far beyond a mere sense of calmness and the abstract mystical connection with God. Stille constituted a meaningful marker of both physical and spiritual development that manifested in the body. The details of their conversation concerning “ways of life” and what the Bible had to say about it were not important enough to record in the diary. The change that Nitschmann perceived in the captain’s body moved him to record this victory for Christ in the hope that reading it might move others or, at least, operate as an edifying commentary on his religious mission. Experiencing, communicating, and recording instances of Stille became an embodied religious missionary practice that functioned as an extra-theological element of Moravian lived religion.

Nitschmann emphasized the physical circumstances of the meeting, not who the meeting was with. In fact, other than his biological sex and rank on the ship, Nitschmann did not think it important enough to include any personal details about the captain, not even his name. Moravian travel diarists rarely provided much detail about the people they met in the course of their travels because the fact and circumstances of bodies coming together and changing was, ultimately, what mattered. Observations of physical changes allowed diarists to ascribe religious meaning to these meetings, which translated into a sense that Moravians were performing God’s work in securing new Christian followers. As a corollary benefit, these descriptions of bodily convergence made uplifting stories for the believers who
read about or listened to them in Moravian congregations elsewhere as a result of the copying and distributing of these diaries.\textsuperscript{23}

Observing religiously motivated changes in bodies became a hallmark of many Moravian travel diaries. A few weeks after meeting with the captain, Nitschmann met a baker from New York and a “well-meaning” school master (both of whom remain nameless) who displayed “some good movement” toward Christ and “sought God.” He spent an evening with these two men talking about the mechanics of building religious community and how many new converts would/should be sufficient for maintaining such a community. Nitschmann employed the popular Biblical metaphor of a harvest to describe his thoughts on the matter. He said “that not enough [people] had been converted by us.” “However,” he qualified, “it should be more fruitful [in the future] and that fertility should be proven to us in how the community is composed,” and, most importantly, “when [the converts] come together as a result of speaking from the heart.”\textsuperscript{24} Tacitly criticizing the legalism practiced by the Lutheran Orthodoxy, religious community was not created by formal statements of faith disseminated by an ordained clergy. Community was realized through the bodies of ordinary believers coming together and orally proclaiming the good news of

\textsuperscript{23} Copying and distributing handwritten newsletters was a practice developed in Europe as early as the sixteenth century. See Zsuzsa Barbarics and Renate Pieper, “Handwritten newsletters as a means of communication in early modern Europe,” in \textit{Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe, Vol. III: Correspondence and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400-1700} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 53-79.

\textsuperscript{24} UAH, R.14.A.35, Doc No. 1, 8; Diary of Brother David Nitschmann, May 4, 1736; “…sonder solte auch fruchtbaehr seyn und wie sich die fruchtbaehrkeit an uns beweist und im was die Gemeinschaft besteht und wenn sie zusammen kämen allemahl von ihn eigenhertzte reden…”
the Gospels as they experienced it in their lives. Believers created religious community by both “coming together,” an issue of physical proximity, and through the bodily practice of “speaking from the heart,” which could be performed alone or in the context of a gathering. For Nitschamann, people changed collectively as the religious “fertility” of converts coalesced into Christian community. The enthusiasm with which Nitschmann recorded these short, seemingly trivial episodes reveals the spiritual meaningfulness that he ascribed to the practice of keeping records of these interactions. Writing about his meetings with people provided him with a clearer sense of purpose with regard to the physical aspects of his spiritual mission.25

In the 1730s, the Moravians struggled to establish mission stations among the Lutherans, Catholics, and Anglicans in the Danish West Indies, in Greenland with support from the Royal Danish College of Missions, and in Governor James Oglethorpe’s Georgia. Moving between these places, travel diarists quickly discovered the cathartic effect of providing more detailed descriptions of the actual content of conversations, bodily reactions, and feelings they experienced along the way. The “Heiland” [Savior] features much more prominently in the later entries of early travel diaries as the genre increasingly became an important source of religious meaning making. On June 9, 1736, Nitschmann had a conversation with an unnamed

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25 Ibid; “[am] 4. wurde mit etl. geredet, dass es nicht genug waren, dass wir uns bekehret hatten, sondern sollte auf frucht bahr seyn und wie sich die frucht bahr keit an uns beweist, und in was die Gemeinschaft besteht und wenn sie zusammen kämen allemahl von ihn eigen Herzen reden.”; “Ich ausführlich vonführungen der Seelen und von Saten Geist das sich Kinder Gottes zu hätten, haben nicht mit Feuer zu strahlen auf ander, sondern sich selbst schaft zu sie sei notwendig um ander damit zu gewinn.”
New Yorker on the topic of love. Before the conversation started, “the Lord gave grace and they [the New Yorker and Nitschmann’s Moravian companions] believed that the Lord [was] among us.” “There was talk of the right type of love and of what [love] consists.” The conversation ended with a disagreement over whether the nature of God’s love could change over time. Nitschmann explained that experiencing the love of God was something that should be a part of everyday life and that God’s love had not changed since the time of the *Heiland* and the early Christians. Afterward, Nitschmann and company “took [their] leave from one another,” but “the grace of God commanded us to write to [the Moravian settlement in] Georgia” about the “solid standing of grace” and the “true hunger” for God that resided in the heart of this wayward New Yorker. This was no ordinary, pedestrian conversation.

Nitschman believed the *Heiland* had personally blessed this meeting and the conversation before it even started, and he observed that the man was able to feel the presence of God. The nearness of God’s presence forced Nitschmann to compose a letter informing others (presumably other Moravians) about this man’s voracious yearning to hear the Christian message and relate the good news of this conversation. Diary entries allowed the author/traveler to ascribe additional religious meaning to encounters like these after the fact, in this instance connecting the influence of God

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with the composition of a letter to Georgia and declaring the presence of God before the conversation even started. Nitschmann articulated a purpose for the Savior composed of much more than an unattainable ideal. God confirmed, commanded, remained, accompanied, motivated, directed, and moved the bodies of believers, both messengers and listeners.

One eminently important task performed by the Heiland in the lives of Moravian believers was ritual purification. Many diary writers expressed deep concerns about both ritual and bodily cleanliness. On June the 10th, Nitschmann met a man who told him that “he was in a dispute with the [local] parishes. In his opinion, the souls [in his area] were quite miserable because they want to be as simple as our Savior had been.” The man spoke about a local stigma attached to the possession of a Christian conscious, but concluded that “each are purified by the blood of Christ and [are] wasted [meaning ‘lost’ or ‘abandoned’] without the use of it.”27 In this entry, Nitschmann subtilely broadened the centrality of the Moravian axiom of exhibiting a simple, childlike devotion to the Savior. In addition, the people who lived nearby were also unhappy with the liturgical practices of their church and longed for a condition of spiritual and/or devotional simplicity; to be more like the Heiland. An afternoon conversation ensued concerning the social consequences of encouraging a

27 UAH, R.14.A.35, Doc No. 1, 16, Diary of Brother David Nitschmann, June 10, 1736; “Kamen wir zu ein Bruder, der uns erzälte in was von einen Streit er mit das Pfarren gewesen. Es ist recht jämmerlich in was von Meinung die Seelen stehen, weil sie so einfaltig sein wollen wie unser Heiland gewesen. Nach Mittags waren etliche zusammen davon, dass Brandmal des gewissens und den an satz geredet wurde, das ein jeder durch das Blut Christi gereinigt werden wüsten und ohne nutzen davon.”
Christian conscience that demanded a sense of mystical simplicity. Maintaining a childlike devotion to the *Heiland* required one to be free of contaminants, such as an overbearing clergy or excessive ceremony in religious practice, elements that worked to obfuscate the pivotal mystical connection between God and believer. In order to recover that state of simplicity and reinitiate the proper context for this mystical relationship, one must be ritually cleansed and purified by the blood of Christ. The mystical power of Christ’s body, in the form of his shed blood, had the power to reinvigorate the miserable condition of souls in the world. Jesus’s blood washed away the complexities of Christianity championed by the eclectic mix of Christian religious groups in New York. The lesson, and Nitschmann’s reason for recording this particular episode in his diary, lay in the man’s proclamation to continually “use” the blood of Christ, or all else would be lost. To “use” Christ’s blood in religious devotion was to free/purify oneself of the filth of sin.28

In this first mention of the blood of Christ in the Moravian travel diaries, David Nitschmann demonstrated that believers, regardless of their station, thought about Christ’s blood in simultaneously mystical and material forms. Nitschmann’s description preserves the salvific qualities of the blood, but the imperative to “use” the blood of Christ implicated the body as both consumer and supplier of ritual eucharistic purity outside the context of the sacrament of Holy Communion. In order

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28 It is impossible to know if the man from New York actually said this, or this was Nitschmann’s addition. Given the Moravian penchant for invoking the blood and wounds of Christ in this period and the criticism they received for this particular devotion from outsiders, it is not unreasonable to assume that this was actually Nitschmann reformulating the man’s words to fit his purpose.
to use Christ’s blood, believers had to understand it in physical, not exclusively mystical or ideal, terms. The blood had to operate as an embodied element of Moravian devotional practice. The practice of recording aspects of inter-personal interactions for this purpose had special religious significance and worked to extend the edifying utility of these interactions beyond the interaction itself. By creating written descriptions, both the authors and other believers now had the opportunity to participate in these religious experiences that occurred in the course of overland journeys. Christ’s blood, outside the context of a familiar home congregation, operated as a ritual practice that was shaped by individual circumstance.

The drama of overland travel in the service of God captured the imaginations of Moravians in both the Old and New worlds. After being copied and distributed, these diaries were read, in part or in their entirety depending upon their length, aloud at the weekly Gottesdienst (worship service) or at Gemeintag services, made available for Moravian believers to read on their own, and in some instances even recorded in the local public congregational diaries. A diary kept by an obscure Moravian named Brother Kaskens and his wife (who’s given names we do not know), two missionaries who resided in a small settlement called Pilgerhut within the boundary of the Dutch ‘Society of Berbice' on the northern coast of South America, chronicled their four-month journey to Pennsylvania in January 1752.29 The Kaskens traveled overland

29 The diary that survives is a reproduction from the records of the Bethlehem Congregational Diary and was subsequently distributed to the Moravian missionary congregation on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas.
from Pilgerhut to the South American coast, then overseas to the tiny island of Eustatius, then north to St. Thomas where they toured and inspected the Moravian missionary settlement there before heading north, once again, to Philadelphia. Kaskens chose to use the pages of his diary to perform his devotion to God through descriptions of his interactions with African and Indigenous people.

Kaskens and his wife departed from Pilgerhut on January 18th and paddled down the River Berbice on a canoe. They continued through the Dutch colonial region of Demarara where they met an Indigenous man who offered to host them at his house for the night. Staying true to their calling, Kaskens and his wife spent the evening telling this man stories about the Heiland. After hearing these stories, Brother Kasken’s wrote that their host’s “heart was so soft, that [his] eyes stood full of tears and he received amazing love from me.” Kaskens developed a sense of spiritual kinship with this man based on his physical reaction to the Christian message. Memorializing the love he felt for this Indigenous man in his diary constituted a reflexive devotional practice. The descriptive language endowed interactions like this with a sense of personal meaning and intimacy that moved beyond simply reporting the raw number of conversions achieved in the mission field. Detailed reports about Indigenous hearts being moved by the Gospel stories honored God’s assistance in facilitating the conversions won by the missionaries.

Meetings with converts, new and old, reinforced the durability and credibility of the Moravian message. One Sunday in late March 1752, Kaskens met “2 negroes” on a sugar plantation on the island of St. Thomas. One of these African men “struck me on the armpit and asked me, of his own free will, whether I was a [Moravian] brother?” Somewhat surprised to hear that this man knew of the Moravians, Kaskens responded in the affirmative and asked the man, “How do you know about us?” The man replied that he had come to know many Moravians there, especially one named Friedrich Martin, who had served as one of the early Moravian missionaries on the island. The man said he “knew all the brothers by name” and Kaskens asked him “whether he still remembered what he had learned from his brothers.” To Kaskens’s delight, the man said, “Yes…he should not forget [what he had learned] for all of his life. He [the African man] promised me that he wanted to come back on Sunday so that he could talk with me more.”

Cultural transformation mattered to Kaskens, Nitschmann, and other Moravian missionaries. Transformations led to regular attendance at future religious meetings as well as oral conversations about Christian faith. Stories like these spoke to the larger issue of the successful, person by person, spread of the Moravian message. Contrary to the strident forms of pastoral persuasion

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employed by Catholic missionaries to native peoples in colonial Mexico, the English in North America, and the Jesuits in French-controlled regions of Canada, these stories tacitly emphasized the benefits of more tolerant, though certainly paternalistic, methods of bring non-Europeans into the Christian fold.\textsuperscript{32}

References to ethnic and racial hierarchy in Greenland, however, offer instances where official Moravian Church policy differed from practices of faith in the mission field. A diary kept by Mattheus Stach, Moravian missionary to Greenland, contains some of the clearest examples of Moravian gender dynamics developed as a result of travel and living in a settlement on the Atlantic frontier. After receiving the call from God to go to Greenland to convert the Inuit people there in 1733, Stach embarked on the journey with his father, Christian Stach, and Christian David, one of the original founders of Herrnhut who led the Czech refugees that settled on Zinzendorf’s estate in Saxony. The men traveled overland through the German cities of Jena and Halle on their way to Copenhagen, where they “found good friends and awakened souls” waiting to greet them before they undertook their grand “attempt to convert these savage people [in Greenland].”\textsuperscript{33} The stark contrast in language and

\textsuperscript{32} For a useful analysis and overview of missionary tactics employed by various Europeans in North America, see James Axtell, \textit{The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

\textsuperscript{33} UAH, R.21.A.169a, 7, Diary of Mattheus Stach, January 19, 1733; “Hier funden wir unterschiedlich gutte freunde und Erweckte Seelen die zum Teil schon vorher mit Brüdern bekannt gewest...”; 8, “…und einen Versuch zu Bekehrung dieser wilden Menschen zu tun.”; Stach viewed his diary more as a memoir \textit{(Lebenslauf)} than a travel diary, even though it chronicles his travels to and from Greenland and the entries are structured chronologically like a diary. Stach added to this document over a period of over thirty years and, thus, it covers a much longer period of time than most other Moravian diaries. It is for this reason that his diary gained devotional significance for him much earlier than many of the other travel diarists. It is also important to note that the surviving document is a copy of the original.
tone between Stach’s description of the people the Moravians met in Copenhagen and those they expected to convert in Greenland suggests that Stach and his companions shared many of the common European prejudices against non-European bodies and cultures that provided some of their motivation to go to these unknown places and change them.

Bodily practices operated as the focal point that remained paramount in Moravian religious culture, but they took on more complex dimensions in the mission field. Stach’s descriptions of working to convert the Inuit peoples inadvertently exposes devotional, sacramental, cultural double standards in the blanket Moravian claim that all souls are equal before God. For example, Sister Beckin, Moravian missionary Johann Beck’s wife, gave birth to her first son named Johann Ludwig on June 20, 1737. Within days of his son’s birth, Stach had him baptized in the normal Moravian fashion. Two years later, in late March 1739, Stach reported that he “baptized the first four people, namely our dear Kajarnak Samuel, his wife Anna, his son Matthaus, and his little daughter Auuna.” But Kajarnak and his family had already been living with the Moravians in Greenland for about a year. Back on June 2, 1738, Stach reported that “Kajarnak was the first native of Greenland to be thoroughly awakened,” and thus constituted “the first witness among his people.”

34 UAH, R.21.A.169a, 18, Diary of Mattheus Stach, March 30, 1739; “Im 7 Jahr unseres Hir seins 1739 d. 30 Marz. Tauffte ich die 1ten vier Personen nemlich unseren Lieben Kajarnak Samuel, seine Frau Anna, sein Sohn Matthaus, und sein Töchterlein Auuna.”
35 UAH, R.21.A.169a, 17, Diary of Mattheus Stach, June 2, 1738; “d 2ten Junny wurde der Erste grönlander Kajarnak gründlich Erweckt. Der hernach der Erste Zeüge unter seinem Volk wurde…”
Worthy of being baptized immediately after birth, Europeans born of baptized parents did not require the same level of spiritual education to make them worthy of receiving this holy Christian sacrament. Kajarnak’s young daughter Auuna could not be baptized immediately because Kajarnak himself was only a recent and unbaptized convert. Auuna’s willingness to listen to the Christian message delivered by the Moravian preachers, however, made her an “awakened witness” capable of understanding the Christian message, but that did not make her immediately worthy of full baptism. Auuna, Matthaus, Kajarnak, and his wife had to wait almost a year living in close proximity to the Moravian missionaries in spiritual congregation before their loyalty could be vetted and they could be declared fit to be formally baptized. The language and tone of Stach’s diary entry indicates that the Moravians liked Kajarnak and his family and spoke about them in a friendly, familiar, and even respectful manner. Baptism, however, remained a cherished sacrament to which Europeans had easier access. Similar to Native American converts in British North America, simply listening to the Christian message and serving as a witness for the faith was not enough for a willing Inuit who had already converted. Inuit converts, both young and old, had to commit to acceptable standards of physical conduct over a long period of time in order to demonstrate their worthiness to be baptized.\footnote{Axtell, \textit{The Invasion Within}, 26-27, 122-123.}

Recording particulars about the baptisms of Inuit peoples he met became one way Stach and other Moravians in the Atlantic world demonstrated to God and
themselves that the mission was succeeding, whether in Greenland or elsewhere.

From the perspective of a Moravian believer, being away from home and doing God’s work in a strange place became important ways of demonstrating one’s continued devotion to God. The practice of tracking this work over time through tales of spiritually significant meetings with people they met in the course of their travels would ensure that other believers, who did not reside in the mission field, could also experience the triumphs of the Moravian mission program. Perhaps most importantly, the focus upon instances of bodies converging and changing in these diaries, regardless of who these people were or where they were from, conveyed the message that the Moravian Church was growing. And a growing Church implied a happy God who approved of the behavior of the missionaries.

**Ceremonial Bodies**

Early Moravian travel diarists in the 1730s and early-1740s only began to discover the cathartic and spiritual potential of ascribing religious significance to their experiences by writing about them. As Moravians became increasingly familiar with the religious qualities missionaries associated with interpersonal encounters while in transit, travel diarists began to search for other ways to capture the sanctity of their journeys. Chronicling the nature, details, and frequency of traditional Moravian ceremonial worship rituals and personal practices effectively expanded the array of
possible religious meanings and mystical purposes that the diaries could embody. As the most conspicuous example of this process of cultural knowledge formation, Moravian blood and wounds piety took on new meanings based on the new environments and surroundings in which the missionaries performed traditional ceremonies of devotion and worship. As a consequence, travel diary writing became more explicitly devotional. The diaries themselves increasingly became a space for Moravians to both practice and perform their embodied personal piety and emphasize the piety of ordinary believers collectively. They became, more specifically, a new method of practicing embodied devotion.

Whereas Nischmann, Kaskens, and Stach emphasized individual connections as spiritually meaningful and empowering, Johann Friedrich Cammerhof used the pages of his diary to stress the importance of collective piety. Cammerhof worked as one of August Gottlieb Spangenberg’s most trusted assistants in Pennsylvania and he deeply embraced the Moravian devotion to the blood and wounds of Christ. The extensive references to blood and wounds mysticism mark his travel diary as among 37 Cammerhof’s devotion to the blood and wounds of Christ led early historians of the Moravians to partially blame him for the crisis of piety known as the “Sifting Time.” However, Moravian blood and wounds piety, regardless of whether or not it played a significant role in reactions to the Sifting Time, was certainly not a product of the Sifting Time, nor was it a motivating factor that precipitated the Sifting Time. Paul Peucker, *A Time of Sifting: Mystical Marriage and the Crisis of Moravian Piety in the Eighteenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015); Craig Atwood, *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 127-129; see also, Gillian Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), and Beverly Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem: From Communal Mission to Family Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).
the clearest examples of Moravian travel writing as a religious practice of common devotion.

The collective and gendered piety in Cammerhof’s diary began on the title page. He triumphantly announced that he would narrate the journey of “eleven blessed little wound worms on their pilgrimage from London to Pennsylvania beginning on September 26, 1746 aboard the Snow John Galley [under] Captain Crosweite.” Though added later for the benefit of those who would read this diary, the title page established a mystical tone, even leaving a space for God in the list of traveling companions. The opening pages contain a long and detailed prayer meant to bless the trip and ask for God’s favor on the long and potentially dangerous journey ahead. “You [referring to the Moravian travelers] blessed caravan of the Cross, whose entire plan has been authorized by the power of God and divinely consecrated in the name of your husband!” Tacitly acknowledging the centrality of the group over individuals, this prayer also immediately established the gender dynamics of the mystical relationship between God and believer as that between a husband and wife. As the masculine provider of graceful blessing, God formally sanctioned the journey itself, authorized the intentions behind it, and declared the entire endeavor to be a

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sacred act. Believers, regardless of their physical sex, became the spiritually feminine brides of Christ who had no power with regard to the divine sanction of their physical actions. The occasion of departure was the time to re-establish that mystical hierarchy.

The role of masculine provider, however, could also include embodied female attributes in Moravian religious culture. Physical attributes of the body did not immediately translate to separate, predetermined gendered subject positions of the Christian soul. Believers of both sexes were considered feminine brides of Christ in mystical marriage and all communicants were believed to possess a feminine soul. But Moravians also understood the relationship between God and believer, as well as God and Church (i.e. believers in the collective), in a familial context between mother and child. In this instance, the mother (God) took on elements of both the masculine and feminine subject positions and believers retained their role as the feminine recipients of the mother’s care and guidance. “To you [God], we give thanks for what we are now,” Cammerhof continued in this opening prayer, for “[e]ach of us is your child. As a mother [Mutter], you have prepared, cared for, watched over, and suckled [gesäugt] us, and [as a result] many have turned to us. This we know well.”⁴⁰ God, in his capacity as masculine mother, commands gratitude and bestows the essential gifts of grace and redemption upon believers from on high. God as feminine mother,

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however, performs the maternal role of caregiver who provides bodily nourishment and discipline. Conversely, taking on the role of feminine dependent allowed Moravians to achieve success as missionaries in bringing new converts into the faith by demonstrating deference to divine (and, by implication, civil) authority. The disparity, with regard to relative power in the relationship between God and believer existing as both bride and child of Christ simultaneously, as well as the corresponding state of spiritual and bodily dependency, did not have a negative connotation for believers. Moravians celebrated the feminine status of common believers in embodied terms as bride, wife, and child, as an empowering subject position that conferred spiritual authority and the ability to expand the kingdom of God on earth. They would be heavily criticized for this stance despite the fact that other Protestant denominations held similar beliefs with regard to the gender of the soul.41

Being in a position to receive also conferred a heightened awareness of divine assurance and confidence with regard to the righteousness of their actions. The feminine subject position obviated the need for guidance from traditional worldly authorities because it reflexively merged the intentions and actions of the believer with those of God. Believers did not act of their own accord, with God either approving or disapproving of their actions after the fact. Submission to God signified

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and could be regarded as evidence of God’s approval. “We are still inexperienced people,” Cammerhof said, “still young in years, and unpracticed in the plan”; however, “You [God] have communicated to us, through those who reign beneath you, that there should be a little ‘Powder of Succession’ [Successions-Püürlein] [spread] for us over all ends and places where we turn to in the future.”

God’s will endowed the actions and behavior of true believers with righteousness. Moravian believers knew they were doing the right thing because true believers could only act according to God’s will. “Our heart knows no joys or sorrows other than His and yours.”

After establishing the authority and feminine righteousness of ordinary believers in this opening prayer, Cammerhof turned to the journey ahead:

We now see the ocean in front of us. Express, then, [your desire] to our Husband, that he enclose us in [His] arms and kiss us. Say to our Husband hero, who commissioned our journey, that He go forth before us as a general and accompany us on the journey to Delaware. Express to [our loving] little Mother, that she should be sharp and committed and, in this way, glorify the wounds to us so that we do nothing to our husband’s honor over there among the Indians other than love.

The fluidity of Jesus’s gendered subject position appears even more complex as it becomes both feminine and masculine simultaneously. In his role as husband in

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mystical marriage with the believer, Jesus emerges as both an affectionate feminine custodian and an authoritative masculine leader. The ‘Husband hero’ possessed the ability to conquer any challenge in the course of travel through caring spiritual embrace and/or militaristic determination. In his role as mother of the mystical family of believers, Jesus emerges as a stern and unyielding disciplinarian who remains committed to the project of guiding the actions and behavior of Moravians in such a way that their ‘husband’s honor’ would not be tarnished. Treating Indians with love and celebrating the wounds of Christ are two essential practices that would keep them on the path to righteousness. Cammerhof’s appeal to his fellow pilgrims to communicate their desire that the Heiland protect them in his fluidly gendered capacities indicates Moravian believers found these alternative gender hierarchies both appropriate and meaningful. Appealing to God in these specific ways demonstrated their purity of belief and thus assured them that the path they had chosen was, indeed, sanctified. The image of Christ’s wounded body operated as a passionate metaphorical reflection of the love and respect the Moravians should show to the Indians they would encounter. They should care for the converts in their charge just as intensely as Christ had for them on the cross. The effect of Christ’s wounded body would only be honored with faithful and tolerant behavior.

With this pious dedication, Cammerhof and the other Moravians set off on their journey to the New World. Upon their departure from London, Cammerhof and his companions expressed their exuberance about the mission that lay ahead and the
anguish of having to leave their co-religionists behind in London by engaging in song. Though considered a central aspect of religious practice in many cultures, for Moravians and German Pietists singing was considered “an expression of the soul, aroused by the Holy Spirit, and as a means for communal communication. Group singing strengthened the group identity as well as the faith of the individual.”

Moravians believed singing had the effect of reducing the spatial distance between believers and the divine and signified a heightened awareness of the grace of God. Singing also connected with the bodily religious practice of writing when Moravians recorded both traditional and improvised songs in their diaries. In this way, singing and writing operated as both sequential and simultaneous producers of religious meaning.

The morning after their departure from London, the Moravian congregants traveling with Cammerhof held a “blessed little Singstunde, where our Husband, Father, and dear little Mother let us feel their inexpressible presence.” Religious singing did not confine itself to the mystical realm of the spirit. Singing had the power to alter feelings inside the bodies of believers and ultimately included a latent, but physically observable, sense of companionship among themselves as a group of co-religionists as well as with God in his/her many gendered guises. The practice of

45 Paul Peucker, “The Songs of the Sifting: Understanding the Role of Bridal Mysticism in Moravian Piety during the late 1740s,” *Journal of Moravian History*, No. 3 (Fall 2007): 53.
recording these experiences allowed the diarist to translate these feelings into language, thus making the mystical experience of altered feelings tangible and able to be read and experienced by the author him-/herself and other believers.

Feelings of euphoria and a heightened spiritual state often preceded the ascription of religious meaning to the physical environments that surrounded them. After the *Singstunde*, the Moravians on board “dedicated their chambers…behind the curtains in steerage…so that He [Jesus] pervades it with the light from his wounds, so that it should feel to us like a holy sanctuary.” Having sacralized their living quarters, the Moravian brothers returned to the deck of the ship for more singing. Cammerhof recorded one particularly meaningful song:

*Also remember our kin,*  
*the communicants of the blood,*  
*there in Red Lion Square.*  
*Be hailed again*  
*and a thousand times kissed*  
*you blessed little heart of a Cross-Air-Bird.*

Singing symbolically reduced the metaphorical distance between co-religionists by emphasizing the spiritual community that formed as a result of the bodily death of Christ. As “communicants of the blood,” the Moravians they left behind in Red Lion Square, London remained connected in spirit to their brethren crossing the Atlantic through their common reception of God’s grace and forgiveness from sin. This

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spiritual communal connection was understood and infused with meaning through metaphors of the physical body. To “be hailed again” expressed a desire to once again be in the physical presence of their brethren in London at a later date and be able to greet or salute them. Being in their physical presence again would allow the previously departed to articulate their approbation of the spiritual state of their co-religionists and reinforce religious commonality through the act of repeated kissing.

The final line of this improvised melodic verse evokes the image of Christ hanging and dying on the cross. “Cross-Air-Birds” refers to the doves that continuously flew around above the bloody, crucified Christ in Christian imagery. As symbols of peace and obedience to the cross, they also stood for Moravian believers. The blood of Christ signified the commonality that bound Moravian believers together in community regardless of their physical location.

Having cemented the communal connection to their co-religionists in London through song and made their living quarters a sacred physical space, Cammerhof began to feel uneasy about the impending turn toward the open ocean as the ship sailed between Lisbon and the Azores. He sought solace in his diary by recording a comforting prayer: “He is the head of all principalities and authorities, in addition to the Word of God [who said]: ‘I am among you as a servant’: and as such, lay the Son of God, who is to be the Lord.”

Craig Atwood, Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem, 109.


“Er ist das Haupt aller Fürstentümer und Obrigkeiten und die Rede des Heilandes dazu: Ich bin unter Euch, wie ein Diener: und gleichsam wie verlegen Gott Sohn, das ist, der Herr zu sein.”

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palliative agent, reassuring Cammerhof that he need not worry about the dangers of
traveling on the Atlantic ocean because God was everywhere and controlled
everything. The prayer implied that God resided among them as a mystical servant
who would look after the bodily safety of the Moravian believers on-board. This
prayer “plays quite gracefully on our hearts. We believe in His divinity, and have seen
His humanity, and felt our blood-relationship with Him, who had us partake in the
blessed appreciation of his service.”50 Acting on the hearts of believers, this prayer
assured bodily safety and religious community located in ‘blood-kinship’ facilitated
by God.

Local circumstances dictated devotional innovations in the content of
Moravian piety and travel diaries became a space where Moravians could tangibly
express their reactions to these new and often unsettling circumstances. The body of
Jesus acted as both paternal guide and maternal sanctuary. As the Moravian
companions sailed near the coast of Africa, Cammerhof found himself thinking about
recent Moravian efforts to proselytize and establish mission stations there. He

“Spielten recht anmutig in unsere Herzen. Wir glaubten seine Gottheit, und sahen seine Menschheit,
und fühlten unsre Bluts-Verwandschaft mit Ihm, die uns seines seligen Diener - Sinnes teilhaftig
gemacht.”
articulated his thoughts, sentiments, and prayers for those missions in the form of a poetic prayer:51

1. /

It well concerns us all
in Jesus’s warrior hole
over yonder in Europe
and up to the north pole,
over here in Africa
and in Asia
and America.

Had we only been there first.
And thinking of Algiers and the Cape of Good Hope and Guinea with a delicate hunger for human souls before our Lamb.
Whether the Lord has taken a Cross-Air-Bird ever through the African sea,
since our Husband
fully revealed
his blessed plan to our little church.
That saved us.
We are also recruiting so nicely here
through this otherwise dark region
so well secured
in our little nest in the [side] hole

to us it is inexpressibly good.
Well we flutter criss-crossed
but flew not back and forth
We fly perfectly straight
in our mission.
But we say to the little Lamb
Oh, but Africa is also yours.
Should the little Cross-Air-Birds
not also in this land
that is so lovely
and not already customary
Sing Glory to the Sidehole
in Africa as everywhere
so pretty!
Here and there are not places
where you will provide
to us an open door:
how beautiful and wonderful
we sparkle in the deep dark
as a little church of the cross.

Moravian masculinity took further shape in this poem, as the side wound of Christ took on the persona of a warrior fighting for the souls of new converts. Spatially, the “fighting” masculine side wound had conquered the lands of Europe, the North Pole,

Africa, Asia, and America. But Cammerhof also characterized the missionary enterprise in Africa in bodily terms as possessing a “delicate hunger” and desire to bring the “human souls” into the Christian fold. Remembering reports of Moravian successes at winning African converts in the past, Cammerhof emphasized the masculinity of the Moravian missionary enterprise as it penetrated into the African continent.

Cammerhof recast eighteenth-century notions of the African continent as a dark and mysterious place in more positive language as containing potential converts to Christianity. He clearly viewed European culture as superior to African culture in his generalizing characterization of the African continent as an “otherwise dark region” and a place where “deep dark” exists. Associating Africa with notions of darkness worked to reinforce notions of European cultural superiority while highlighting his understanding that Africans lacked the “light” of Christianity. Cammerhof seems to have shared traditional European biases, but he also believed that Africa was one of God’s many “lovely” provinces where the Moravian “Cross-Air-Birds” should sing “Glory to the Sidehole!” communally alongside the Africans. The maternal sanctuary of Christ’s side wound articulated opposition to African religious culture and the “dark” religious forces there, while simultaneously providing an “open door” both for the missionaries to pass through to engage in mission work and for the Africans to embrace their message. Christ’s blood and side wound operate
as an anthropomorphized passageway to Africa that implicitly tempered, without explicitly embracing, the traditional racially motivated opposition to African culture.

In addition to songs and poetry, efforts to recreate the liturgical rhythms of Moravian devotional life involved constant vigilance in maintaining the traveler’s connection to God while in transit, their spiritual connection to important members of their community in Europe, and their connection to Moravians at their destination. Holding more than one worship or devotional service on a single day was not unusual, or even uncommon, in Moravian communities given the demands of their normal daily worship regimen in the eighteenth century. However, the practice of recording these improvised services in the pages of a travel diary allowed Moravians to re-articulate, and thus re-experience, the flow of these devotions in a narrative style. Cammerhof did this with particular clarity.

Cammerhof enjoyed writing in his diary and he took every opportunity to report on God’s positive influence over the Moravians on-board. After thirty-six days at sea, he wrote that the Moravian pilgrims “moved along quite joyfully and happily with [the words of] our daily Lösung: ‘Now may the Lord’s strength be displayed, just as you have declared, (from Numbers 14:17) Now I just want to see what you will do with me.’”

In the context of the Bible, the “Lord’s strength” being displayed in the Book of Numbers 14:17 refers specifically to God’s capacity for the violent

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punishment of Egyptians who refused to believe. The randomness of the institution of the Moravian Lösung, however, allowed Cammerhof to take this verse out of its biblical context and apply a positive connotation to it in order to emphasize the cheerful progress the Moravians had made on their journey as well as God’s role in facilitating that progress.

After setting the tone for this particular diary entry, Cammerhof turned to a description of his immediate environment. In the morning, the weather was “very hot” with heavy winds blowing toward the north-east, but the winds died down and became “very weak” in the afternoon to the point that the ship seemed to only inch forward. For some, recording details about the weather — the strength and direction of the wind, for example — and their effects on the progress of the journey and the morale of the travelers became a simple method of keeping the mind occupied on a long sea voyage. For Cammerhof, and many other Moravian travel diary keepers, these observations also became a pretext for the ascription of religious meaning to their current circumstances. They worked to articulate the religious significance of and thankfulness for the current wellbeing of Moravian travelers and a desire that God continue to bless them. “So it is to us, that we will certainly see how sweet and beautiful our dear little Lamb will make [of our journey].”

The devotional act of ascribing religious meaning to immediate circumstances reinforced the Moravians’ mystical ecumenical connection to spiritual brethren in other Christian groups, i.e. other true believers in substance, if not in confessional name. Sailing off the coast of Africa, they reached the latitude “28 degree 48 minutes” by noon and Cammerhof recorded his thoughts about celebrating the “all holy God in our Singstunde together.” This singing service:

reminded us of our communion with the Church in general, and especially those members who are our co-religionists and already gathered together for it [the Church]. In doing so, we were quite well behaved as we just floated there on the sea where so many had given their outer lives for the Lamb. And so, with a blissful mind, drifting together in the harmony of the Church, we sung: Here we stand on our guard, you spirit of righteousness.

With this, Cammerhof articulated the full, and probably unspoken, meaning he ascribed to this particular singing service in the pages of his diary. Far away from home, in the midst of the ocean where so many Christian believers had lost their lives before him, God protected them and connected them with their spiritual brethren back home. “But we are still distinct and mindful of the spirit of the little church of Philadelphia, which is given to us [and] stirs among us.” This “little church” was not a physical place in Pennsylvania. It was the Philadelphian sense of spiritual kinship that Moravian believers felt toward all true believers, which transcended worldly distinctions.

Repeatedly expressing the close emotional connection to their brethren on both sides of the Atlantic in their travel diaries reveals the spiritual element of this practice, which was an important aspect of establishing a distinctly Moravian religious identity. Moravian believers preoccupied themselves with keeping this connection present in their minds and hearts, but performing this spiritual maintenance took on special significance on Saturdays when they celebrated the Sabbath. After “meditating” on the Lösung on November 5, 1746, and taking time to appreciate its message about the vast beauty of Christ’s “sanctuary” (i.e. the physical world), the wind changed and took them off course. Despite the change in the weather, the Moravians decided to hold a sacred love feast after the normal Sabbath worship service that day. The love feast gave the Moravians an opportunity to “come together and discuss many blessed matters and to behold the [Holy] [S]pirit on both sides [of the Atlantic] in Europe and America.” The blessedness of this Sabbath day love feast, for Cammerhof, had a positive effect on their immediate environment, for in the aftermath of their mystical experience of divine connection with their transatlantic religious network, “we received a pretty nice east-north-east wind, which allowed us to continue on our correct course.”

mystical experience of the love feast to the change in the weather directly, the
narrative style of this journal entry (and many others) makes this inference
reasonable.

To commemorate the favor God had shown them on that Sabbath day,

Cammerhof composed another short devotional poem: 57

1./ It is often dear to us:
That the sweat of Jesus,
emanating out of him,
moistens our course,
and cools us body and
soul.
Thus
little birds can
still be merry,
and sing and pray,
as they [did] at home.

2./ Oh pilgrims, you
graceful pilgrims!
What have we
in our ocean journey
from your love feast
in the hall
of Bethlehem,
so pleasant
now renovate,
not today meditate!

3./ We see the day
and little bird flying
out from Herrnhaag
from Lendenheimschen house
with joy towards you.
Oh, we would also like [to be]
there!
Alas, but now
we are away from you
almost six hundred miles.

4./ Still we are yours
and want to be
with skin and hair,
indeed as long as truth
quite a break
so little touches us
with smeared blood.
So then bless us
newly our Husband!

Reflecting on the events of this Sabbath day, Cammerhof used devotional poetry to
connect himself and his fellow travelers to Bethlehem in Pennsylvania and Herrnhaag
(in central Germany) through physical imagery of different aspects of the body of
Christ. The essence of God “emanates” out of Jesus’s body in the form of sweat,
which had the power to mitigate the difficulties of their journey and reinvigorate both
their bodies and souls. As such, the demeanor of the group and their ability to recreate

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“1./ Of wirds uns heiß: / doch Jesu Schweiß, / der aus ihm drang, / befreuhtet unsern Ganz, / und kühlt
uns / Seel und Hütt. / Damit / kans Vögelein / doch munter seyn, / und singt und bedt, / wies sonst
daheime thut. // 2./ Ach Pilger=Volk / du Gnaden-Volk, / was haben wir / in unserm See-Revier / von
deinem Liebesmahl / im Saal / von Bethlehem, / so angenehm / um renovirt, / nicht heute meditirt! //
3./ Wir sahn den Tag / und Vögeleins Flug / von Herrnhag (sic) uns / von Lendenheimschen Haus / mit
Freuden hin zu dir. / Ach wir / wäre gern auch Dai! / doch nun alas / sind wir von dir / sechs hundert
Meilen schier. // [4./] Doch sind wir dein / und vollens seyn / mit Haut und Haar, / so lange noch für
wahr / ein reinigs Zäserlein / so klein / mit Blut geschmiert / sich an uns rührt. / So seyn uns dann /
aufs neue unserm Mann!”

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Moravian devotional life away from home originated with the blood of Christ. Even though he believed they were 600 miles away from Herrnhaag (though, in reality, they were much much further), they devoted the whole of their bodies to their counterparts in Europe as long as even a little of their mystical husband’s blood was smeared upon them. The transatlantic spiritual network cohered as an interconnected and fully functioning image of Christ’s physical body.

Sailing past Bermuda, the ship headed south to the Bahamas before finally sighting land near the coast of Cape Fear, North Carolina. Now, instead of beginning each entry with an element of Moravian devotional spirituality, the mundane events of the day became a more prominent element in the framing of his devotional mindset, which signifies Cammerhof’s, perhaps unconscious but no less present, comprehension and appreciation of the power that worldly events had on the structure of Moravian religious devotions. When the weather turned cold, “we were all the more sensitive. The transition was from an intense heat to the cold. But this [transition] appealed to us quite admirably in our Lösung [for today]: ‘I will preserve him night and day, saith the Lord.’ Under the shadow of His grace, one remains [both] early and late.” The protection gained through the grace of God no longer remained

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58 Sweat, in this instance, is a metaphor for blood. In the late medieval and early modern periods, all bodily fluids were believed to be some form of blood. See Carolyn Walker Bynum, Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern German and Beyond (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

a theological abstraction in the daily practice of ordinary believers. Cammerhof, explicitly, supplied this paraphrase of Isaiah 27:3 with circumstantial meaning derived from his experience of the weather. The stated theological objective of the Moravian institution of the Lösung was to promote a sense of spiritual unity and common religious identity among dispersed Moravians through the process of reading the same passage from the Bible at the same time. As an element of the lived religion of common Moravian believers, however, the Lösung also emphasized the peculiarity of individual circumstances. It then fell to the believer to figure out how their individual circumstances populated the text of the Lösung with meaning, and vice versa. As such, it was not the act of reading the same passage on the same day that promoted a distinct sense of Moravian unity and common identity so much as the aggregate, simultaneous process of all Moravians engaging in this process of personal reflection and meaning making in disparate circumstances which brought them together. The content of individual ascriptions of religious meanings to their immediate surroundings could be fleeting and did not matter or even endure in the long term, for the purposes of promoting religious unity, so long as believers actually engaged in the work of making them. Recording these ascriptions of meaning in their diaries, however, did preserve them in physical form for future re-consumption. Thus, embodied experiences in the world operated as ephemeral stimuli for the individual construction of a common collective identity.
Female Moravians contributed to this identity in their own way by holding their own worship services while in transit and making a point of recording instances of common religious experiences that were specific to themselves. Anna Johanna Piesch used her diary quite effectively for this purpose while on a journey from London to Bethlehem in 1752. After sailing west along the English coastline, Piesch reported that they “were all astonished to pass through [a storm safely],” but “the Sisters diligently sang as they always did during storms, and I duly diverged with them.” Moravian Sisters often held their own Singstunden while sailing across the ocean in times of peace times as well as hardship. In fact, Moravian women seemed to hold more singing services among themselves than the men in general and often stayed after the mixed-gender worship services ended in order to continue singing among themselves. At these services, women regularly sang hymns about the blood and wounds of Christ, especially the most famous hymn on this topic entitled O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden (O Head Full of the Blood and Wounds).

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60 We know very little about Anna Johanna Piesch other than what she wrote in her diary. My purpose in presenting these brief examples is to demonstrate how her diary fits in the overarching transformation of Moravian travel diaries into tangible elements of religious devotion and practice. Beverly Smaby published a solid overview of the complete contents of her diary (not only the devotional aspects of it). See Smaby, “‘Other Measures to Keep the Candle Lit’: The 1752 Transatlantic Travel Diary of Anna Johanna Piesch,” in The Distinctiveness of Moravian Culture: Essays and Documents in Moravian History in Honor of Vernon H. Nelson on his Seventieth Birthday, ed. Craig Atwood and Peter Vogt (Nazareth, PA: Moravian Historical Society, 2003), 97-120.
64 UAH, R.14.A.35, Doc 14, 752, Diary of Anna Johanna Piesch, November 6, 1752.
approached the North American coastline after eight weeks at sea, the women on-
board “thanked the little Lamb with childish, bowing hearts” for His “blessed
guidance…that we have come safely to port.” God was ultimately responsible for
their fate, but the services held by and for women by believers like Anna Piesch
operated as an extension of the pastoral care women received in the context of living
in female choir houses in Moravian settlement communities. Recording fleeting
instances of women’s worship in travel diaries, in addition to highlighting their
contributions to the mixed-gender worship ceremonies, worked toward fostering a
distinctly female Moravian identity as an essential aspect of a more collective
Moravian religious identity.

Mystical Bodies

As travel diaries became more complex instruments of embodied religious
devotion, some Moravian believers began to supplement the descriptions of
interpersonal interactions and improvised religious ceremonies performed in the
course of travel with personal accounts of direct one-on-one experiences with God.
The use of travel diaries as a medium for recording details pertaining to immediate
mystical encounters with the divine marks their final transformation into a distinct

65 UAH, R.14.A.35, Doc 14, 752, Diary of Anna Johanna Piesch, November 18, 1752 & November 21,
1752; “…wir dankten dem Lämmlein mit kindlich gebeugten Herzen…”; “…wir dankten dem
Lämmlein noch gemeinschaftlich vor seine Treue und selige Leitung und dass wir glücklich in Hafen
kommen sind.”
mode of devotional practice. Experiences of divine intervention took many forms, from simple observations of God providing the necessities of daily life, to miraculous healings, to direct mystical communications, to personal spiritual musings. Immediate manifestations of God’s presence and intercession worked to deepen believer’s connection with Christ’s worldly designs and encouraged those who consumed these stories with the idea that God was present in their daily lives.

After spending some time with the Moravian congregation in London, Abraham Jacob Kohn felt compelled by the Heiland to pursue mission work overseas in Pennsylvania. In July 1742 Abraham and his wife traveled from London to the docks at Dover with a fellow Moravian Brother Hudon. The Moravians in London tried to convince Abraham’s wife to stay behind because she had come down with a fever, “but she did not want to stay.” So, Abraham, his wife, and Brother Hudon traveled to Dover to board a ship that had just arrived from Amsterdam. At this point, Abraham felt, “particularly refreshed by the great care [with which] the Lamb had [treated] us and He let his wounds stand open for us, poor sinners.” Brother Hudon felt the same after making inquires about the durability of the ship. Christ had provided Abraham and his wife with a fellow Moravian to act as their companion and interpreter and His wounds cleared their path of any physical obstructions. The Lamb

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also cared for his wife’s fever and bestowed in her the strength and will to carry on to port in Dover. The Heiland had met two immediate bodily needs that arose as a result of their trip: guidance and healing. Abraham ascribed religious significance to his feelings of rejuvenation based on these caring gifts that he had received from Jesus.

The body became a central signifier for Abraham as he related both the hardships he encountered and the progress he made. Bodies moved from London toward Dover. Abraham’s wife’s body became sick, was healed, and she then determined to keep moving. Abraham felt a sense of calmness and revival after the hardships he had already endured. But most importantly, Christ’s body made it possible for him and his wife to make it thus far. Christ’s wounds, which “stand open for us, poor sinners,” expressed both the consequential immediacy of the bodily needs of the believer and God’s ability to meet those bodily needs and calm the anxieties associated with them. Composing a physical reminder in his diary about their plight and the divine solution strengthened Abraham and his wife’s faith and their relationship with the Lamb.

Bodily illness was one of the most common hardships that Moravians endured during transatlantic travel. Moravian diarists often wrote about the bodily health of their fellow travelers, demonstrating the situational distinctiveness of the relationship between physical bodies and Moravian religious practices. “On the 20th [of July], Sister Meier [a Moravian woman who had joined the Kohns in Dover] had a very strong fever. But the Heiland bestowed much liveliness upon her and actually melted
away our hearts that same day.”\(^67\) Sister Meier’s fever was cause for concern. Kohn’s diary entry, however, transforms her illness into a positive message about God’s saving grace and the religious experience (“melting hearts”) associated with the divine intervention. The import obtained from the devotional piety associated with the practice of recording this event, both for himself and for those who would read this diary. Committing this episode to paper in the real world allowed Abraham to attach additional religious meanings that would be available for others to consume and experience. They would not forever remain a happy, though fleeting, memory that only existed in Abraham’s own mind. Sister Meier’s fever, however, did not show signs of improvement. The next day the ship put into harbor on the French coast to replenish their supply of fresh water and Abraham sent a letter to Spangenberg reporting that Sister Meier still “remained in her very strong fever and [went] without food and water for days.” Abraham’s deep concern for Sister Meier’s bodily health sharply contrasted with Sister Meier herself, who “was delighted by all the pain, and the Lamb’s haste was all important to us.”\(^68\)

Sister Meier’s reaction to her serious illness, though seemingly contrary to how one would expect a sick person to behave while seriously ill, makes perfect


sense when read from the perspective of Abraham viewing this occurrence as a religious experience. It is reasonable to assume that Sister Meier exhibited normal symptoms and behavior associated with fever and bodily illness: sweating, headaches, weakness, and possibly even confusion and irritability. We do know that she suffered from a loss of appetite. Abraham, however, chose to document Sister Meier’s courage in the face of her suffering. To him, she seemed to “delight” in her bodily pain, remaining content and even cheerful about the circumstances to which God had put her. Pietist faith required believers to trust Christ absolutely and take comfort in the knowledge that they would be taken care of, despite their lack of understanding of His purpose in the moment. Positivity in the face of illness was also connected with traditional Moravian death culture, where the dying person and those that surrounded her/him felt a sense of joy that the person would soon be reunited with the Heiland in heaven. Rather than fixating on the particulars of bodily illness and death, they concentrated on the body as a temporary vessel that allowed believers to interact with God’s world for a time, but which, ultimately, facilitated their return to the divine state.\textsuperscript{69} Abraham turned a difficult and potentially unsettling situation into a cause for religious celebration.

And yet, Abraham Kohn practiced an even more traditional (though medieval) form of Christian mysticism during his trip to London. In his travel diary, he

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\item \textsuperscript{69} Katherine Faull, “‘You are the Savior’s Widow:’ Religion/Sexuality and Bereavement in the Eighteenth-Century Moravian Church,” \textit{Journal of Moravian History} No. 8 (Spring 2010): 101, 89-115. In fact, Moravian gravestones from the eighteenth century generally substitute the word “died” with “Heimgegangen,” which means “went home.”
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periodically recorded instances of direct mystical encounters with God. He wrote them up as various forms of dialogue, either directly between himself and God or, more simply, as God speaking directly to him. The content of these interactions reveal the centrality of concerns about the physical body and embodied religious faith. The encounters themselves occur at random intervals and the content of his interactions with God are often related without much or any context. However, these interactions reveal important religious lessons that are meant to guide the spiritual path of missionaries and ordinary believers alike.

Kohn’s direct mystical interactions with God were, first and foremost, about proximity. Abraham felt the presence of God, especially the Heiland, in multiple aspects of his daily life, but these interactions were special. He identified and addressed God as “der Domine” (a Latin cognate meaning “the Lord”) who had returned to him. On the night of August 10th:

The Lord [der Domine] spoke to me very late in the night [about] whether I believed that the Heiland was truly the Son of God. I said: Yes. He said he could not believe how I could believe that because one must say: ‘Father help me in this hour.’ And after that, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ I replied to him, ‘Even his meanness makes him important to me, and so on.’ It struck him quite deeply, and he said to me [that] even he would not be so reformist. He had already said … what would convince him [the sinner] [of His message]. I said to him, ‘the Spirit of God
would be [in] the man who preaches the wounds before the sinners. He [the Heiland] should not be refused if the secret spirit of His wounds are also made clear.\textsuperscript{70}

Abraham believed he was actually in the physical presence of God. While it remains unclear whether or not he experienced visions, the presence of the divine was palpable enough to be able to hear and perceive God’s reaction to his replies. In addition, this embodied religious experience involved having an oral conversation in which God tested Abraham’s faith by briefly interrogating the connection between Christian belief and practice in order to determine whether Abraham was a true believer. In order to pass this test, Abraham had to say the right things and those who truly possessed the spirit of God had to preach/communicate the right message in order to provoke the conversion of unbelievers. God even told Abraham precisely what he needed to say. “Father help me in this hour,” and “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” are passages from the Gospels of John and Matthew, respectively, and both are attributed to Jesus leading up to the time of his crucifixion.\textsuperscript{71} As such, they both point to the bodily death of Christ as the genesis of


\textsuperscript{71} “Father help me in this hour” is probably an abbreviation of John 12:27, which reads: “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ’Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.” “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” is almost verbatim from the Gospel of Matthew 27:46, which reads: “About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).” Both Bible verses are reproduced from the NIV Bible.
Atonement and the most important message for both believers and missionary preachers. Believing and saying these things demonstrated the purity of his faith, both to Christ and potential converts.

Abraham’s mystical encounters with the divine followed a fairly regular pattern: God visited him, tested his faith, and then Abraham responded in a satisfactory manner that taught a valuable lesson about trusting in the redemptive power of Christ’s bodily death. Personal redemption was the secret that the wounds of Christ revealed. God imparted heavenly truths through skillful rhetorical cues, but did so by playing the role of a common person. Eleven days after his first mystical encounter (on this trip, at least), after another of Sister Meier’s illnesses, Abraham again found himself in conversation with God:

When Sister Meier was entirely well again, the Lord said: The Heiland would brandish his chastising hand. I told myself it would not have been like that. He said, he [God] had already often heard that the righteous must die with the unjust, and that we will not all be righteous. I said: Yes, always for this very reason, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but that he convert and live.

The lack of an immediately identifiable causal connection between Sister Meier’s recovery and Jesus’s apparent wrath speaks to the authenticity of this religious experience, at least in Kohn’s mind. The lack of context indicates that Kohn used his travel diary as a tool for working out the meaning of this encounter. In order to signal that he was not giving instructions to God, Abraham wrote that God did not need to

be seen as an angry, vengeful deity. However, he also made God more accessible to
the common man when he related that God “had already often heard” that everyone
must die regardless of her or his status vis-a-vis Christian righteousness. Life and
death both have a double meaning in this encounter. All bodies, whether righteous or
unrighteous, justified or unjustified, have to die. Abraham took no pleasure in the
death of the sinner, but an unconverted body was never really alive in the first place.
It was only following a conversion to Christianity that the body experienced life.
Conversely, the unconverted body, though not really alive, still housed and contained
the mechanism through which conversion occurred. Bodies, in this instance, did not
represent a source of spiritual corruption. They constituted an integral physical
apparatus for attaining salvation. Life, in other words, involved existing in a state of
embodied Christian spirituality following conversion.

And still, an embodied Christian existence, in and of itself, was not enough.
Believers did not and could not exist by themselves. Abraham’s final major encounter
with God before his arrival in London clearly brought the issue of spiritual fellowship
to the forefront. On August 24th, he wrote:

The Lord came and wanted to make brotherhood with me. He asked whether we
would welcome him [referring to an unconverted person] as a brother if it was sin
that [he] held. I said, no. We call no one brother if he does not possess a sinner’s
heart. Then he said that he still had much love and the keenest instruction for us [the
Moravians] because he would make the Consistario from Holland no longer
remember [anything] about the Moravians here in this country, because he [the
Consistario] was convinced of what others [had said] about us and did not approve of
the vain holiness in us like his colleagues had said. Whereupon he [God] had indeed
answered them, that perhaps [Moravianism] is the correct religion, because the
Reformed do not lack knowledge, but most do. About this, I took him exactly [at his word].  

Religious kinship, for Abraham, required the possession of a “sinner’s heart.” Abraham believed he possessed one because he did not refuse the offer of “brotherhood” from God. A “sinner’s heart,” in the parlance of eighteenth-century German Pietists, did not refer to the heart of an unconverted sinner. To possess a sinner’s heart, a person must have gained knowledge of her/his sinful state, repented for sins (i.e. had a conversion experience), and lived a godly life. A sinner’s heart was a heart possessed by a converted believer capable of appreciating the grace of God, the depravity of sin, and the fellowship of her or his co-religionists.

Though not discounting the importance of the conversion experience, Abraham emphasized embodied religious practice as the most important factor in determining whether someone was worthy of being considered a spiritual brother. The conversion experience conferred upon the newly minted believer forgiveness from sin. It did not, however, confer ritual purity and spiritual perfection in perpetuity. Pietists, in accordance with their Lutheran and Reformed counterparts, believed in the Protestant doctrine that salvation could not be ‘earned’ through good works. But

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73 UAH, R.14.A.35, Doc 5, 136-137, Diary of Abraham Jacob Kohn, August 24, 1742; “Der Domine kam und wollte Brüderschaft mit mir machen. Er sagt, ob wir es war eine Sünde hielten, ihn einen Bruder zu heißen. Ich sagte Nein, wir nennen niemanden gerne Brüder, wenn er kein Sünder-Herz hätte. So sagte er, er hätte uns doch sehr lieb, und den scharfsten Befehl, denn er vom Consistario hätte aus Holland, nämlich über die Herrnhuter zu machen, hier in diesem Land, nicht mehr bedenken, weil er was anders von uns überzeug wäre und die eingebildete Heiligkeit an uns nicht gefunden, wie seine College vor gesagt haben, vorauf er ihnen zwar geantwortet hätte, vielleicht ist das die rechte Religion, denn Reformierten fehlt an wissen nicht, aber am tun, darüber nahm ich ihn genau.”

living a godly life of repentance and constantly striving for Christian righteousness with pure intentions and solely as a method of serving God (not humans or the world) did confer upon the believer the right to be included in brother- and sisterhood with other true believers. In essence, conversion was not enough. Believers had to remain vigilant in the knowledge of their sinfulness and struggle tirelessly to eradicate sin from their worldly lives. The sustained effort, after initial conversion, to maintain spiritual purity contained overlapping meanings as a personal embodied devotion to God (a sustained thanksgiving, of sorts, for their deliverance from sin), as a signifier to other members of Christian brotherhood, and as an example to potential converts.

The Moravian/Pietist conception of an embodied religious life proved to be scandalous and controversial in regions that operated under Protestant establishments. The Dutch Republic and the Dutch Reformed Church embraced a sense of measured religious tolerance and remained “[f]ully committed to the ‘further reformation’ in the Netherlands” and even largely embraced the transatlantic revival movements in the 1730s and 1740s. However, the Consistory in Holland, like many established churches in Europe, became hostile to the “enthusiasm” that the revivals seemed to breed because they tacitly threatened their ecclesiastical and political authority. The Moravians became particularly associated with the dangers of enthusiastic religious

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practices soon after they founded the settlements of Heerendijk and Zeist in 1738 as Dutch transit centers for transatlantic passage.76

Abraham displayed a keen awareness of the increasing criticism and persecution experienced by his co-religionists in the Netherlands and the Dutch Reformed Church’s characterization of Moravian embodied religious practices as “vain holiness.” In Abraham’s encounter, God came to the rescue of the Moravians and characterized the Dutch Consistory as misled and misinformed. Abraham’s relation of this final mystical meeting with God in his travel diary purposely linked his concept of brotherhood with God’s willingness to intervene on behalf of the Moravians as a method of circumventing the devotional prejudices of the Dutch Consistory. Moravians, to Abraham, were the true believers who possess “sinner’s hearts.” The day after his last mystical encounter with God, Abraham reported that the “Heiland showered us with streams of grace.”77 An implied reference to the moment that the Roman lance pierced the side of Christ’s crucified body, the blood of Christ allegorically streamed over the Moravians on-board the ship and purified their bodies and souls bestowing renewed “salvation [that] comes from the same blood in time and eternity.”78

78 Ibid; “…und unsere gantze Seeligkeit kommt von derselben Bluthe in Zeit und Ewigkeit.”
One final important example of the transformation of Moravian travel diaries comes from Peter Schwimmer. By the late-1750s and early-1760s, as missionary settlements in Greenland, British North America, and the Caribbean became more established and stable, some Moravian diarists who traveled across the Atlantic clung tightly to gendered and bloody images of the Holy Trinity as a method of attributing situated spiritual meanings to their circumstances. Schwimmer, a Moravian missionary who traveled to St. Croix in the Caribbean, kept a diary of his exploits from 1755 to 1765. Virtually every page drips with religious devotion and Moravian blood and wounds piety. Schwimmer’s remarkably consistent language echoed many of the mystical experiences that believers like Cammerhof and Kohn recorded. But the careful tracking of place, a characteristic feature of Moravian travel diaries up to this point, almost completely disappears in Schwimmer’s diary in favor of detailed spiritual reflections.

At the end of April 1763, at an unspecified location on the Caribbean island of St. Croix, Schwimmer pondered the meaning of the Heilige Woche (Holy Week), which included “Grüne Donnerstag”79 (Weeping Thursday), “Chor Freitag” (Good Friday) and “Ostertag” (Easter Day). ‘Weeping Thursday,’ better known as the Christian celebration of ‘Maundy Thursday,’ commemorated the Last Supper Jesus held with his disciples in Jerusalem before his crucifixion. Moravians sang songs

79 The adjective “Grüne,” though literally translating to “green,” actually derives from the German verb ‘greinen’ or ‘weinen,’ meaning “to weep.” In popular German culture, “Green” Thursday also refers to the tradition of eating green vegetables, especially spinach, on this day.
(‘chor’ in German translates to ‘choir’) on Good Friday to commemorate Christ’s passion. And they celebrated Easter Sunday with a sunrise service that simultaneously symbolized Christ rising from the darkness of bodily death and believers emerging from the darkness of sin. Schwimmer described Easter Sunday as “a symbolic day that feels better than can be described.” Seemingly congruent with the traditions of most brands of Protestantism in this period that elevated Easter Sunday as the paradigmatic celebration of the Jesus’s resurrection, Schwimmer emphasized the cleansing power of Christ’s death. “I am pleased with God my Savior,” he wrote, “for He has dressed me with the garments of Salvation, clothed [me] with the skirt of righteousness and His bloody reconciliation and whose power covers me like a poor child.”\(^{80}\) For Schwimmer, his sinfulness was “reconciled” in the eyes of God at the moment of Jesus’s death, not upon the resurrection. Only a savior that had experienced bodily death could bestow the ‘garments of salvation’ that clothed his own sinful, naked body.

Characterizing himself as a “poor child,” Schwimmer emphasized his own helplessness as a sinner and thus his dependence upon God for salvation. Taken in combination with the clothing metaphor, Schwimmer presented a vision of Jesus as both masculine provider and feminine caregiver. Jesus, consistent with descriptions in

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\(^{80}\) UAH, R.21.A.165.b, 18-19, Diary of Johann Peter Schwimmer, April 1763 (exact date unknown); “...Ostertag bleiben immer eigne Signalische Tage, die sich besser fühlen als beschreiben lassen.”; “Ich freue mich Gottes meines Heiland, den Er hat mich angezogen mit dem Kleidern des Heils, mit dem Rock der Gerechtigkeit bekleidet und sein blutige Versohnung und dessen Kraft überdeckt mich armes Kind.”
the diaries of Nitchmann and Cammerhof, takes on elements of husbandly masculinity and motherly femininity depending on the circumstances and intended spiritual faculty. The Holy Ghost, however, took on qualities reminiscent of a sacred servant. Schwimmer asked his “dear mother the Holy Spirit,” who was “the spirit of Jesus from God,” to give him a childlike ability to give thanks for the “precious gift of my bloody little Lamb to my sincerely beloved Father.”

A few weeks later, Schwimmer clarified his thoughts about the Holy Ghost: “It became clear to me that the spirit of Jesus [came] from his blood and wounds. And the Spirit of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, would be two by which my heart could begin with joy. The same Holy Spirit” who remained “true and caring and showed me how to worship the Father.”

The primacy of the blood and wounds, in Schwimmer’s mind, metaphorically transformed Jesus into a birthing mother. The wounds operated as the embodied birth canal/s and the blood administered the mystical salvific qualities through the Holy Spirit. In turn, the Holy Spirit nurtured believers and taught them to revere their masculine Holy Father and the masculine qualities of their Savior as a good mother would teach her child.

81 UAH, R.21.A.165.b, 19, Diary of Johann Peter Schwimmer, April 1763 (exact date unknown); “… und meinen Liebe Mutter der Heilige Geist, der Geist Jesu aus Gott, schenkt mir manches kindliches Abba, und dank Leidigen vor das kostbar Geschenk meines blutigen Lämmleins bei meinen herzlich geliebten Vater…”

82 UAH, R.21.A.165.b, 21, Diary of Johann Peter Schwimmer, May 1763 (exact date unknown); “Es wurde mir klar, das der Geist aus Jesu, aus seinen Blut und Wunden: Und der Geist aus Gott, vom Vater unsers Herrn Jesu Christi, zweierlei wäre, woran mein Herz eine ab ort Freude hatte, derselbe Heilige Geist, der Mutter treu, Pflege, und ziehe an mir tat, hat mir armen Tummern albern Kinde manch schönes Abba und Anbeten, in diesen Monat geschenkt…”

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Completely abandoning earlier iterations of the Moravian travel diary as a space for believers to articulate stories of religious and worldly survival, Schwimmer used his diary purely as an extension of his own experiences of piety and devotional practice. He offered thoughtful meditations on various aspects of embodied Moravian religious experience. Concluding his thoughts from May 1763, Schwimmer wrote, “Everything is His gift and giving. My little worship, love, praise, thanksgiving, and adoration be all the louder. Therefore, [may] the Lord bless my soul. Halleluja!”

Same as every entry, Schwimmer ended his diary with an entreaty directed toward God. Addressing his “Redeemer and Bridegroom,” he concluded, “Most beloved, with the bread of heaven, and soaking me with his blood from the 5 little fountains [the five wounds of Christ]. Ach, I [am a] poor little sinner. What am I supposed to think and say? Other than think that only You are the Lamb.”

Composing and collecting over 145 pages of these devotional affirmations, Schwimmer used his diary almost exclusively to document day-to-day reflections on his spiritual state and to proclaim the primacy of the blood and wounds. For Schwimmer, recording his own meditations on the blood and wounds of Christ mattered much more than memorializing the occurrences of his daily life.

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84 UAH, R.21.A.165.b, 145, Diary of Johann Peter Schwimmer, March 25, 1766; “Erlöser u. Bräutigam...Allerliebster, mit Himmel Brot, mit seinen Fleisch, und Tränke mich mit seinen Blut, aus den 5 Brünlein, Ach ich armes Sünderlien, was soll ich da sagen, und denken die Sinnen gehen zu und denken Lamm nur Du.”
Moravian blood and wounds piety survived the so-called “Sifting Time” of the late 1740s and 1750s and became a defining characteristic of Moravian devotional practices and embodied religious experiences in the Atlantic world, even in the years following Zinzendorf’s death. Moravian believers conceptualized their personal relationship with the Christian God in language that evoked Christ’s physical body. After going through the often traumatic experience of conversion, Moravians spent the remainder of their lives working to maintain their new relationship with the Heiland. Preserving and developing an embodied relationship with God, thus, became a central element of concern in the way believers strove to live and articulate a pious Christian life.

Travel diaries offer a unique opportunity to look beyond the immediate stages of the conversion experience and observe how common Moravian believers constructed, practiced, and memorialized their subsequent religious experiences in the absence of the support structures and social motivations imposed by living in their home communities. Some focused on contact with others, some emphasized personal circumstances, some wrote about common Moravian rituals of collective worship, some focused on drawing religious conclusions from worldly circumstances, and still others chose to write solely about mystical spirituality. All Moravian travel diarists wrote as a method of comforting themselves in the face of new, unpredictable, and often difficult circumstances while articulating their devotions to the Heiland. Travel
diaries, thus, operated as an atypical form of religious piety for Moravian believers who yearned for opportunities to express religious sentiments while traveling.

Moravian travel diaries cannot, however, be considered solely as autobiographical elements of personal piety and individual identity formation. At the conclusion of their journeys, Moravian scribes, commissioned by the Unity Elders Conference, meticulously copied, titled, dated, paginated, and then distributed these diaries to Moravian communities all over the Atlantic world in order to inform and edify far flung congregants with entertaining, informative, and uplifting stories of personal religious and worldly struggle. Each travel diary reads like a unique adventure story that unfolds in a piecemeal, day-by-day and month-by-month fashion that every Moravian believer could identify with and connect to their own spiritual and worldly circumstances. All Moravians could relate to the descriptions of interpersonal interactions, mystical encounters with God, and worship services, including Singstunden, Liebesmals, and Abendmals, because these were aspects of common Moravian religious experience and devotional practice that occurred in every Moravian congregation, great and small. Relating to these descriptions in the context of stories about God’s work in the outside world contributed to a sense of common

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85 I do not mean to suggest that personal travel diaries cannot be viewed as autobiographical. I consider them in a larger context as elements of cultural communication because they circulated among Moravian congregations and had a distinctive effect on larger Moravian identity formations. For more information on Pietist autobiographies, see Peter Vogt, “In Search of the Invisible Church: The Role of Autobiographical Discourse in Eighteenth-Century German Pietism” in Confessionalism and Pietism: Religious Reform In Early Modern Europe, ed. Fred van Lieburg (Mainz: Verlag Philip von Zabern, 2006), 293-311, which includes a section that addresses Moravian autobiographical memoirs (though it does not include travel diaries) on pages 306-309.
identity that extended embodied religious experiences, especially Moravian blood and wounds piety, outward to the boundaries and margins of the spiritual and physical world. The purpose of these diaries was to endow the mystical workings of God with physical, corporeal form that could be consumed by other believers.

The language of physicality that Moravians used to articulate their spiritual experiences and worldly encounters, however, reveals the centrality of embodied spiritual practices and experiences as well as alternative gender hierarchies in the Moravian Atlantic world. Moravians no longer unconsciously conceptualized the gender of Jesus exclusively in terms of masculine or feminine, paternal or maternal, husbandly or wifely roles, duties, or obligations. The embodied gender in descriptions of blood and wounds piety reveal the simultaneous masculinity and femininity of God in his/her many guises according to the circumstances of the invocation.

In the 1730s, during the early years of the Moravian Atlantic world mission, Moravian believers tended to emphasize the masculine aspects of the triune Christian God in concurrence with most other Christian traditions in early modern Europe and the Americas. However, as a period of transition, the 1730s also found Moravian believers experimenting with the gender of God (as demonstrated in chapter two). To
be clear, Moravians did not think that Christ was female.\footnote{Aaron Fogleman tried to make this case in \textit{Jesus is Female: Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Fogleman’s thesis offered a much needed corrective to previous Moravian historiography that neglected the role of gender both in Moravian religious culture and responses to it. His analysis is constrained, however, by his own efforts to connect Moravian challenges to the gender order in colonial America to specific acts of religiously motivated violence; evidence of which he has very little. His other big assertion, that Moravians understood Jesus as a woman, is perhaps the book’s biggest weakness because while some Moravian believers did assign feminine gender roles to the person of Jesus, they never understood him as anything but biologically male. This issue will be addressed further in chapter five.} In fact, Moravians in this early period often emphasized the masculinity and paternity of Jesus in travel diaries because of a deep seated adherence to ancient Christian traditions and the daunting prospect of braving the high seas of the Atlantic, with its wide reputation as deadly and dangerous. As a consequence, the masculine characteristics of the body and spirit of Jesus do not fall away from common Moravian devotions in the 1740s and 1750s. The paternalistic assurance and perfectionist, soldierlike guidance Moravian travelers received from their \textit{Heiland} never disappeared. And yet, ordinary Moravian descriptions of their experiences with the divine do alter/vary the gender, though not the sex, of Jesus, in particular, with increasing regularity over the course of the 1740s and 1750s. By the 1760s, Moravian travel diarists like Peter Schwimmer and others understood Jesus not as male and female in terms of androgynous biological sex (he was always physically male), but as exhibiting and exercising both masculine and feminine gender roles.

Common Moravian believers fluidly altered the gender of Jesus based on their own immediate needs and environmental circumstances in ways that reveal a deep seated sense of inclusivity. Moravians did not invent the concept of Jesus whose
gender was mutable, nor was this concept unique to them. Carolyn Walker Bynum, for example, has documented instances of medieval Christian mystics and devotional writers who referred to Jesus as a mother figure going back to the High Middle Ages. The Moravian innovation does not lie in the fact that common believers understood, albeit perhaps unconsciously, that Jesus performed either masculine or feminine roles. It lies in the capacity of believer to impute both masculine and feminine attributes simultaneously. Jesus was always masculine and Jesus was often feminine. But in these Moravian diaries, Jesus also appears as both masculine and feminine simultaneously and interchangeably.

Gender fluidity with regard to Jesus did not operate as a conscious rhetorical trope. It occurred, first and foremost, because of the fact that diarists wrote from their point of view as ordinary believers, not trained theologians. The pages of a travel diary operated as a blank canvass to express devotion to God, no matter how messy or informal. Herein lies the ultimate importance of the travel diary as an essential aspect of Moravian devotion: the disorganization and informality reflects and operates as a unique expression of the Pietist imperative of inward-focused, experiential piety, what Moravians and Halle Pietists understood as “heart religion.” It constituted an extension of the larger Pietist critique of the legalistic formalism of the established Lutheran orthodoxy. Faith statements and learned theological precepts proffered by

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academic theologians could not be the only source of proper Christian devotion. Jesus could be a mother and/or father or/and husband and/or teacher or/and caregiver and/or leader or/and supporter and so on because Moravian Pietists believed that observing and, more importantly, experiencing God’s work in the world, both in microcosm and in macrocosm, constituted a better and more intimately devout method of practicing their Christian faith. Moravian believers performed the tasks of observing and recording their experiences, and the Moravian Church sanctioned them as legitimate expressions of pious Christian devotion by copying what they recorded and distributing the copies to multiple Moravian congregations for other believers to consume. Diaries captured the complexities of God in ways that formal theology, faith statements, and devotional tracts could not. Records of embodied religious experiences operated as strong assertions of a particular religious identity, tacitly advocated against the established orthodoxies of the Lutheran Church, and acted as a distinguishing counterpoint to the Christian program propounded by the ‘Church Pietists’ in Halle and the more established dissenters in the New World.

Empowered by the ability to construct their own narratives of faith and travel in the service of God, the diaries became an unintended platform for subtle social protest that reveals how Atlantic world travel prompted Moravian believers to both challenge and reinforce traditional European notions of gender and race. Descriptions of interactions with non-Moravians, with non-Europeans, and especially with God indirectly disclose wider Moravian notions of gender and racial hierarchy that speak
to the compositional nature of Moravian spirituality. Fleeting instances of gender and racial hierarchy in Moravian travel diaries, taken as a whole, suggest that messiness, incoherence, and improvisation functioned as enduring and necessary components of Moravian religious culture and identity formation.

Moravian travel diaries gave ordinary believers license to articulate, perform, and record their own visions of Christian spirituality and conceptions of the repentance struggle. Gender often operated as a primary organizer of this devotional piety. However, as the next chapter will show, gender hierarchies and racial dynamics became even more salient features of the epistolary culture of Moravian missionaries in the Atlantic world from the late-1760s to the 1780s at the same moment that religiosity and mystical piety became a less significant component.
Chapter Four

New Moravian Bodies:
The Decline of Correspondence as Religious Devotion in North America and the English Caribbean, 1760-1785

Writing as “poor and humble members” of the Moravian Church, Johann Brucker and his wife Barbora [sic] composed a short letter to the “[d]ear and lovingly chosen congregation of sinners of the slaughtered Lamb of Jesus Christ” in the fledgling congregation in Bethlehem to express the spiritual particulars of their call to Atlantic world mission. The “will of the Heiland” commanded Johann and Barboras presence in the mission field and for this gift they did “not know how to thank the good Lamb enough and recognize the grace which he has shown us here on our journey and in Bethlehem.”1 In order to convey the magnitude of his religious convictions to the Moravian Church leadership, Johann wrote:

Praise be to God that I am his sinner, that I am still in control there, since the blood of Jesus, which has been sacrificed for me, is resting upon my poor heart. It is probably the greatest bliss to have or to be found in heaven or on earth. The poor sinners experience the bloody wounds of our slaughtered and crucified Lamb and we feel […] delight in [what] the Lamb says and gladly live before Him in great grace and happiness and be able to use [what he says] in His service. Always, I know and feel

1 UAH, R.14.A.8, Doc No. 170, Letter, Bethlehem, November 19/9, 1742, Johann & Barbora Brucker/- in to Congregation in Bethlehem; “Theure und aus erwählte Liebliche Sunder Gemeine des geschlachteten Lames Jesu Christi unsers Gottes und unsers Herrn. / Weil nun das gute Lamm und beide diese grosse Gnade hat wider fahren laßen, das wir auch sind unsers Heilands willen in dieses Land Pennsylvanien berufen worden und glücklich hier hergekommen sind, so kennen wir wohl dem guten Lamm nicht genug davor danken und seine Gnade erkennen die es uns er Zeigt hat bis hie her als auch auf unsurer Reise und in Bethlehem.”
very poor, miserable, incapable, and incompetent in the things of the Savior, but I
cannot and will not do anything but always be so devoted, persevering, and
committed before him, and that I have wanted to feel a little noble or the blissful sins
and wounds.²

The mystical qualities of the blood and wounds of Christ endowed the Brucker’s
request for mission work with the weight of divine sanction. The blood of Christ
“rested” on Johann’s heart causing feelings of spiritual ecstasy and compelling his
continued devotion and piety.

Barbora acted as the pious instigator in heeding the divine call to mission, for
she would “not refuse where the Heiland wanted her to go, because we shall go
among the Indians.” But her determination to spread the news of Christ’s death to
“Indians” of the New World did not necessarily mean only attempting to convert
“Native Americans” to Christianity because both Bruckers had received a sense of joy
in “looking forward to [being among] the blacks.” Whether Johann and Barbora
considered Native Americans to be “black” or whether they expected to be in a place
where they could minister to both Native Americans and Africans will forever remain
a mystery. In the end, however, it did not matter. To Johann and Barbora, like most

² Ibid; “Gott lob das ich sein sunder bin, bin ich noch was so fahr es hin, seit dem mir Jesu opfer Blut,
das worden ist, darauf mein armes Herze ruht, es ist wohl im Himmel und auf Erden keine grössere
Seeligkeit zu finden oder zu haben. Die arme Sünder erfahren als das Wunden Blut unsers
geschlachteten und geweuzigten Lammes, man fühlt das einen recht innig wohl ist dabei und zu
freuden sein wir es das gute Lamm sagt und macht und gerne es vor die größe Gnade und glück halt
vor ihn zu Leben und sich in seinen dienst brauchen können zu laßen. Ich erkenne und fühle mich
immer sehr arm, elend, unvermögend und untüchtig zu den sachen des Heiland, doch kann und will ich
gar nichts machen, sondern immer so ergeben und überlassen vor ihm sein, und mir das beständig aus
beiten, das ich das Edle klein oder das seelige Sünder und Wunden gefühl möge haben, und mir es
immer vor die grösste Gnade halten das ich auch von Ewigkeit her bin schon gezeilt und Erwählt
worden das geringste glied zu sein an seine Liebe der Gemeine. Ach ja ich werde es in Ewigkeit nicht
vergessen was ich habe vor unauspreechliche Gnade und Seeligkeit genossen bei euch, und es schmerz
und beschämt mich immer das ich euch habe so viel mühe und schmerzen gemacht...
other Moravian missionaries, innate biological features of non-European bodies, such as skin color, did not constitute meaningful signifiers of difference, at least on the literal surface. Unconsciously, however, physical bodily distinctions began to matter a great deal, as this chapter will show. Moravian missionaries only consciously cared about the state of unregenerate, though eminently save-able, souls and collecting as many human converts as possible for God regardless of early modern notions of biological race. “I want to tell them only about the little Lamb who has been slaughtered and [who has] paid an eternal ransom for them and the whole world. His death comes to me with all of his pain, not [merely] as a momentary [feeling] in our hearts.” Continuously feeling the violent death pains of Jesus and the weight of his blood on their hearts, however, acted as a subconscious reminder that bodies actually did matter for issues related to the soul because bodies contained the power to foster an unbreakable spiritual connection between God and believer.

The mystical blood and wounds of Christ facilitated Barbora and Johann’s motivation to engage in mission work abroad. The repeated references to Christ’s “slaughter” sought to convey an appreciation of the weight of their impending pastoral responsibilities and also provided a sense of security and safety against the uncertainties inherent in stepping out into unfamiliar territory. Conforming to

\[\text{Ibid; “Sie weigert sich nicht wo sie der Heiland hin haben will zugebrachen, dann wir sollten unter die Indianer gehen da wurde nichts vor diesmal daraus nun will uns der Heiland nach St. Thomas haben wir sind es auch zufrieden ich freue mich unter die Schwarzen ich will ihnen nichts anderst sagen als Lammlein, das du bist geschlacht und hast vor sie und alle Welt bezahlt ein Ewiges Lösegeld, es komme mir sein tod mit allen seine Schmerzen, keinen augenblick uns aus unsren Herzen.”}\]
Moravian epistolary and devotional convention in this period, Johann invoked the supremacy of Christ’s mystical body as both worldly and spiritual caretaker: “Our heart is no longer ours, but [belongs to] the Lamb, the foundation of the Cross, the wounds that flood the reward of the blood of Jesus.” The mystical language of the blood and wounds somewhat contrasts with the sentiments directed toward his Moravian co-religionists in Bethlehem. “We greet you all warmly and kiss all the elders and bishops, and [continue] to work our hands and our hearts to be faithful to Jesus through all of our garments.”

Allusions to embracing and kissing members of the Moravian Church leadership and using their hands, hearts, and clothing (their “garments”) to maintain spiritual fellowship constitute imagined renderings of embodied mysticism that would be slowly replaced by physical descriptions of human bodily behavior in the real world in Moravian missionary correspondence. Though Moravian blood and wounds mysticism would persist for decades, this letter from the 1740s illustrates the earliest beginnings of a larger transition in Moravian epistolary culture away from the language of mysticism as the primary signifier of both inward spirituality and outward circumstances. By ambiguously referring to the “blacks,” Barbora and Johann’s rhetoric also exemplifies how rudimentary concepts of biological race had only begun to enter the Moravian lexicon in this early period.

That would change dramatically, however, by the early 1760s as the Moravian racial

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4 Ibid; “nun liebe Gemeine denkt an uns vor dem guten Lamm. wir grüssen euch alle Herzlich und küssen allen Ältesten und Bischöfen und arbeiten Herz und Hände, zum treu sein bei Jesu durch alle gewände, unser Herz ist doch nicht mehr unser, sonder des Lammes, des Kreuzes Stamm, der Wunden Flut ein Lohn von Jesu Blut.”
vocabulary became increasingly sophisticated based on new experiences with non-European peoples in the New World. The blood and wounds of Christ in this history operate as a transitional metaphor for the human body that encouraged Moravians to spend more time contemplating and assessing the comportment of actual people in the real world. In contrast to other Protestant traditions present in the American colonies, physical human bodies initially provided Moravian believers with access to the mystical Christ; they were not a hinderance to true faith. Over time, however, non-European bodies became more complicated and controversial as the missionaries learned more about them.

This chapter will briefly track the decline of affective mysticism in Moravian transatlantic correspondence as a method of observing a larger reorientation of Moravian articulations of physical bodies. It draws on epistolary letters written for a variety of purposes by members of Moravian settlement communities and mission stations in Pennsylvania, Barbados, Antigua, Jamaica, and Herrnhut. I argue that evolving constructions of mystical and physical bodies in transatlantic communications arose from the peculiarities of local circumstances in the New World and reveal how Moravians came to internalize notions of racial difference through an increasing awareness of external behavior. Historians typically cite Moravian

5 Though her focus is not on religion, Kathleen Brown made an argument that is highly relevant to my own when she says that the “expansion of Europeans across the Atlantic created the conditions for the transformation of early modern body care. New ways of imagining both the diseased body and the civilized body emerged from this imperial context.” The point is that how the English (and in my case, the Moravians) talked about the body matters for how they constructed their everyday realities. See Kathleen Brown, Foul Bodies: Cleanliness and the Making of the Modern Body (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 357.
involvement in the rise of African Christianity in the eighteenth century as evidence of an inherent racial tolerance and colorblindness in a world overrun by arbitrary racial hierarchies and oppressive economic and social institutions. Jon Sensbach argues that for Moravians, “there were only the saved and unsaved, a condition upon which skin color had no bearing.” On the contrary, while Moravians certainly believed themselves to be quite tolerant and even progressive in this area, latent suspicions of non-European peoples based on issues related to culture and outward appearance, combined with their sporadic use of vaguely defined explanatory terms like “black” and “white,” illustrate how physically raced bodies actually constituted a salient and quite meaningful, if unconscious, factor in how Moravians both constructed and evaluated the spiritual condition of non-European souls in the early modern Atlantic world.

Their pervasive belief that all souls were equal before God, regardless of race, ethnicity, or nationality, allowed Moravians to see past and rationalize cases of race-

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7 Jon Sensbach, “Race and the Early Moravian Church: A Comparative Perspective,” Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society, Vol. 31 (2000): 2, 3, 1-10. This is not to say that Sensbach completely neglects Moravian incidents of violence against slaves. However, he seems to read Moravian sources literally and sees the violence and underlying contempt as fleeting aberrations in a larger story about Moravian love and respect for their African co-religionists. “At some profound level, [Moravian] slave and master became brother and brother, sister and sister.” See Sensbach, A Separate Canaan, 94, 105.

8 Even Philip Morgan cites an interesting example of some Moravians passing through Virginia who met a “stream of visitors, white and black” while attempting to buy produce from some local African slaves. For the example in the context of a larger discussion about Europeans establishing trading relationships with African slaves, see Philip Morgan, Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 370. For the quote from the Moravians as it appears in Morgan’s text, see Adelaide L. Fries, ed., Records of the Moravians in North Carolina, I (Raleigh, NC, 1992), 142.
based prejudice, verbal intimidation, and physical violence toward African slaves and other non-European converts. Moravians permitted and tolerated the abuse of non-European bodies because they consciously believed that saving their souls was more important than worrying about issues of bodily safety. Bodies, however, did matter a great deal in terms of how Moravians constructed both the status and methods of saving non-European souls. Conceptions of race modulated how Moravians understood the often oppositional nature of the pure soul versus the depraved body, a depraved body that increasingly became associated with indigeneity and African-ness. In the process of making this collective epistolary transition away from allusions to mystical bodies and toward observations of physical behavior by the end of the eighteenth century, Moravian missionaries and believers revealed how deeply ingrained conceptions of race developed and operated in their daily lives and became a primary component of their religious and social identities. Physical bodies mattered to the Moravians, despite their conscious inclinations to the contrary. The examples in this chapter collectively assert that even Europeans who clung to early modern egalitarian ideals could not escape the ugly manifestations and consequences of race-based prejudice that pervaded both the New and Old Worlds. The roots of these cultural transformations can be observed in the idiosyncrasies of Moravian transatlantic epistolary culture.
MORAVIAN MISSIONARIES in the eighteenth century regularly wrote letters addressed to individuals, entire congregations, Church leaders, and eventually the Unity Elders Conference (UEC), which took over the religious and social administration of Moravian congregations all over the Atlantic world in the years following the death of Zinzendorf. Officially founded at the General Synod held in Marienborn, Germany in 1769 (though other improvised administrative units had existed previously that served similar functions), the UEC consisted of three broad departments, including one that managed the foreign missions. Dedicating one of these broad administrative units to the Atlantic world missions signaled the increasing importance of the mission program as a symbol of unity that linked all Moravians together in spiritual community. Wielding official authority, the UEC performed many functions, including approving the appointments of individual missionaries, periodically sending official inspectors to mission sites in order to more efficiently allocate resources, evaluating the progress of individual missions, and keeping up a regular correspondence with individual missionaries. The UEC even claimed to speak and act for the Moravian Church as a whole. Before 1760, missions and missionaries reported to Zinzendorf directly, but after his death “they obeyed the U.E.C., and in obeying the U.E.C. they obeyed the whole Church.”\(^9\) The creation of the UEC furthered the democratic trend toward diffusing Moravian religious and secular authority.

Before 1760, Zinzendorf required regular reports and letters to be sent from each of the ever increasing number of mission station. Upon receipt of these letters, the Moravian Church commissioned official scribes to copy and then distribute them to Moravian settlement congregations for edification and internal informational purposes. Beginning in 1765, the UEC decided that some of this information should be made available to the general public more broadly in an attempt to assuage the uncertainties and misgivings that had been circulating for decades about the peculiarity and alleged secrecy of the Moravian Church.\textsuperscript{10} As such, the Moravians began publishing books and pamphlets about individual missions, including those in Greenland, the Danish Caribbean, and British North America, as well as histories of the Moravian Church as a whole based largely upon selected missionary reports.\textsuperscript{11} Beginning in the 1790s, the Moravian Church also began publishing more regular accounts of its mission work in the form of periodical magazines.\textsuperscript{12} These publications, ultimately, did relatively little to alleviate the concerns of their opponents, but they have formed the evidentiary basis of virtually all subsequent histories of the Moravian Atlantic world missions since the nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{10} More on this in the chapter five.
\textsuperscript{12} The two major publications are: 1) \textit{Periodical Accounts relating to the Mission of the Church of the United Brethren established among the Heathen}, 1790, and 2) \textit{Reports from Moravian Congregations}, began in print in 1819.
Moravian missionaries and ordinary believers who wrote letters and composed reports utilized a language of religious inclusivity in order to demonstrate their dedication to God and to each other. For many, blood and wounds piety remained a central focus in their daily religious lives and this form of Moravian devotional piety found its way into the epistolary correspondence, as in Barbora and Johann Brucker’s letter. In the last letter sent from the thriving congregation in Bethlehem to the UEC in 1765, a Moravian congregant writing under the name “Sister Mari Magdalen” composed a heart-felt message to the “Venerable Directory in Herrnhut.” The first thirty-five lines of the letter — almost the entire first page — consisted of deeply religious, heartfelt, emotional language that overwhelmingly demonstrates her modesty and devotion to God. “[M]y heart is too full,” she wrote, “but I must say that I know that the Savior has done great mercy to his people…. I must confess, I have found myself guilty in all [things], even more than [God] has said, and I have risen with my dear heart and eaten at His feet. He has also looked at me poorly and mildly and comforted me.” Mari bookended both the beginning and end of her letter with this heavy-handed mystical language as a method of framing her detailed report about the state of the Bethlehem economy and a new Moravian Choir in the village of Lititz, just north of Lancaster. In closing, she returned to the mystical language of piety. “I, for my part, feel my imperfection from all sides, but the enjoyment of my heart, soul, and body has blissfully preserved me through my bloody Martyr Man, [which will be] wonderful for you [as well]. But I can be
forsaken and I like to be a sinner who cries for His soul [and] would gladly help to collect his bloody pain…. Mari Magdelen.” These sentiments clearly demonstrated her undying commitment to her co-religionists and to Jesus regardless of anything that might happen to her in the physical world.

After Zinzendorf’s death, the Moravian Church officially disavowed as “enthusiasm” the hyper-focus upon and highly emotive language of the blood and wounds of Christ in an attempt to quell public opposition coming from Protestants both sides of the Atlantic. However, the Church leadership had little power to completely eradicate this particular form of Moravian piety because of its sustained centrality in the lives of ordinary believers as a concrete symbol of bodily health and spiritual wellbeing. The more reserved and fleeting nature of Mari Magdelen’s

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references to the blood and wounds in her invocation of the “bloody Martyr Man” and his “bloody pain” reflect the official rejection of this emotive piety. For Mari, Jesus remained bloody, but the affective focus on the bleeding, streaming, and flowing of Christ’s blood that characterized this form of mysticism in the 1740s and 1750s was noticeably absent.

Affirmations of personal piety in epistolary correspondence established a spiritual connection with the recipient that was both personal and communal. These affirmations demonstrated a basic, subtextual standard of intimate devotion to the Heiland that the recipient would recognize. This standard language also communicated the strength of the author’s adherence to Moravian religious principles. As an instrument of rhetoric used in the context of a missionary writing to authority figures in distant Europe, the language of piety often contained persuasive connotations. The use of accepted, sacred terminology was meant to reassure the recipient of the ritual purity of the author and produce a feeling of comfort that the report and the requests for additional funding, supplies, new personnel, and/or relocation contained therein arrived from a trusted, likeminded, and sufficiently devout person who was intimately dedicated to the faith. Some European converts in the mission field even received the opportunity to appeal directly to the UEC. Jane Skennell, a Scotland-born British convert on the Caribbean island of Antigua, competently used these technique in a 1774 letter to Herrnhut. “I take this opportunity of writing you the desire and Longing of my Heart and hopes that Our Dear Lord and
Savior Jesus Christ may open yours also to grant me my desires, which I believe you have heard a little of before.” Though more direct than most of the German-language letters written by Moravian missionaries, Skennell had clearly internalized the “heart-centered” piety and learned to use that pious language as an element of persuasion. “I have often beg’d and Requested the Favour,” she wrote, “of being a member of your Congregation, of the Brethren and Sisters here in Antigua; But being always told they could not Grant me that favour without Orders from home, it has Occasioned me to go home from [Moravian church] meeting[s] with a Heavy Heart and shed many tears before our Savior.” Displaying a characteristic adherence to the embodied spirituality of Moravian personal piety, Jane Skennell stressed the weightiness and the toll that the lack of acceptance had taken on her body.15

Launching into a brief summary of her conversion experience, Jane highlighted the devotional shortcomings of the Church of England on Antigua, which she had previously been forced to attend, as a prime example of “Satan [being] busy to delude and draw every Peon Sinner into his net, for I might say I lived fourteen Years without God in [the previous] Twenty, [for] which I hope our Lord and Savior may forgive me my Deficiencies.” The Moravian missionaries on Antigua had granted her inclusion in the local congregation and the daily gatherings for prayer and worship, but not full membership. Still, she found in her “Heart [that] I am not Satisfied for I have a sincere Hungering and Thirsting after my Savior’s Blood and

Righteousness, and to be wholly his for I deliver up Heart, Soul, and Body, and Children, and all that I have unto him, [in] hopes that he will bestow his Holy Spirit upon us, that he may Direct us in the narrow way for the time to come.” Simply making the request for membership was not enough. Jane Skennell had to fully demonstrate and perform (surely at the urging of her German Moravian mentors) the fact that she possessed the requisite understanding of embodied Moravian spirituality in order to convince the UEC that she deserved to be a full member in the Moravian Church.\footnote{Ibid.} Her uses of Moravian blood and wounds piety suggest that the purpose of this devotion in the epistolary correspondence was to emphasize and promote personal and collective unity. As a language of devotion, the blood and wounds still represented a common devotional wholeness and religious harmony that metaphorically linked disparate Moravian communities and believers across the Atlantic basin. It also meant that affective blood and wounds piety still retained a sense of persuasive authority for Moravian Church leaders, despite having officially distanced themselves from it over a decade earlier.

Missionaries also used these persuasive tactics in order to demonstrate the righteousness of their actions with regard to their treatment of converts in the mission field. By the late 1760s, however, Moravian blood and wounds piety in missionary correspondence had begun the process of reverting back to a devotional ideal that was firmly connected with the Christian sacraments, especially the Eucharist and

\footnote{Ibid.}
baptism. As an indicator that this process had begun to occur, direct references to the salvific qualities of the blood and wounds, as in the previous examples, became less common in favor of implied references through invocations of Christ’s bodily death. William Balmforth related a story about fellow missionary Samuel Utley and a recent experience he had baptizing a dying African woman.

“The 5[th] of November 1768, Br. Utley was called to a sick negerin [a German cognate referring to an African woman] in the evening just when we were going to the Holy Communion, and so he promised to go in about an hour: and as soon as the Holy Communion was over, he went and his wife with him and found [the African woman] very sick so that they thought that she was very near her dissolution and she begged very much for Baptism and he could not deny it to her. When he had done it, he came home: and told us how it was with her and that he had Baptized her into the Death of Jesus Christ and called her Johanna however contrary to his thoughts. Her disorder took a turn and she recover[ed] again. She has been 2 or 3 times at our house to see us and once in our Church at a preaching.”

The dire circumstances ultimately convinced Utley to perform the baptism on this African woman, but not without reservations and not before making her wait until he and his wife could receive the Holy Communion themselves beforehand. Utley felt that he had performed this baptism outside the normal process of determining whether this woman was worthy of receiving the sacrament. Africans had to behave in an acceptable manner and demonstrate their worthiness for baptism for a period of time after their initial conversion. The African woman’s declining health made this

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17 To be clear, many Moravian believers and missionaries still directly referenced the blood and wounds of Christ in this period. By the late-1760s, however, blood and wounds piety no longer occupied such an exalted position in epistolary correspondence and references to it became much less graphic. Thus, the transition away from this type of mystical language was not uniform for all Moravians. Some held on to it much longer than others.

18 UAH, R.15.D.b.15.a, Doc No. 16, Letter, Antigua, February 22, 1769, William Balmforth to Martin Mack. The quote as it appears in the text above has been altered slightly for the purpose of improving the clarity. The original English text from the primary document reads: “…Master took him with him to Dominica having bought a plantation their [sic] which indeed is painful to hus [sic] to lose our neger Brethren…”

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spiritual vetting process impossible. Unlike Jane Skennel, African converts were not afforded the opportunity to personally plead their case for baptism, communion, or membership in the Moravian Church directly to the UEC or the Mission Directory. They had to demonstrate their commitment to the faith by being physically present at church meetings often enough, despite the fact that they often could not control their movements because of their status as slaves in the English Caribbean. Balmforth even seems to imply that he believed she was not worthy of the baptism, in retrospect, by elaborating on the woman’s spotty attendance record at Moravian worship services after her recovery.

In addition to regular physical attendance, those who sought the sacraments of Holy Communion and baptism had to pass through many additional steps in the vetting process. The confirmation and baptism of an African convert on Antigua depended, first, upon the spiritual state of the Moravian missionaries themselves. On December 31, 1768, Balmforth explained that the missionaries held a “conference before the Holy Communion as we had spoken thoroughly with our few [European] Brethren & Sisters about [the] hearts sensation [of the African candidates]. We found them open and sinner-like, which gave us courage to ask our Savior about th[o]se which [are] candidates for the Holy Communion, if it was now time for them to be admitted specters at the Holy Communion for the last time before Confirmation.” Finding that the judgement of their Moravian mentors was sufficiently “sinner-like” allowed the nominees to move forward to the next stage in the process, which meant
submitting them directly to God for his approval, via the lot. The Moravian lot consisted of three pieces of paper, one containing affirmative, one with negative, and one with neutral language that would be placed in a vessel and the first one chosen at random was considered the will of God. On this occasion, the lot decided whether three African candidates would be allowed to witness others receiving communion. The lot selected William Tomlison to “be admitted a spector at the Holy Communion for the last time before Confirmation” and then baptism. Sisters Sarah and Nelley, both female slaves who lived near the settlement, were not admitted as spectators. Sister Sarah received a determinative “no” from the lot, but Sister Nelly received a “blank” (neutral), meaning she was still eligible since God had not decided firmly against her.

About a month later, on February 2, 1769, the Moravian missionaries again “came together to speak about that Brother and these two Sisters which w[ere] made candidates for Baptism.” While the letter does not report exactly what happened in the intervening time since their first round with the lot, this time the missionaries subjected them to further scrutiny. Since December, they had “taken all the pains that we possibl[y] could to get thoroughly acquainted with them and we have had many agreeable conversations with them about their heart’s sensations and we find that it is

not only their desire to be baptized, but also to die unto Sin and live to our dear Savior.” Tomlison received another definite “yes” from God to advance to the next round in the confirmation process, but only after a series of further “agreeable conversations” was his “desire” for baptism deemed strong enough. The vague interpersonal criteria for the re-examination of these candidates for baptism, in addition to the use of the lot, suggests that a measure of race-based distrust drove these relatively inexperienced missionaries. In all three of these cases, the missionaries deemed it necessary to get “thoroughly acquainted with them” again and again, despite the relative longevity of their previous relationship, before they could be satisfied with God’s final determination. After completing this process, which had taken months, it finally “came into our hearts to ask our Savior if it was time for them to be baptized.”

Historians have typically viewed instances of Moravian missionaries striving to “get to know” non-European converts in the mission field as evidence of a culture of benevolence. In fact, the overbearing and lengthy process seems quite discriminatory given that European Moravian’s born to the parents of converted believers were baptized shortly after birth. Balmforth, for his part, did not even report on the baptismal fate of Tomlison or Sarah this time, but Nelley finally received a firm “no” from the lot.

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21 Ibid.
BY THE EARLY 1770s, the Moravian Church possessed over forty years of experience ministering to African and Indigenous peoples in multiple regions of the Atlantic world. Affective piety in transatlantic correspondence had declined in favor of more practical descriptions and commentaries on local devotional life. The graphic language of the blood and wounds of Christ used by believers like Barbora and Johann Brucker had dissipated and reverted back to more traditional language related almost exclusively to the Christian sacraments. The Atlantic world, for believers who experienced it over such a long period of time, no longer conjured fears of a mysterious unknown. Letter writers simply did not require the same level of mystical bodily protection against uncertainty that the blood and wounds previously provided.

Moravian believers, of course, still believed in the salvific power of the blood of Christ and used it as a persuasive symbol to convince non-believers of the magnitude of Christ’s sacrifice. Some still called upon the blood and wounds to reinforce the more general primacy of Christ’s mystical body as an object of common devotion. While the blood and wounds of Christ clearly bonded the bodies of European Moravian believers and properly baptized Moravian converts together in spiritual fellowship, it did not uniformly apply to the bodies of all non-European followers. Jon Sensbach has claimed that the ideal of spiritual equity in Moravian

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religious culture superseded any concerns about the physical bodies of believers. But if physical bodies truly did not matter in the affairs of the soul, then why would Moravians feel compelled to submit willing and devoted African candidates for communion and baptism, such as Nelly, Sarah, and Tomlison, to the lot for God’s final approval at all? Had the wounds of Christ not bled for the sins of all mankind?

As a matter of fact, the bodies of African converts carried great significance with regard to how European Moravians understood the state of their souls. In the Caribbean, the Moravian’s dedication to the concept of spiritual equity regardless of race or ethnicity (combined with a reliance on the lot for the determination of God’s will) often had the effect of blinding missionaries to the more severe realities of the institution of slavery. Making a routine of preaching in the Antiguan countryside on Sunday afternoons, William Balmforth began having conversations with plantation managers on some of the English plantations who “said they hoped [his preaching] would have a good effect on their negers and they said they could see something of it already.” Naively assuming that the “good effect” referred to the conversion of the

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24 With regard to communion and baptism in the Moravian mission field, Jane Merritt demonstrated that missionaries in Pennsylvania generally only used the lot in decisions to elevate Delaware Indians to communicant status and not for final decisions on their readiness of the actual baptism. See Jane Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 101, note 14. Merritt also briefly notes (citing Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan*, 107-110) that “Moravians had a very different relationship with the enslaved” and actually did use “the lot when deciding to baptize the African enslaved.” The uneven use of the lot in making decisions about communion and baptism for non-European peoples suggests that physical features of non-European bodies played some role in the application of the lot to make these decisions.
Africans to Christianity and not the manager’s hope that his preaching would increase
the physical productivity of their slaves, Balmforth began to fear that “something bad
might come out of that visit” he had with these plantation managers. Shortly
thereafter, “the field negers…stayed [away] from the meeting and I went to them and
asked them how it happened that they did not come to the preaching as usual. They
told me that they liked to come but their overseers treated them very unkindly and
sought for opportunities to find fault with them that they might whip them; and the[y]
know that it is because they come to the preaching.” Initially siding with the
European overseers, Balmforth asked them “to be faithful and obedient negers and
then their overseers could not find any just [cause] to beat them.” Balmforth quickly
found out otherwise, however, because he also “had the mortification to see one of
the overseers meet a negerin in the way coming to the preaching and he turned her
back and beat her severely and some that was in the way coming saw it and they
turned back before he came at them and now the house negers do not come to the
preaching.”

Balmforth and the other Moravian missionaries on Antigua learned a hard
lesson that day about the brutality of slavery and the real intentions of white, British
plantation owners and field managers. The “gentleman” who beat his slave was “a
widower and hath a gentlewoman to keep his house and she tells the negers that they
can be saved as well without going to the preachings, as with going, and tells them if

they will go anywhere to a preaching to go to the great Church [presumably referring to the local Anglican church].” Finding out that the English and Scottish gentlemen he had spoken with recently had lied to him about their intentions for the spiritual well-being of their slaves, Balmforth took this setback as a divine call to action and reconfirmed his commitment to preach to the African slaves. “So at present it looks very precarious how it may go, but we will continue to preach there as long as any negers will come to hear us, for it is not our matter but our Savior’s, and my heart’s wish is that our Savior may not suffer anything to frustrate his intentions. And if he does but stand by us, we will gladly execute his mind.”26

Despite his consternation regarding the incident of violence he had witnessed, Balmforth did not learn the lesson one might hope from this episode. He displayed very little conscious concern for the physical condition of the African slaves and chose to remain hyper-focused on himself and his own religious mission. The “precariousness” of the situation he mentioned in his letter to the UEC did not refer to the physical dangers that slaves encountered by attempting to attend Moravian religious services. Nor was he acknowledging the courage displayed by the slaves who attempted to do so. Balmforth’s ability to continue to carry out his religious mission in the way he conceived it was at stake. In fact, Balmforth blamed the African slaves themselves for their absence from his preachings and prayer meetings, which he perceived as a personal slight to himself and a moral failure on their part, in

26 Ibid.
spite of the fact that he now had firsthand knowledge that many slave owners and plantation managers actively prohibited their attendance through the use of physical violence and intimidation. Physical attendance at his prayer services, however, was still a requirement for saving their souls. Balmforth subsumed any moral obligation to protect the slaves or, at least, protest against the use of violence toward them under the guise of his patronage for Christ. “It is not our matter,” he claimed, “but our Savior’s” to deal with these situations as he pleased. Far from expressing any concern about the physical condition of African bodies, Balmforth performed his own loyalties to Christ and the Moravian Church by proclaiming his “heart’s wish” that Christ, not the Africans, should not suffer anything more. At a very basic level, African bodies only mattered to Balmforth in the sense that they had to be physically present so that he could perform his pastoral duties. The image of Christ’s wounded and bloody body hanging on the cross had not translated to sympathy for those who endured physical suffering at the hands of slave owners and field supervisors on sugar plantations.

African bodies mattered a great deal, however, with regard to how the Moravians assessed the moral character and spiritual readiness of converts to receive the sacraments. In this area, the missionaries often viewed the behavior of female African converts with particular suspicion. Balmforth wrote, “I believe that you will remember that I spoke with you when you were here about Rosena, for I was a little

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27 Ibid.
suspicious about her because she’s a young negerin.” Balmforth’s misgivings about Rosena’s age, gender, and especially her race caused him to closely track her movements and conduct. He thought that she had “a husband in another island” and he “thought that she perhaps might be taking another husband.” The pretense for his suspicions about marital infidelity, by European Christian standards, was that Rosena stopped showing up for church due to illness. But when Balmforth’s wife went “to see [the young African woman] before she was brought in bed a good while,” she “could see that she was with child.” It never entered Balmforth’s mind that Rosena could have been sexually assaulted by her English overseers or that she probably did not impute the same cultural value/s upon marriage. The fact that Balmforth called the man on the other Caribbean island Rosena’s “husband” implies that the Moravian missionaries probably married the couple themselves. But Rosena taking another lover outside the boundaries of Christian marriage was interpreted as a personal moral failure. “Rosena was very shy and could not look [Balmforth’s wife] in the face! [Martin Mack] told me if she did so without letting us know of it and getting our approbation to it, we could not baptize her child, but as yet she hath not said any[thing] to us about it.”28 Rosena’s behavior had clearly not met Balmforth’s expectations and also had baptismal consequences for her child.

In this episode, Christ’s blood operated outside the immediate context of Moravian mystical devotion, instead functioning as a principle for determining

28 Ibid.
spiritual eligibility to receive the sacraments based notions of purity and familial relations. Baptizing the children of non-European converts, for example, could be a contentious issue for Moravians. Zinzendorf had approved of childhood baptism within the context of the confessions of the Lutheran Reformation and rejected the Anabaptist insistence upon the baptism of mature adults because he believed that “God’s work is not restricted to the mind.” In theory, communicants did not require any prior spiritual instruction because no amount of pastoral guidance could supersede God’s divine ability to confer grace. Zinzendorf, however, did put restrictions upon who could benefit from this decree that implicated familial blood relations. “Our teachers,” he preached in a public sermon to the Moravian congregation, “do not rightly baptize children whose faithful upbringing does not guarantee the parents.” By implication, only the children of true and obedient Christians could be faithfully baptized. Non-European converts, of course, were affected most by this restriction because the purity of their faith and the morality of their behavior always seemed to be in question. Rosena’s behavior, in the form of her perceived marital infidelity, precluded the baptism of her child despite the fact that she had converted and was believed to have taken a husband in Christian marriage. In Balmforth’s mind, Rosena’s own conversion and the potential baptism of her child should have acted as deterrents to any errant behavior on her part. He felt it incumbent upon Rosena to acknowledge her moral failings, regardless of cultural

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differences regarding the institution of marriage, and confess her sins of infidelity to
the Moravian missionaries before her child could even be considered for baptism. In
other words, the baptism of Rosena’s child depended upon her behaving according to
Moravian expectations with regard to spiritual vigor and personal morality.
Judgements about the purity of Rosena’s soul had serious consequences for her
child’s eligibility for baptism and were made based upon external observations of her
physical behavior. The sins of the mother, in this case a relationship deemed illicit by
the missionaries, became inscribed upon the body of her child through the familial
bloodline.

Taking up the call to mission involved a process of conceptualizing and
articulating idealized renderings of the bodies, culture, and behavior of Africans in
order to demonstrate a sense of passionate and generous commitment to the
reclamation of their souls for Christ. Moravians peppered their reports to the mission
board with descriptions of Africans as backward, though blamelessly so, docile, and
absolutely willing to transform themselves based on an initial impression of
Christianity as unquestionably superior to their indigenous beliefs, customs, and ways
of behavior. On the occasion of the very first Moravian baptism on the island of
Barbados in 1768, Benjamin Bruckshaw reported to Brother Johannes von Watteville,
“that our Dear Lord last Saturday evening let us know his mind in a Conference about
the Negroes that it was now time to have a Baptism.” At that point, the missionaries
had several promising prospects among their African communicants, “but He chose
only one for the first [baptism], who is an old negroe woman, [who] lives 3 miles from us. Indeed there is none who hath been so competent in coming to the meeting as she. She not having missed above twice neither on Sunday, or Wednesday nights this 3 quarters of a year.”

This elderly African woman was chosen for baptism by the lot, but her regular attendance at Moravian prayer meetings (i.e. good behavior) over a long period of time made her an ideal candidate in the first place.

Having sufficiently demonstrated her loyalty to the Moravians, Bruckshaw explained that this African woman was particularly useful to the mission in that region. “She is an instrument of Blessing to those of her sex,” he wrote, “in telling [other Africans] of our Savior and bringing them to Church. I have often seen 10 or 12 in a Company, which she hath brought.” Dutifully attending Moravian worship services with other female Africans made this woman “look Cheerful, but when she is obliged to come alone, she is not so pleased.” Cultural docility and dutiful obedience defined this first African candidate for baptism. The Moravian missionaries never mention her name. Though meant compassionately, the Moravians saw her as a useful instrument for appealing to the female slave population on the island of Barbados. Permission to receive the sacrament of baptism was her reward for good behavior.

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30 UAH, R.15.E.b.10.a, Doc No. 22, Letter, Barbados, September 12, 1768, Benjamin Bruckshaw to Johannes von Watteville.

31 Ibid.
Moravian missionaries used transatlantic correspondence in attempts to demonstrate notions of Christian empathy through small acknowledgements of the hardships of life Africans endured under the institution of slavery. Describing non-spiritual “outward matters,” Bruckshaw reported that on Barbados “the Negroes have it much harder then [sic] in any other Island in the West Indies. In other Islands the Negroes have gardens out of which they can get many things,” but “the Cattle Keepers [referring to the English plantation managers who oversaw the livestock] are so careless that the[y] let the Cattle eat it up so that the poor things have only their [weekly food] allowance” to sustain them.\(^{32}\) Attempting to demonstrate a close affinity with their African subjects and a sense of empathy with their physical suffering, Bruckshaw further explained that the Africans on Barbados “must work from light in the morning till the stars appear at night with a whip after them.” Characteristic of Moravian observations of the bodies of converts, Bruckshaw then segued into a gender-specific description of the clothing and living conditions provided to plantation slaves. “The men, when they are pretty well dressed at their work, have a pair of old Britch[es] and a Cap, but thousands have only a tiny apron, which the[y] tie [in the front], and put it between their Thighs and under the strong behind.” Women slaves “have an old Petticoat or a piece of Cloth wrapped about their waist and nothing else. And at night the[y] sleep upon a Board. The women have the Children in their field with them, and three or four times a Day, they are allowed to

\(^{32}\) Ibid.
go and give them the breast.” Slaves on the island of Barbados meagerly provisioned their slaves with articles of clothing similar to those living in the Chesapeake and Lowcountry, but Bruckshaw’s purpose in describing the clothing slaves wore was to highlight physical and cultural differences between African and European bodies.

Under the guise of disapproving of the conditions slaves had to endure, Bruckshaw's observations demonstrated a simultaneous curiosity and aversion to the physical sight of African bodies at work. Relatively well dressed African men with strong legs and prominent posteriors contrast with the African women whom he depicted as immodestly dressed and vulgarly performing childcare while in the field. His attention to articles of clothing that did or did not adequately cover private areas of African bodies points to the fact that Moravian missionaries possessed traditional assumptions about mannerly and respectable dress and applied them to non-European peoples despite their status as unfree laborers. The worldly body of African slaves, for Moravian missionaries in the Caribbean, operated as both physical object of fascination and potentially useful object of production. Though trying to sound sympathetic to their situation, Bruckshaw painted a rather exotic portrait of Africans working on sugar plantations by accentuating aspects of their appearance that

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33 Ibid.
34 Philip Morgan has a useful comparative analysis of articles of clothing and types of cloth worn by slaves in the Chesapeake and the Lowcountry in his *Slave Counterpoint* (1998), 125-128.
35 Jennifer Morgan has made a similar point about African women whose value as slave laborers was determined by their capacity to perform the labors of both plantation work and childbirth. See Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 12-49.
Europeans would find unusual. Africans were only “well dressed” when wearing European-style pants and a hat. But most of them, even under the circumstances of slavery that were outside of their control, dressed only in rags that barely covered their private parts.

Bruckshaw indulged his own curiosity and that of his reader by underscoring the peculiarity of African bodies and customs with regard to covering them. The “tiny apron” that “tied in front” drew the reader’s attention to the African male genitalia and accentuated the “strong” appearance of his legs and posterior. African women, according to Bruckshaw, covered their genitalia with a second-hand European petticoat, a garment meant to be worn under a dress or skirt (which many African woman did not have), and wore “nothing else.” This description conjured an image of African women working in the sugar fields with their torsos and breasts exposed. The sexualized language used by Bruckshaw in describing African bodies worked to rhetorically de-civilize them based on observations of physical characteristics that ran counter to the accepted norms of European modesty that generally characterized exposed skin as scandalous, especially the skin of non-Europeans.36

Bruckshaw’s equivocal compassion for the physical plight of African slaves on Barbados sugar plantations and his comparative disdain for the physical neglect practiced by their overseers ended here, however. Addressing Johannes von Watteville, he wrote, “You will say this [treatment is] hard hearted of their owners.

36 Kathleen Brown, Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 357.
But I must say their owners in general are as good to their people as they can afford. The Island is wore out, and will bear nothing without great Labour…I believe it is the most Labourious place under the sun.”

Bruckshaw clearly privileged European economic conditions over the physical toll those conditions took on African bodies.

In their physical form, African bodies emerge from these descriptions as uniquely suitable for work in the Caribbean. Historian Jennifer Morgan has shown how the laboring bodies of enslaved peoples became deeply embedded in discourses concerning “notions of difference and human hierarchy.” Bruckshaw’s characterization of African men as strong and durable complemented his portrayal of African women as eminently willing to combine their work in the sugar fields with the burdens of childcare in a way that underscores how deeply Moravian’s internalized the social inequalities inherent in the institution of slavery. His candor also accentuates the general Moravian disregard for the physical health of African bodies. But Moravians conveyed these harmful sympathies, unconsciously, through the language of benevolence and concern. Conceptualizing African bodies as strong—but-disposable explains their ability to use the labor of Africans in much the same way as other Europeans while simultaneously talking about them in a cordial manner that seemed to accord them a superficial respect.

37 Ibid.
39 And yet, as the example of Rosena and others have shown, the Moravians did not strictly separate bodies and souls as some historians have thought. See Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan* (1998).
One of the most significant problems that plagued Moravian missionaries to African communities was the language barrier. Writing from the Moravian community of Spring Garden, Antigua, Johann Meder deftly articulated the unique challenges that language differences could foster. “It is true too that several among them, that come to us, do not yet rightly know what they are about, & can not yet understand what they hear, but they come only, because they have been persuaded by others, to come.” Displaying little of the famous Moravian cultural sensitivity to non-European cultures, Meder had little respect for the capacity of potential African converts for independent thought. “For one can indeed call it a wondrous work of the Savior, when a poor Negro, who has lived not much better than a beast, & is buried in ignorance, gets a desire to come to hear the Word of atonement” in a language he or she might not even understand. Despite his characterization of Africans who attended his meetings as ignorant sycophants, Meder prayed that God should grace them with the power to understand and have “his good spirit awaken them out of sinful sleep….

We have, I assure you, work enough, to make ourselves acquainted with those that come; for it is not enough, that we know they come to our meetings to hear some thing of our Savior, but [that] they want still more instruction & advice to be given them.”

Attendance at Moravian church meetings was not enough. Africans had to prove their loyalty to the Christian faith through obedience, deference to Moravian authority and, most importantly, comprehension of the Gospel message.

\[^{40}\text{UAH, R.15.D.b.15.a, Doc No. 102, Letter, Antigua (Spring Garden), May 14, 1774, Johann Meder to Brethren of the Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel.}\]
The harsh language Meder used to describe African culture could be attributed to the fact that this letter was not addressed to the Unity Elders Conference in Herrnhut, but to the Brethren of the Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel (BSFG) in England. Moravian missionaries in the English Caribbean faced the problem of institutionalized racism among the planter elites that complicated Moravian goals of converting and baptizing African slaves on their plantations. Meder reported to the BSFG that there was “a general outcry among the planters, whose Negroes go to [the Methodist] meetings, that they are spoiled, & become lazy & the like; but they won’t give themselves rightly the trouble to seek for the differences between us both [referring to the differences between the Moravians and the Methodists]; for if they did, they would soon find, that with those who come to us, it is not so.” Meder displayed little concern for the condition or humanity of the slaves themselves. He drew no contrast between the Moravians and the English in terms of their ways of thinking about slavery. In fact, Meder is at pains to demonstrate that the Moravians actually support the English planters, who would do well to keep their slaves away from the Methodists, whom he characterized as contributing to the “laziness” of African laborers. In contrast, the Moravians would, “through the grace of God, seek to convert [the Africans] to our Savior; the only principle or motive, that make a man do his work & behave in every respect, as he should.” Moravian missionary success in the Caribbean partially depended upon their ability to improve the economic

41 Ibid.
productivity of African bodies through the process of conversion and pastoral maintenance.

Part of the project of communicating the legitimacy of the Moravian missionary enterprise from the standpoint of the missions themselves involved finding ways of communicating their “successes” to the mission board in Europe. In addition to reporting the numbers of baptisms, relating short stories about particularly significant baptisms, and on rare occasions actually bringing converts back to Europe from the mission field, the Moravians sporadically sent letters and testimonies that they claimed were composed by the African and Indigenous coverts themselves. One letter began, “We are the Negroe Brethren in the Island of Antigua, take this opportunity to write these few lines to complement our kind loves to you [the members of the Unity Elders Conference] and your family, and to the Brethren which are here at present…and me hoping this may find you in a fair State of health, with the blessing of our Savior.”42 Clearly written for a European audience, the opening of this letter demonstrates the deference and gratitude that was expected of good and willing converts to the Christian faith. Race, however, appears as a meaningful signifier that separated European and African “Negroe” Moravians. “But Dear White Brethren,” Johann Nicholas, the supposed African author of this letter, continued, “we have forget to mention in the first setting out of this letter between white and black Brethren, which it ought to be a distinction; but we do know and do express to you

42 UAH, R.15.D.b.15.a, Doc No. 109, Letter, Antigua, July 25, 1774, Johann Nicholas to the Unity Elders Conference.
that your Brethren and our Masters and Brethren...they are more to us than Father and Mother, to us, in the light of this world; for they appear to us as the Savior of Mankind.”

First-hand praise directly from the mouths of the converts themselves confirmed that the men and women missionaries behaved honorably and the converts received their teachings eagerly. After all, what better method of legitimizing themselves and their practices as missionaries than to secure the “testimony” of those they had converted who considered them the “saviors of mankind?”

In his haste to proclaim the success of the mission in Antigua, the author of this letter also revealed, in concrete terms, what Moravians really meant when they used the term “heathen” as a moniker for African and Indigenous peoples. The author directly credited the missionaries with putting in the necessary work to produce African converts capable of “express[ing] the word of our Savior.” And, “to tell you the truth, we [reflexively referring to the African converts] were entirely what they called Heathen; for without the advice and trouble [of] some of the…good [missionaries], we would never [have been] able to express the words of our Savior, which we do now and we are now Praying our Savior to lead us more and in his grace; and especially for the Salvation of our own Souls.” The term ‘heathen,’ according to this letter writer, consisted of more than a vaguely defined European reference to those who had not heard the word of God nor converted to Christianity and thereby existed in a state of ignorance. ‘Heathen’ specifically connoted living

43 Ibid.
without the ability to “express” the word of God and, thus, without the ability to properly engage the body in the pursuit of true salvation. Being exposed to the Gospel stories and choosing to believe them was no longer enough to secure redemption from sin. Believers had to learn to outwardly articulate the word of God in order for their sins to be forgiven, a precondition for shedding this disparaging label. The term implied the possession of an uncultivated body incapable of speaking and behaving in ways that accorded with acceptable Christian (and European) standards. Being able to marshal and verbalize the right words in prayer after conversion operated as a tangible sign that the Africans had truly converted. Heathen-ness, then, was a form of physical religious behavior that operated alongside the more conventional language of race based on subjective observations of “white” and “black” bodies.44

To reinforce the subtle interminglings of religion and race, Moravian letter writers often turned to the numbers. Johann Nicholas maintained that while “it is not in our power to mention the quantity” of African converts on Antigua, “our Master and Guardians will…inform you [of] the number of our Brothers and Sisters; but to our recollection, we thought it to be about fifteen or sixteen hundred Negroes, with us all in Congregation.” Having converts themselves inflate the numbers based upon a less rigorous definition of conversion added an additional layer of credibility to the missionary enterprise in that region. In closing, Nicholas affirmed that, “We are now with sincere conscience to our Savior, as we have join[ed] together to write this letter,

44 Ibid.
that we are endeavoring for our Salvation by the advice of our dear Masters.”\textsuperscript{45} The construction of the letter, the author’s words, and the deferential tone all seem to rhetorically embrace, both implicitly and explicitly, the author’s and his co-signer’s condition as slaves, praise those keeping them in bondage, and endorse the power dynamics of the master-slave relationship. While there is little evidence to suggest that Johann Nichols did not actually write this letter, the language and tone it contains makes it difficult to imagine that it was not edited quite substantially by the Moravian missionaries themselves. As such, this letter serves as evidence of Moravian cultures of communicative representation, as well as European notions of race, religion, and mission, not necessarily the thoughts and concerns of the African converts.

The next day, on July 26, 1774, a contingent of “poor black Sisters who are helpers” in Antigua composed another letter to the Unity Elders Conference. Echoing similar sentiments expressed by the African men, Hannah Tyffy expressed her “most hearty and tender Salutations” and gave “all [in the UEC] many many thousands thanks for all that you have done for us [by] Sending us Brothers and Sisters to live among us poor ignorant [b]lind bad people who was all darkness and did not know any thing but wickedness.”\textsuperscript{46} Though expressed in different words than those used by Johann Nicholas, Hannah employed the exact same embodied notion of cultural

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} UAH, R.15.D.b.15.a, Doc No. 110, Letter, Antigua, July 26, 1774, Hannah Tyffy (et al) to the Unity Elders Conference. There are actually six women signatories to this letter: Hannah Tyft, Sebinah Martin, Mary Nibbs, Priscilla Farley, Esther, and Nelly. For the sake of convenience I will refer to Hannah as the author of the letter because her name is listed first in the list of signatories.
backwardness by characterizing her own African religious culture and those who practice it as “poor,” “ignorant,” “bad,” and “blind.” Hannah’s notion of “heathenism” went one step further by applying the common rhetorical trope of “darkness,” utilized by many Europeans in this period, to the concept of Indigenous culture/s originating in Africa. Darkness, in this formulation, operates as an integrative concept that encompasses metaphorical blindness, lowness, and a general sense of disorder. The author also made explicit connections between cultural darkness, ignorance, sin, and depravity. Strengthening that point, Hannah continued, “but oh we [also] give our D[ear] Lord and Savior [a] thousand thanks and praise for all that he has done for us poor Sinners[,] how shall we thank and praise him enough.” Hannah did not make perfectly clear whether “Sinners” referred to all Christian believers in their struggle to maintain their personal relationship with Christ or to the Indigenous religious culture of the African converts. But her use of the term “poor Sinners,” in any case, does utilize the denigrative rhetorical work performed by this notion of “darkness” in its association with the condition of the unregenerate.47

Hannah’s deference, gratitude, and politeness, however, was not enough. She still had to conform to Moravian epistolary convention by demonstrating her own devotional piety in order for her words to have the desired effect upon the recipient of her letter. The guidance provided by the Moravian missionaries made the African sister’s “hearts…to[o] full” with love for Christ, “but not enough” for “we give him

47 Ibid.
our hearts that he may wash it in his most precious Blood and make it clean. We want to do everything to please him for he has done everything for us.” Full hearts still had to be ritually cleansed. Still, the blood of Christ in Hannah’s letter retains that sense of orthodox pious authority that sharply contradicts and contrasts with the “darkness” associated with African religious culture. The rhetorical change in the use of blood and wounds piety in this letter reflects an increasing confidence that Moravian missionaries exhibited as a result of extended experience working in the Atlantic world, and not anything specific to the beliefs of these female African converts themselves. The racial connotations of Hannah’s rhetoric also seem to reflect European understandings, not her own.

The outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775 slowed the flow of epistolary communication between Moravian mission sites in the Caribbean and the Unity Elders Conference in Europe. On the British American continent, transatlantic correspondence with Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and Wachovia, North Carolina virtually ceased for most of the war. The carnage experienced by the Moravians during the war had an isolating effect on many Moravian communities and had a significant effect upon Moravian epistolary practices and racial understandings. In late 1781, tensions between the colonial militia and groups of Lenape Native

48 Ibid.

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American Moravian congregants in Ohio, however, sparked a resurgence of transatlantic communication in North America. Reports about inter-ethnic tensions prompted by the war, which would culminate in the 1782 murder of 96 Lenape Moravian converts, disturbed the Moravians in Bethlehem quite profoundly. The way that Moravians in Bethlehem reported these occurrences to the Unity Elders Conference in Europe demonstrates the emergence of a new conceptual connection between religion, racial hierarchy, and the physical body that completely lacked any semblance of Moravian mysticism.

An extract of a letter from Fort Pitt, composed on November 24, 1781, copied in Philadelphia, and sent to Herrnhut, where it was received ten weeks later, provided details regarding the circumstances leading up to the murders. The movement of bodies collectively and the behavior of bodies individually constitute the two most important themes engaged by the author. Militia soldiers had observed the “taking… [of] three Moravian Indian Congregations” by the “Half King of the Wyandot [Huron] Nation,” who fought for the British during the American Revolution.

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51 I must acknowledge that this letter is the only primary source I have on this incident. The import of this letter for the purposes of my argument is less about what it says about the relocation and the massacre itself, and more about the manner in which these events are reported and the ways that the Hurons and the English Officers are described.
Offering a string of wampum as a sign that he had peaceful intentions, the Huron leader also sent the Moravian Indian congregations a “message that he intended to come to them with a great number of warriors [for their defense], but they should not be afraid, because he was their friend, and that he himself was coming along with the rest of his people.” The Moravian Indians agreed to this proposal and Huron warriors began arriving until “the 10th [of August] when their number was increased to 220.” Following their arrival in Gnadenhütten, the Huron convened three councils, each of which informed the Moravian Indians that “they would have to move away” from their land because they were “in their way and a great obstruction, when they [the Huron] were going to war.” Situated along the eastern bank of the Tuscarawa River, the Moravian Indian settlement occupied both a strategic land thoroughfare and waterway for transporting troops and supplies in the western theater of the Revolutionary War. In response, the elders of the Moravian Indian congregations “told them, that it was impossible for them, to move at this time and leave their Corn behind, for they and their children would perish with hunger in the Wilderness.” The Huron war chief did not show any sympathy. He “immediately began to kill their hogs and cattle and destroyed every thing, that came in their way.” In celebration of their victory, the Huron warriors “danced the War-dance [all night] and made a most shocking noise. All the good words, the old men so used to persuade them to leave
off, had no effect, but their entreaties to move them to humane behavior enraged [the Huron warriors] the more, and they grew worse every day.”

A second attempt to negotiate between the two groups also ended in failure as the Wyandot Chief “repeated the same Speech as before, and told [the Moravian Indians], that this would be the last time, that they would speak to them.” In response, “the Moravian Indians desired [the Wyandot], to have but a little Patience, that they might be able to gather their corn, and only permit them to live in their Towns this Winter.” The “Half King of the Wyandots” initially found this proposal agreeable, but the “English Officers that were in their Company, were much displeased,” and convinced the Wyandot “to begin to trouble [the Moravian Indians] anew.” This time, the Wyandot warriors “burned [the Indian Moravian’s] fences, drove their horses into the corn; and killed all the hogs and cattle that were left.” Captain Pipe, one of the English officers that accompanied the Wyandot, demanded that the Moravian Indians consent to relocate. In a brave act of passive physical defiance, the Moravian Indians decided to stay until the next spring, as they had originally intended.

At this point, the author of the letter finally revealed what he understood to be the real atrocity of this incident. Upon learning that the Moravian Indians intended to stay put, the Wyandot warriors took German Moravian missionaries David Zeisberger, William Edwards, John Hechenwalder, and Gottlob Senseman prisoner and “the whole Company of the Warriors made a terrible Cry and dragged them to

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their Camps.” After taking these prominent European Moravian missionaries hostage, the Wyandot warriors “went to the ministers house, broke open the door, and plundered every thing they found, what they did not like they destroyed entirely.” Even worse, two contingents of Wyandot warriors “set off for [the neighboring Ohio villages of] Shoenbrun and Salem, when they took Prisoners Mr. Youngman & his wife also the wife of Mr. Senseman and Mr. Zeisberger” and “some Indian women.” On September 1st, the Moravian hostages began a four week march through the wilderness until they reached the Wyandot stronghold in Sandusky Creek “where they ordered the poor Prisoners to stay. Mr. David Zeisberger and John Hechenwelder were to be sent off to Detroit.” In a message of solidarity with these European Moravian missionaries, the author laments that, “I am not able to make a Description of the distress they are in, neither clothes, provisions nor houses, and if God Almighty doth not in a particular manner provide for them, they must all perish with hunger and cold, for in that part where [the Huron warriors] settled them, there is nothing to be had: and it seems as if they were determined to starve them. If any body should have seen, how they have been treated, a heart of stone could not have been indifferent.”

White Moravian missionaries being placed in harm’s way constituted a much greater affront to the author’s European sensibilities than the continued harassment of the Native American convert congregation.

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53 Ibid.
After conveying his contempt for the behavior displayed by the Wyandot warriors in forcing these European captives (and, presumably, the rest of the Moravian Indian congregations in Gnadenhütten, Shoenbrunn, and Salem) to march through the back country of Ohio with little food or supplies, the author of this letter closed by sharply criticizing the behavior of the accompanying English officers. “There were in the [English] Company nine white men, dressed in the Indian way and painted, who really made an infernal appearance. Neither the Lamentations or Tears of the poor helpless Widows and Children, nor the cries of the distressed Women, could make an Impression on their minds, but [these men] would only mock and laugh at them.”

Unfortunately, ending this letter sent to the Moravian Church authorities in Herrnhut with an anecdote about the barbarity of the English officers also subtilely reinforced a generalized sense of cultural resistance toward non-European religious and social culture. Being “painted” and “dressed in the Indian way” highlighted Indigenous bodies as important markers of cultural difference by conjuring a troublesome image of backwardness and drawing on common European narratives of the savagery of Indigenous peoples. English military officers cross dressing in Native American garb only supported this notion of cultural prejudice. Such heartless cruelty perpetrated on helpless people, including women and children, could only be rationalized through the nonconformity to European cultural norms espoused by non-European peoples. The cross dressing metaphorically transferred

54 Ibid.
some of the culpability for the inhumane behavior to the alleged “savagery” of the Native Americans while simultaneously rendering the English officers culpable. The cross dressing also accentuated the plight of the European captives over and above the Native American converts who had just been violently removed from their homes and farmlands.

The cultural racism espoused by Moravians under the guise of toleration in the eighteenth century did, however, have other unexpected consequences. In the early 1780s, as hostilities connected with the war for independence began to wind down, Moravians worked to restore the normal lines and intervals of transatlantic communication to and from North America and the Caribbean. The content of the letters they wrote in the period after the American Revolution, however, changed quite dramatically. In similar fashion to the report about the removal of Indigenous Moravians in Ohio, physical bodies and their behavior, both of the Moravian missionaries and especially the converts in their charge, had taken over as the main objects of interest. John Montgomery, a British Moravian missionary born in Ireland, arrived on the island of Barbados on February 10, 1784. Like many of his European counterparts in this period, his body needed time to adjust to the new climate and environment in the Caribbean. During his “seasoning” period, Montgomery became very ill, first with an ailment he described as a “prickly heat,” a skin condition where rashes developed as a result of exposure to warm and hot temperatures, followed by several bouts with the “fever and ague,” a condition characterized by alternating
symptoms of fever and chills. His wife (whose name we do not know) took care of him during his illnesses before she also became “sickly” and “lost her appetite and all whatever she eats or drinks she throws up directly.” In addition to this “disagreeable disorder,” Montgomery reported that his wife also had “a stoppage about her Breast & Heart so that often the whole forenoon she pants & gasps for Breath, as if every Hour should be the last.” Montgomery cared for his wife so that for “3 weeks & upward I have not got one fourth nights rest together, but [I am] constantly up attending [to] her; & still my own Body is truly but very weakly, being scarce ever one day in any measure of common health.” Despite all of the illness, John and his wife rejoiced that “nothing but peace & love has reigned in our hearts one to another,” but even though Brother Deichen, their resident Moravian physician, “has used all his skill to help” his wife through her illness, it had all been “in vain & now she utterly refuses using any more Druggs.”

Montgomery’s heartfelt words supported a desperate plea to the Moravian Brethren of the UEC not to recall Dr. Deichen back to Europe. His detailed language about the physical conditions of both the island, himself, and his wife’s body represented an attempt to appeal to the humanistic sympathies of the members of the UEC, educate them about the emotional and bodily hardships involved in relocating to the New World in the service of God (which they surely knew already), and persuade them not to take away the only man who could help his wife. Physical

malady and bodily hardship operated as the primary persuasive rhetoric in the mission fields in the 1780s as opposed to the mystical rhetoric that pervaded missionary correspondence in previous decades. Local circumstances, however, dictated Montgomery’s refusal to follow the orders of the UEC to send Deichen back to Europe. “So Dear Brethren, if by this no[t] fulfilling of your orders I should even grieve you (which I should be very sorry to do), I beg you to forgive me for I have meant it for the best; but let not Br. Deichen be charged with being desirous of staying of his Choice, for he was full willing to go by the first opportunity: & please God to recover us, or even me a little, he will go as soon as possible.”

In this first letter written by John Montgomery as a missionary on the island of Barbados, God is merely an afterthought in his attempt to get the UEC to let someone with medical training remain in the Caribbean to perform the task of healing. The details of the physical illnesses they suffered take center stage and served to reinforce the immediate urgency of keeping the doctor on the island. Montgomery did not appeal to God to perform this task directly, which suggests an alteration in the spiritual thinking of Moravians in mission fields on the margins of the Atlantic world.

Montgomery’s correspondence with the UEC in the years immediately following his arrival indicate inflated expectations as to the difficulty of converting non-Europeans to Christianity. After proudly proclaiming that the Moravians had resumed preaching in Bridgetown and had recently baptized “one Negro woman there

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56 Ibid.
and one in the Country,” his review of the progress in the town where he and his wife lived was not quite as positive. “[W]hen I come to tell you Concerning our own place here in St. Thomases Parish, what shall I say - Lord have mercy, for I own I am quite at a loss what to say or think - for it is not alone that the Negroes here in this Neighborhood are Slack in Coming to hear [his preaching], but far more like as if they had made a League [against him] that they would not come.” Montgomery demonstrated a latent distrust of the Africans he had met since his arrival and conveyed a sense of surprise that they would not eagerly submit to his teaching and standards of attendance and behavior. He went and “begged numbers of them as the Greatest favor that they would come if but once to the meeting…if happily our Savior might get hold of their hearts by such opportunity.” His naiveté that it would only take one meeting to convince these Africans of the merits of Christianity — an optimism for quick conversions that was quite common among Christian missionaries of many denominations and confessions, Moravian or otherwise, in the New World — was based on an inherent misunderstanding of the status, condition, and mobility of the African slaves on the island. “They all acquiesce with all what one Says to them,” he wrote, “& promise to come, but they mean it not so; for we see no more of them.” Montgomery took the lack of attendance of these potential converts as a personal insult to himself and deflected his own failings and lack of experience onto
the Africans by drawing on traditional cultural biases against non-European peoples. He also, noticeably, did not fault the institution of slavery for their absence.\(^{57}\)

The absence of Africans at his religious meetings caused Montgomery great distress to the point that he briefly pondered whether “we are quite in the wrong place here in St. Thomases [Parish] - for I cannot gather that even there has been the least real awakening here” because “formerly many came to the meetings.” But the physical behavior of the few Africans that did show some interest in hearing his message also greatly disturbed him. “We have here on our place 4 Negroes…Esther’s husband, who is a Mason & Still lived in [the] country, has taken another wife: & consequently we must exclude him from the H[oly] Comm[union], but he has not come near her or us since he did this. His name is Jacob: & Esther lives on our place.”\(^{58}\) By excluding Jacob from the communion service, Montgomery foreshadowed just what kind of missionary he would become. Tolerance for alternative beliefs about the sanctity of marriage was not an issue on which he or the Moravian mission program could tolerate or compromise. The relative lack of detail and nonchalance with which Montgomery reports this incident with Esther and Jacob to the UEC points toward the non-controversial nature of his intolerance on this point.

The UEC in Herrnhut responded to Montgomery’s letter in October 1784. The content of Montgomery’s report caused Samuel Liebisch some measure of surprise because “[i]t contained, to be sure, more matter of grief than of joy.” Members of the

\(^{57}\) Ibid.
\(^{58}\) Ibid.
Moravian mission board had become accustomed to receiving positive reports from Atlantic world mission stations. Responding in both German and English, in order to allow both Montgomery (who could not read German) and the other Moravian missionaries on Barbados to read it, Liebisch immediately addressed the issue of bodily illness, which caused the members of the UEC “much sympathizing pain.” But Liebisch took this opportunity to clarify the position of the Moravian Church with regard to the evolving relationship between mystical and worldly power in order to restore the power of Christ into Montgomery’s explanations of his and his wife’s physical health. “May our dear Savior, who is also the Physician of our Body, look graciously upon You [referring directly to Montgomery and his wife] and restore Your Health, that You may joyfully prosecute Your Call.” Christ oversaw physical repairs to the human body first and foremost, not human doctors with medical training. Yet the UEC also acknowledged the influence of humans in this process because Montgomery had “rightly judged, that in such Circumstances [they] could have no objection to Br. Deichens staying with [Montgomery]. But if You should recover Your Health, he will, according to the former direction given him, return to Europe.” In correcting Montgomery’s neglect of God in the characterization of his predicament, the UEC exposed a subtle rift in conceptions of personal piety between Moravians in the Old World and those in the New.

Liebisch then responded to the difficulties reported by Montgomery regarding compelling the attendance of local Africans at their religious meetings. In 1784, after over fifty years of Atlantic world missionary activity, the difficulties outlined by Montgomery seemed commonplace and little cause for concern. “We can easily imagine, how painful it must be to You, after having begged the Negroes, to come to the meeting, to see none of them come after all. But nevertheless we cannot directly agree with Your opinion that You are not in the right place.” Learning to appeal properly to the local population in order to get them to listen to the Moravian message was as much a part of the seasoning process for missionaries as the bodily illnesses Montgomery and his wife experienced. Instead of rashly moving the location of one of the mission settlements on Barbados, the UEC implored Montgomery to “patiently await, what our Savior pleases to do. He will certainly send a new time of gracious Visitation among the poor Negroes.” For Moravians in Europe, God would succeed where Montgomery had failed. The same was true with regard to,

[That particular circumstance, You mention touching the Negro Jacob, who You was obliged to exclude from the Holy Communion. [It] gave us likewise much pain. […] You say: ‘meanwhile be sure, amidst all Grievances we are here [in Barbados] with our whole hearts, of only our gracious Lord can have that Satisfaction to see that we answer his aim with us, in our Call measure.’ May our Dear Savior establish You more & more in that mind. Look upon him in every pain and trouble, and recommend the poor Heathen to his merciful Heart with tears & prayers.

As a method of comforting Montgomery and urging him to trust God when he experienced adversity in his mission with the Africans on Barbados, Liebisch reminded him “that other Brethren on our Missions have experienced the like before
& yet our Savior has at last let them see rich fruit." In other words, he should be patient and rely upon both Jesus and the Moravian transatlantic network to provide guidance and solutions to his problems regarding the behavior of the Africans on the island.

All the problems reported by and concerning Montgomery prompted Liebisch to reiterate the central importance of fully utilizing the Moravian Atlantic world correspondence network to resolve local issues. “The more difficulties arise on any Mission, the more necessary it is, to keep up a diligent correspondence concerning the Course of it with the UÄC [the Unity Elders Conference] that we may be able to assist You with our good advice.” Unintentionally foreshadowing events to come, Liebisch advised Montgomery to exercise caution in his interactions with the African slaves on Barbados. “[L]et it be your concern, as much as lies in your power to prosecute Your Call faithfully. Go to seek the poor Negroes, lay hold of them with love, & improve every opportunity to tell them a Word of our Savior. If they will not receive Your Word one time, they will perhaps another time & thus You will have the joy, to gain them for our Savior. Love one another fervently, and exhort one another daily.” However, as the following analysis will demonstrate, historians have taken this language of caring benevolence too literally in characterizing Moravian missionaries as racially tolerant and sympathetic to the plight of their African converts.

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60 Ibid.
Plantations in the Caribbean, where Moravian missionaries went to try to establish relationships with African slaves and get them to attend their religious meetings, bred violence and brutal inhumanity through the treatment of slaves by English slave owners and the strenuous, backbreaking nature of the work involved in cultivating cash crops like sugar.\textsuperscript{61} The missionaries regularly witnessed barbaric acts of cruelty that they occasionally reported, in an offhand manner, to the UEC. Overtime, however, the way that the missionaries related these experiences, combined with the deep-seated cultural aversion to Indigenous African religious beliefs and social customs, complicates the accepted historical assumption that Moravians did not engage in racially motivated violence. John Montgomery, though exceptional with regard to the directness of the descriptions of his actions and behavior to the UEC, was one of these unfortunate cases. His story reveals the complexity of early modern Moravians’ conscious commitment to alternative racial hierarchies in making all souls, whether European or non-European, equal, while unconsciously reinforcing more traditional racial hierarchies espoused by most other Europeans in the New World through descriptions of physical characteristics. Bodily features and behavior

\textsuperscript{61} The historical literature documenting the violence and barbarity perpetrated on African slaves in the Caribbean and the strenuous nature of sugar cultivation in this region is quite detailed. For a disturbingly accurate portrayal of the violent tendencies of white elites in this region, see Trevor Burnard, \textit{Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Afro-Jamaican World} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Burnard argues convincingly that the ability of the white elite to maintain their power over African slaves in the Caribbean relied on their capacity for violence. For one of the standard works on the development of plantation slavery and sugar cultivation in the English Caribbean, see Richard Dunn, \textit{Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972).
continued to shape how the missionaries conceptualized the spiritual condition of African souls.

Montgomery thought of himself as a characteristically tolerant Moravian missionary who cared for the souls of local Africans on Barbados as much as his own. In a letter to Samuel Liebisch in August 1784, Montgomery made clear that his exclusive purpose on Barbados was to “remove those lets and hinderances which have hitherto stood in the way, and have kept the poor Negroes from coming to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.” One of the biggest “hinderances” consisted of the “base inclinations” of the Africans, “whether in wrathful revenge, or gratifying the flesh and in these points they excel.” Montgomery did not observe “any sign of remorse” for what he believed was vulgar physical behavior, but he also did not believe that the fault for this behavior lay entirely with the Africans themselves. The Africans, “when one speaks with them concerning the need…of having our Sinful & Guilty Souls washed in the Cleansing Blood of God our Creator…acquiesce, & own it all to be true.” However, “at the Same time I Believe they [referring to the African slaves] rather in their hearts join in with & imbibe the Delusive Spirit which actuates their overseers the white[s]: who are Called Christians.” With this statement, Montgomery disrupts two central dynamics of religious and social life in the Caribbean and the larger Atlantic world. First, the real culprits in this instance are the “whites” who merely posed as Christians. Montgomery blamed white people in general, like himself, for the corruption of African souls in a place where notions of
white superiority functioned as the most important organizer of social relations. Second, contrary to the common Protestant narrative of the innate depravity of the body, Montgomery faulted the soul’s power to delude for “actuating” the wicked behavior of whites and deceiving the souls of the Africans. Despite their supposedly immoral “base inclinations,” Montgomery did not think Africans were innately depraved beings. White people played a key role in contributing to their perceived spiritual delinquency. Observing the actions of bodies, however, provided the physical evidence that allowed him to negatively assess the influence of the souls involved. Montgomery also implied that the slaves “imbibed the delusive spirit” willingly with no acknowledgement of their lack of freedom to choose, which suggests a much more ambivalent stance regarding the physical destructiveness of the master-slave relationship. In any case, Moravian missionaries clearly did not think about bodies and souls as intrinsically separate entities. The behavior of bodies structured how Moravians determined the spiritual disposition and moral orientation of both European and African souls.

Moravian transatlantic communication reveals much about how religion, race, gender, and sexuality intersected and became entangled in the mission field. In June 1785, John Montgomery reported that he needed advice on how to handle a situation with an older African man he called ‘Brother Semion.’ Semion had been baptized and worked for the missionaries at their settlement in the village of St. Thomas.

62 UAH, R.15.E.b.10.a, Doc No. 211, Letter, Barbados, August 1784 (exact date not included on original), John Montgomery to the Unity Elders Conference.
Montgomery reported that Semion started going “out to the plantations…under the pretense of getting Molasses or Sweetening; but upon inquiring we find that all the money he can gather for fowls, &c: he buys Spirits therewith & gets frequently Drunk.” While this allegedly deceptive and wanton behavior clearly violated Moravian standards of proper conduct for a man who claimed to have truly given himself to Christ, Montgomery also stipulated that, “the Managers of [the English plantations] have their particular pleasure in Giving, as they say, the Negro Belonging [to] the parson Spirits to make him Drunk; this is frequent, yea Common.” Despite knowing this, Montgomery believed the fault lay entirely with Semion for this behavior because he had “repeatedly warned [Semion] with tears[,] [but] his Desire for the Drink carries him so far, that he tells me if he does not get it, he must Die.”

Montgomery constructed Semion’s compulsion for alcohol as the result of a flawed or defective spirit, one that did not possess the ability to alter or prevent his sinful behavior.

Montgomery characterized Semion’s actions as calling into question the limits of acceptable bodily behavior with regard to the eligibility of a relatively recent convert to participate in Moravian communion services. In the process, he revealed a proclivity for violence and intolerance that lurked in the depths of his own soul. Following the first Communion Sunday service after he became aware of Semion’s problem with alcohol, Montgomery noticed that Semion “went Directly from the

63 Ibid.
Comm[union] & spent the afternoon [drinking] & came home late & Drunk.” Upon Semion’s return, Montgomery chastised him so sharply that, “for a whole year [afterward] he never went out on a Comm[union] Sunday.” Still, Montgomery did not believe that Semion’s spiritual fortitude was equal to his own because at “other times he Steals off and none can hinder [him] Except [when] they take their whips, which I have never tried, & I wish never to be Drove thereto.” The effects of living in such a violent environment had begun to manifest in the person of Montgomery. Though he expressed some apprehensions about the barbarity of the practice of whipping, he also did not reject the practice entirely. African slaves still retained the ability to ‘drive’ him to such an act. Seeing slaves being whipped for minor infractions on a regular basis clearly made a deep impression on him. It was not, unfortunately, an impression that drove him to repudiate racially motivated violence against African slaves.

This incident caused personal conflict and “a sense of loss” for Montgomery because Semion was otherwise “a Negro that does faithfully what he is bid in general, and this is rare to be found in any Negro here, unless one is over them.”

Montgomery confirmed that he possessed at least a rudimentary understanding of the institution of slavery and the dynamics of the master-slave relationship. Semion both behaved according to Montgomery’s preconceived notion of how a willing and submissive slave-convert should behave and, simultaneously, contradicted that

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
understanding and prejudice. Montgomery was not critiquing Semion’s choices.\textsuperscript{66} He was concerned with what Semion ‘did’ (“does faithfully”). In other words, Semion’s behavior both confirmed and denied Montgomery’s expectations about how the body of a “true convert” who was worthy of receiving the body and blood of Christ should act. Thus, the sanctity and integrity of the sacrament of the Holy Communion in the mission field depended upon deeply ingrained notions of both acceptable and unacceptable bodily behavior that made potential communicants either worthy or unworthy of participating in the most central Christian ritual of spiritual renewal.

The interplay between religion, racial distinctions, and bodily behavior became even more complex and salient with regard to how Moravian missionaries understood African women communicants and issues of sexuality. Moravians on the island of Barbados distinguished between “Negros” and “Mallotos,” characterizing the latter as overly sexed because of their status as mixed-race individuals. “Another matter which from the Beginning has troubled us here is that in regard to Malottos,” Montgomery wrote in June 1785, “you well know, Brothers, that in this Island the white men use Malotto women as their concubines, but yet the Law will not admit them to marry.” Connecting the issue of concubinage with the lack of ability of the pair to marry by law in Barbados implies that Montgomery initially viewed this as a religious matter. Race, however, quickly took over as his most immediate concern.

\textsuperscript{66} It is debatable how much choice Semion actually had with regard to his alcoholism because of the fact that the English plantation bosses were providing him with alcohol and getting him drunk for their own entertainment in a horrifying display of disregard for Semion’s physical health.
“[H]ow is this [situation] to be treated among us”? he asked the UEC. “Can a Malotto who is a Communicant Sister, in this way take up with a white Man who perhaps keeps her for a month, or a year, or for life[?] It may happen, tho Seldom ever is the Case.”

Interracial sex was much more problematic for Moravians than for the English because the Moravians strove to view it in spiritual terms. Montgomery offered an African woman named Christian, whom he had tried to mentor, as an example of this dynamic. Christian converted to Christianity under Montgomery’s direct pastoral supervision and had lived a pious Christian life according to his standards. This “Malotto S[iste]r [referring to Christian],” however, “who is a Communicant has had 3 white men; one is dead; another is married to a wife, and the third has her now as he pleases.” Montgomery’s discomfort with these inter-racial relationships, despite his tacit acknowledgement that Christian did not initiate or consent to the sexual contact, was rooted in his understanding that they could not, by law, end in marriage and the fact of his general distrust of Africans. Historians have long recognized the role that racial stereotypes played in both restricting African sexuality in the Caribbean while also allowing for the sexual exploitation of female slaves. Unfortunately, sleeping with white men, regardless of the circumstances, was not Christian’s only offense.


Montgomery’s immediate purpose in raising the issue of Christian’s illicit sexual history was to explain how the details of this case had profound religious implications for Christian’s daughters and their eligibility for membership in the Moravian Church. “[M]y present point in view is: this Same woman [Christian] has two Daughters, I may say both white though slaves, they have both had white men but they [have] left them; & they want my consent to take up with others.” Despite these circumstances, Christian’s daughters wanted the Moravian missionaries “to receive them as they are Baptized in the Church of England as infants.” Montgomery briefly added that, “no Malotto will take up with a Negro” and about these matters he requested the advice of the UEC. “Shall we think of receiving people in such Situation or Shall we forbear?” The racial/sexual dynamics on the island, according to John Montgomery, consisted of a situation where African women would engage in sexual relationships with white (presumably European) men and vice versa. But mixed-race people, though he perceived Christian’s daughters as “white,” would not engage in sexual relationships with “Negros.” Partial whiteness, for Montgomery, engendered a sexual desire only for other white people. Sexual preferences were at least partially governed by, though certainly linked to, his understanding of physically raced bodies. Montgomery does not appear to be concerned about the social status of the individuals who engaged in these relationships, whether free or unfree. And his concern for the illicit (i.e. ‘unmarried’) nature of these relationships is only implied.

Montgomery’s repeated emphasis on complexion, on whether the persons involved were “white,” “negro,” or “malotto,” suggests that race constituted the primary issue that prompted his question to the UEC. Race, in other words, played a clear, if still vague and undefined, role in the process of determining who could and could not be received in Christian fellowship by the missionaries and the Moravian Church.

In similar fashion to Rosena sixteen years earlier on the island of Antigua, Christian’s sexual history bore direct relevance for the religious standing of her children. Christian’s history as a concubine (by Moravian standards) would normally have precluded the reception of her daughters as ordinary Christian communicants. However, despite his reservations about interracial sexual relationships, Montgomery offered Christian’s history as an otherwise loyal Moravian communicant and the Anglican baptism of her daughters in their infancy as potentially mitigating factors that might allow him to include them in the Moravian congregation. The combination of race, interracial relationships, mixed-race individuals, as well as both pre- and extra-marital sexuality all coalesce in this case in a way that made spiritual judgments about Christian and her daughters very difficult. Yet, by raising the issue and explaining this case to Samuel Liebisch and the Unity Elders Conference, he demonstrated, at the very least, a willingness to overlook the potentially troubling factors if it meant welcoming more African Christians into the Moravian congregation. That willingness probably stemmed from the impulse, on the part of Moravian missionaries, to consciously privilege souls over and above raced bodies.
Still, the way Montgomery articulated the specifics of this case also reveals important insight about how Moravian missionaries in the New World thought about and navigated the complex inter-relationships between racial and sexual prejudice, religion, and their calling as missionaries. Perceptions of the bodily behavior of African people mattered intensely with regard to who could be personal eligibility to partake in the Christian sacraments, and thus be received into the Moravian congregation of believers. Bodies also mattered in the context of properly articulating the specifics of these devotional and sacramental grey areas as a method of communicating the need for assistance in adjudicating matters of great importance in the mission field.

Five months later, in November 1785, Montgomery received a response to his inquiries from the UEC in Herrnhut. First taking up the case of Brother Semion’s alcoholism, Liebisch relayed the UEC’s stance that,

> no Negro, whether he be hired or bought, should in Case he steals things to buy spirits [alcohol] therewith and to get himself drunk, be left unpunished. Though to have recourse to such Discipline is painful, yet if Negroes are disobedient, and behave themselves naughtily, it is often indispensably necessary.

Semion was, first and foremost, a “Negro,” a blanket term that grouped all peoples of African descent together based upon skin color and denoted a debased social status, regardless of whether they were free or enslaved, as the primary signifiers of difference to the members of the UEC in Herrnhut. In stark contrast, Montgomery, despite his own prejudices, strove to view these situations through the lens of religion and emphasized the spiritual and moral implications of Semion’s behavior in the form...
of his drinking habits and his alleged commission of theft to support those habits. Liebisch, writing under the express authority of the Unity Elders Conference, attributed the whole situation to an innate nature of deception and depravity inherent in all Africans, one that included their native souls.\textsuperscript{70}

Generalizing in this way betrayed deep-seated racial prejudices harbored by Moravians, both in the mission fields and back in Europe, that were not limited to, though certainly connected with, their physical bodies. Generalizing even further, the UEC argued that the Africans “are apt, if connived at, to carry their Excesses further, and it generally has no good End.” Africans, whether they were paid for their work or bought as slaves, whether they behaved as otherwise good Christian communicants or heathen savages, had to be physically restrained or otherwise punished because of the depraved nature of their African-ness and for specific offenses for which white Moravian missionaries were only verbally reprimanded. Though the letter does not say so explicitly, it is reasonable to assume that the UEC tacitly alluded to some form of bodily punishment for Semion given Liebisch’s apologetic rhetoric that the implementation of physical discipline might be “painful” for the missionaries who administered it. In addition to being subjected to physical punishment for his behavior, the UEC declared that Semion “cannot be admitted to the Holy

\textsuperscript{70} UAH, R.15.E.b.10.a, Doc No. 217, Herrnhut, November 19, 1785, Samuel Liebisch to John Montgomery.
Communion.” The nature of Semion’s physical conduct, in other words, constituted the determining factor in declaring his soul unfit to receive the sacrament.

Having pronounced judgment on the issue regarding Brother Semion, Liebisch turned to the UEC’s decision on the matter of Sister Christian. Opting again to respond in general terms, the UEC gave the following answer:

[A]ll Malottos, who with their whole hearts are converted to our Savior…may be received into the fellowship of the Believers, as well as Negroes. […] If any one, who still persists in his sinful ways, offers himself for reception, or is offered for it by others, you are to give proper notice, that in such a Case nothing is to be done by us, except [if/when] a true Changement of the heart is perceived. For far be it from us, that we should baptize Heathens, or admit them to the Holy Communion, who still cleave to their sinful and heathenish Customs. This would be a Shame to the Doctrine of Jesus.

Contrary to Montgomery’s understanding, the UEC declared the sexual practices of Christian, the mother, irrelevant to her daughters’s eligibility to receive the sacraments. They also tacitly declared the prior baptism of her daughters irrelevant, as well. Christian’s daughters could not be baptized, admitted to partake in the Holy Communion, or allowed in any other way to be received further into the Moravian congregation because they continued to “persist in [their] sinful ways” and “cleave to their sinful and heathenish Customs.” The Moravian Church could not deem these daughters as wholly converted to Christ, nor perceive “a true Changement of the[ir] heart” because they still desired Montgomery’s “consent to take up with others.” This Moravian notion of concubinage strongly implied that the missionaries believed Christian’s daughters willingly participated in these interracial relationships and, thus,

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71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
the blame for their actions lay with them. Once again, the conduct of bodies revealed
the spiritual state of the soul.

In casting them aside, the Moravian administrators at the UEC demonstrated
that perceptions of the past behavior of these African women actually mattered more
than whether their souls could (or should) be saved. The spiritual integrity of the
Moravian Church took precedence over any potential physical harm that could come
to Christian’s two daughters. The body of the Church was more important than the
bodies and souls of these women. Wanting to find more suitable partners and have/
protect children they may or may not already have was not enough to move the
Moravian council to grant Christian’s daughters access to the Church, despite their
prior Christian baptisms as infants and their clear desire for religious instruction. The
appearance of toleration in the instructions that all “may be received into the
fellowship of the Believers, as well as Negroes” actually only applied under highly
specific circumstances. In principle, the UEC advocated that “those Souls, who have
once been attracted by Grace [be given] the most strict attention, continually
following them with Love and Tenderness, yea even to win over the Apostate with
Patience…. Only You will do well, if You let all possible caring for them, by way of
loving Intreatment and Admonition, take place, before you have recourse to severer
methods.”73 But leaving the door open to physical violence by sending these mixed

73 Ibid.

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messages always carried the potential for negative consequences. John Montgomery became one of these unfortunate cases.

Over the course of only two years, Montgomery changed from being a naive young missionary with grand aspirations of prompting religious conversions en masse, into a bitter and callous member of a slave society with violent tendencies.\footnote{I use the term “slave society” in the sense that Ira Berlin defined it in his \textit{Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America} (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), as a society with a large slave population where violence was used as a tactic to inspire fear and reinforce the power dynamics of the master-slave relationship.}

Six months after Liebisch’s reply, Montgomery wrote again to Herrnhut in order to “put into words…my poor heart felt Shame, Pain, & Joy” at the answer he had received from the UEC. In the intervening time, a new issue had since arisen with their “Negroe Quashey.”\footnote{UAH, R.15.E.b.10.a, Doc No. 217, Herrnhut, November 19, 1785, Samuel Liebisch to John Montgomery.}

Quashey is Certainly one of the most hardened Negroes that is to be found. He has of late took up with another woman besides his wife and his wife is far gone with the Second Child to him. Now the woman with whom he has took up with has already had 3 Children to different men Each: he had gone after her a good while before we Could find it out: though we suspected him as we often saw him go to the place where she lived. But still he denied [it]. I th[e]n kept Close watch in the Evenings: to find out if She came to him.\footnote{Ibid.}

Moral reservations about Quashey and his lover’s private sexual activity prompted Montgomery to take the step of staking out Quashey’s home in hopes of catching the woman sneaking in to be with him. After many nights of keeping watch, Montgomery reported that:

one Evening at 11 o’clock, after we was long gone to Bed, our dogs jumped out with furey. I got up directly and called out at the window ‘who is there.’ Our Quashey answered ‘it is no Body but my wife, Master.’ ‘Oh,’ Says I, ‘that is all good.’ So I

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went & lay down again, but I grew so uneasy that I could not lie let be to sleep, so I said to my wife ‘something is wrong about our house.’ [...] Accordingly, I went out & named Quashey’s wife and asked if She was there twice, but got no word answer.\textsuperscript{77}

Suspecting that Quashey was attempting to deliberately deceive him about the presence of his mistress instead of his wife, Montgomery immediately resorted to physical threats:

So then I offered breaking up the Door if they did not answer Directly. So then that Strumpet was obliged to come forth. I told her I will not beat you this time, but after this, the first time I Catch you on our place after 8 o’clock in the Evening, I will Cut the flesh from your Bones. I also told Quashey that before he offered to Carrey onSuch practices on our place, he should first have killed me: for I had thousand times Sooner Suffer Death than Suffer Such things knowingly.\textsuperscript{78}

Quashey’s illicit sexual relationships had powerful religious implications, both for the state of Quashey’s soul and that of Montgomery and his family. Montgomery felt so strongly about this matter that he preferred physical death to living with the knowledge that adulterous behavior (by his standards) was taking place so close to himself and his family. Quashey, in an act of courage given the threats he had just received, told Montgomery exactly how he felt, which did not help matters.

He said Directly [to me] ‘Why Master I am not yet a Christian, nor do I want to be.’ Well answered I him: ‘to follow the Devil I Cannot hinder you if you will do it, but your [sic] bringing more miseries of his on our place to Serve him: in the Strength of my God I Shall hinder, should it cost your life. For the first time I Ever find out the like again, I will tie you and whip you very near to Death, if not all out.’\textsuperscript{79}

Montgomery thought violence was warranted in this situation because of Quashey’s unwillingness to accept the message of Christ, which equated to colluding directly with the devil. Quashey was free to engage in these sinful practices, but not to do so

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
near Montgomery’s wife and family because it exposed them to the “miseries” of the devil by sheer proximity. For this offense, Quashey was subject to bodily harm and death, which Montgomery must have known would have been condoned by the Slave Codes on the island of Barbados.

While Montgomery only threatened Quashey and his wife with bodily harm, though in hideously graphic fashion, he went one step further with another African slave woman he called “Old Susannah.” Noticing that Susannah, “had got a young Negro man who came to her house at nights till we found it out,” Montgomery wrote, we spoke with her but in vain [because] She denied it quite. So then I watched her house till I found him one morning just at the Break of day coming out of her house. In Short, I was so irritated that I told him I would not kill him. But if I found him on our place after 8 o’clock at night till the sun was up in the Morning, as sure as I found him: [I] would Shoot his leggs away from him, that he should walk no more.80

The threats worked because the African man “came no more.” But Susannah defended the man and “made him a victim” when Montgomery talked to her about the incident. And in an act of brave defiance, Susannah subsequently “stole…away to him” again. This time, however, Montgomery retaliated with actual violence. He “gave her three Slaps with the whip,” after which “she gave over for a time.”

Susannah, however, was an African woman with strong convictions and “began to do again as before.” As a result, Montgomery “gave her Six Strokes with the whip, but indeed this time I gave them with good will.”81

80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
In Montgomery’s warped version of reality, these threats of violence and acts of actual violence constituted benevolence. He meant them as honest attempts to save these African slaves from the fires of hell. He expressed no remorse for his actions and the only reason he did not take the violence further (or, at least, he did not report any further use of physical violence to the UEC) was because he feared Susanna “would have gone” away from the Moravian mission. Montgomery learned the wrong lesson from this and other incidents, however, because in his mind his actions worked. By “the next Comm[union]” Susannah “acknowledged her fault, so we let her go again to the H[oly] Comm[union] with us.” Even worse, as a result of all these occurrences, Montgomery began to notice that his relationships with African converts had dramatically improved and the Africans seemed to miraculously begin behaving according to his expectations. “Old Simeon has in General gone on much better since I wrote you.” “Esther, who also lives on our place, goes on as well as we could Expect.” Susannah “has not gone near [her lover] this long while.” “And our Communicant Negroes from without [meaning those Africans that did not live at or near the Moravian mission] is all in as Good a Course and much Better than we Could have Expected.” It never entered Montgomery’s mind that his threats and use of bodily violence caused this dramatic reversal, not the divine intervention of a benevolent, but strict, God.82

82 Ibid.
The incidents of violence Montgomery described in his letters are, admittedly, exceptional in the surviving documentary record and even highly unusual in the larger context of the Moravian epistolary correspondence network between their Atlantic world missions. In one sense, Montgomery seems like an outlier in a Moravian mission program populated mostly by much more tolerant, experienced, and successful missionaries. Even the few missionaries working on the island of Barbados with Montgomery did not like him very much. But many Moravian missionaries, in fact, shared his prejudices, though they did not commit them to paper in such graphic terms. And yet, there is reason to suspect that these were not completely isolated incidents. Liebisch wrote, in reply to Montgomery’s “Letter of May 11th,” that “there is nothing in Your Letter, which requires a particular Answer; yet we find several things mentioned therein, which deserve Attention, and for which we are very thankful to God our Savior.” Contrary to the previous response Montgomery received, the UEC seemed to think the Moravian mission on Barbados had begun to prosper. In fact, Liebisch praised the recent conduct of the Moravian missionaries, expressing his approbation that “you lived and laboured together in brotherly love; that you have all been well in health; that (and this is particularly agreeable) you have some Prospect for your chief vocation, which is to win Souls for our Savior,” no

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83 UAH R.15.E.b.10.a, Doc No. 239, Barbados, August 21, 1790, Haman and Fritz to Missions Department of the UEC. Haman and Fritz begin to notice that Montgomery has begun to acquire large amounts of rum. They believed the amount of rum to be more than for personal consumption, though they did not comment further. In the context of a letter to the UEC, this constitutes a subtle attempt to defame Montgomery’s character.
matter the cost. Montgomery’s behavior toward these Africans did not cause the members of the UEC any feelings of apprehension, regret, or unease. In fact, the mission board all but explicitly sanctioned his behavior as a necessary measure for the physical and spiritual upkeep of the mission. The only offense consisted in the disorder to home and spirit caused by the behavior of the Africans.

Liebisch’s deafening silence on the issue of Montgomery’s violent tendencies suggests that African and Indigenous bodies mattered in very specific contexts. In contrast to their understanding in previous decades, where the body operated as a central site of religious empowerment and expression for all Moravians, by the 1780s and 1790s, the body had reverted to a more equivocal obstacle to true faith in Christ for those not of European descent. The embodied mysticism that injected so much meaning and vigor into all aspects of Moravian religious life at mid-century had all but completely disappeared. No longer did Moravian missionaries expend so much effort attributing the setbacks they inevitably experienced on their journeys in the Atlantic world exclusively to God in an eminently positive manner that emphasized Christ as a mysterious teacher, an authoritative leader, or a benevolent mother. Human bodies remained central to God’s work in the world, but they had transformed into highly significant impediments to healthy souls and possessed the dangerous potential to hinder the spiritual progress of the Savior, rather than further it.

UAH, R.15.E.b.10.a, Doc No. 222, Letter, Herrnhut, November 2, 1786, Samuel Liebisch to John Montgomery. The parenthetical in this quote appears in the original.
THIS CHAPTER has examined in some detail the most negative and deep-seated cultural biases harbored by Moravian missionaries as a method of revealing the unconsciously performative nature of their epistolary correspondence network from multiple settlement and mission sites in the Atlantic world. To be sure, for every unfortunate example contained herein there are an equal number of positive successes reported by these same missionaries and many, many others. The negative examples, especially the incidents with Quashey and Susannah, however, demonstrate that racial considerations figured quite prominently in how Moravian missionaries articulated religious matters relating to the soul. The comportment of bodies constructed not only the spiritual fitness of the believer/actors themselves, but also carried consequences for the spiritual vitality of those around them.

These cases also place in striking relief how the nature of the body had transformed over a relatively short period of time. The body remained a central and determinative aspect of Moravian religious culture, practice, and experience. While the number of successful converts certainly implied a sufficient measure of proper bodily behavior on the part of the African and Indigenous communicants, the level of detail that missionaries like Johann Nicholas, Heinrich Meyer, and John Montgomery employed to describe the errant behavior of certain converts suggests that they felt compelled to justify their discontent to the UEC in ways that were not necessary for other, more positive or banal, matters. The tepid (to say the least) nature of the UEC’s
responses to these physically descriptive reports, and the UEC’s complete lack of any kind of formal reprimand for the behavior of intolerant missionaries, indicates that, officially, the Moravian Church clung to prevailing traditions that privileged European bodies over those of the African and Indigenous peoples they sought to bring into the Christian fold. In any case, bodies played a significant role in how Moravians constructed their reality and spirituality in the early modern world.

The contents of Moravian epistolary correspondence reveal the deeply conflicted nature of the Moravian mission enterprise on both sides of the Atlantic. Contrary to the prevailing historiographic narrative about Moravian missionaries that stresses their tolerance and cultural understanding, these letters reveal that Moravians navigated personal, professional, and institutional goals, agendas, biases, and prejudices that implicated notions of religious bodies in conflicting ways. It is, however, simply not true Moravians did not see, understand, incorporate, or articulate notions of physical and cultural race as salient aspects of their religious and social identities.

Moravians shared many of the racial biases possessed by other European groups and both actively participated in the institution of slavery and passively condoned it by not fighting or even speaking against it. The Moravian Church and individual believers in settlement communities and mission stations in places like Pennsylvania, North Carolina, the Danish and English West Indies, as well as in Dutch Surinam and Guinea owned slaves and exploited their labor because of the
color of their skin. Jon Sensbach was not wrong to argue that Moravians “were not interested in the physical aspects of racial identity in the way the [Enlightenment] philosophes were.” They may not have been consciously interested in that intellectual project, but notions of physicality and bodily behavior both explicitly and implicitly informed the ways Moravians imagined and performed their understanding of the cultural, religious, and social differences between themselves and their African and Indigenous charges. To neglect these racialized notions of the physical body that lurked below the literal surface outside of the direct oversight of the Moravian Church leadership in order to proclaim the Moravians more tolerant based on their familiarity and reciprocity with non-European peoples essentially erases the negative aspects of these interactions, negates the influence of the missionaries and ordinary Moravian believers in this process, and denies the power of correspondence in the distribution of these notions back and forth across the Atlantic. Moravians saw race and used race in their daily lives. They just did not think they did.

85 Jon Sensbach, “Race and the Early Moravian Church: A Comparative Perspective,” Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society, Vol. 31 (2000): 1-10. In another piece, Sensbach argued that Moravians and their notions of race should be set with the context of an early modern duality between “their disdain for the modern world and their need to act within it.” He also correctly pointed out that the Moravian Church had adopted a “militant pro-slavery” stance by the late 1780s, though he still believes that Moravians were not interested in physical distinctions of race. For these arguments, see Sensbach, “Slavery, Race, and the Global Fellowship: Religious Radicals Confront the Modern Age,” in Pious Pursuits: German Moravians in the Atlantic World, ed. Michelle Gillespie and Robert Beachy (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 223-238. For Sensbach’s groundbreaking work on the Moravians and the emergence of African Christianity in the Atlantic world, see also, idem, Rebecca’s Revival (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); idem, A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

86 Sensbach, “Race and the Early Moravian Church,” 2, 1-10.
Moravian notions of mystical and physical bodies, though important in their own right as an element of early modern religiosity, also constitute necessary context for accurately examining public opposition to the Moravians. Moravian believers, as the analysis thus far has tacitly shown, did not understand, comport, nor proclaim themselves to be religious radicals. The British and German Protestant public on both sides of the Atlantic, however, thought otherwise. Moving in this direction, the next chapter will draw on the content of anti-Moravian pamphlets and colonial newspaper articles in order to investigate how the thoughts and, especially, the behaviors of believers played a vital role in shaping the contours of Moravian, Pietist, and Protestant radicalism in eighteenth-century British North America and beyond.
Chapter Five

Dangerous Corporealities:

Bodies, Gender, and Resistance to Atlantic World Moravians in British North America, 1740-1790

’Tis this to be, as tho’ we did see his nail-prints, and put our fingers into his nail-prints, and thrust our hand into his side.’ And this [the Moravians] call seeing Him who is invisible. And to this agrees their other uncouth communings, ‘of laying in the wounds of Christ, ‘of seeing into His Heart, &c.’ Nay I might defy mankind to shew any thing in this definition, but what is purely seated in the imagination. It is such a faith as the Devil can easily give, and I may add, does give, when permitted to delude. It is such a faith as any person has power to make, who has a warm fancy, and a qualm of devotion. — Samuel Finley, *Satan Stripp’d of His Angelic Robe*, 1743

The embodied nature Moravian beliefs and practices constituted a form of collusion with Satan and Samuel Finley meant to expose them to the church-going public by writing a pamphlet that would “strip” them of their angelic robe of secretive delusion. By the time Finley, a Presbyterian minister in New Jersey, published his pamphlet in Philadelphia in 1743, the Moravians had already made numerous enemies on both sides of the Atlantic. The Hallensian Pietists viewed them as a credible threat to the power and influence of the larger German Pietism movement in

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2 Samuel Finley was an influential revivalist preacher in New Jersey who embarked on a long trip through the Connecticut backcountry preaching the “New Birth” as an itinerant. He would later become the president of the College of New Jersey, which was later renamed Princeton University. Frank Lambert, *Inventing the ‘Great Awakening’* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 126.
Europe. The Moravian sphere of physical presence and influence now stretched from
Europe to Greenland to British America to the Caribbean and as far south as Dutch
Suriname. And the Moravians had increasingly become a salient talking point in
ecclesiastical debates concerned with the revivals and awakenings that occurred in
frontier congregations all over the American colonies. Critics of Moravian religious
culture ran the gamut from staunch “anti-revivalist” Anglican preachers who abhorred
the emotional nature of “enthusiastic” worship, to “moderate-” and “radical-”
evangelical ministers, like Finley, who supported the alternative forms of preaching
and prayer at the revivals, but found Moravian reinterpretations of Christian beliefs
and the ecclesiastical agency they accorded to common believers unacceptable.3
Moravian religious beliefs and practices and the register at which Moravians
expressed them presented a clear and present danger to both the Anglican and
Congregational religious establishments and to emerging evangelical Protestant
groups that sought to cultivate new pastoral styles and new relationships between
ministers, believers, and God. Finley’s words capture a taste of the literal essence of
the objections raised against the Moravians in British North America.

3 I have adopted Thomas Kidd’s “three point continuum” model of describing the basic sides taken up
by pro- and anti-revivalist clergy in the Great Awakening as a method circumventing the older,
oversimplified terms “Old Light” and “New Light.” For Kidd, anti-revivalists “dismissed the revivals
as religious frenzy or ‘enthusiasm.’ In the middle were the moderate evangelicals, who supported the
revivals at their outset but became concerned about the chaotic, leveling extremes that the awakenings
produced [Gilbert Tennent fits this model]. Finally, on the other end, were the radical evangelicals,
who eagerly embraced the Spirit’s movements, even if social conventions had to be sacrificed.” See
Thomas Kidd, The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America (New
Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), xiv.
Stigmas against the physicality of Moravian religious beliefs and practices permeate Finley’s words. By touching the nail prints on the cross, believers came into symbolic contact with the genesis of redemption from sin and strengthened the personal relationship with their Savior. To their detractors, however, believing such things crossed a significant ecclesiastical boundary by making material, and, thus, seeable, even if only metaphorically, “Him who is [and should remain] invisible.” By “thrusting” their hands into the side wound of Jesus, believers diminished the spiritual distance between themselves and the divine while simultaneously strengthening their faith in similar fashion to the Apostle Thomas when Jesus appeared to him after the crucifixion. Opponents viewed Moravians “laying in the wounds of Christ” and wanting to “seeing into His Heart” as evidence of a fundamental disbelief that Christ was truly divine. Only “the Devil” himself could allow Christians to exhibit such delusions and excesses. Indulging these beliefs and practices could only alter, stifle, and disrupt traditional methods of Christian worship. Public denunciations of Moravian devotional alterities worked collectively to construct a broad Protestant notion of radical religious bodies in colonial America.

The corporealities embedded in Moravian piety seemed to have the pernicious effect of empowering ordinary believers. But merely exposing the general nature of radical Moravian bodies to the larger Protestant public was not enough to discredit them. Critics actively worked to marginalize Moravian believers by associating their

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4 This is an eighteenth-century rendition of the biblical story of “Doubting Thomas.” The original story can be found in the Gospel of John 20:19-28.
practices with notions of unpredictability, eccentricity, and inferiority. In similar fashion to anti-revivalist reactions against the newly emerging styles of evangelical conversion, Moravian believers appeared to present a direct challenge to the spiritual and ecclesiastical authority of Protestant clergy by sowing “qualms of devotion” into colonial society and exposing Christianity to the “warm fancies” of “any person.” The “uncouth communings” of common believers and the immediacy of their relationship with God crossed an imaginary boundary that both radical evangelicals and radical Pietists, who zealously clung to their own concepts of ‘heart religion,’ could not fully tolerate. As a result, these groups, in addition to more traditional and conservative Protestants, worked hard to render suspect virtually all of the Christian beliefs held by the Moravians. “[T]he Moravian Church has no other Commandment but Faith and Love, and what others call to be holy, it calleth to be saved. It is the common Resort of the Church of God, till it meets with a common Reception of all Religions. It is that Body whereof Jesus Christ is the Head and where he is present, challeng[ing] all the other sects.” Empowered Moravian believers who possessed the authority to appeal directly to ‘the presence’ of God and proclaim ‘faith and love’ as the only requirements ‘to be saved’ constituted a provocative repudiation of Protestant institutional hierarchies that still required the intercession of trained and properly

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5 Anonymous, A Compendious Extract Containing the Chiepest Articles of Doctrine and most remarkable Transactions of Count Lewis of Zinzendorf and the Moravians. Together with the most material Objections of some of their Antagonists. Collected from the German. Intended for a Summary of the Controversy, which at present is a matter of Universal Speculation, in this Part of America. Philadelphia, Bradford, 1742. Library Company of Philadelphia, Microform, Doc No. 4918, 3.
ordained clergy. The character of traditional Protestantism, “that Body whereof Jesus is the Head,” seemed to be disappearing.

In response to these provocations from below, British colonial society fashioned the Moravians into an exemplar of the new problematic forms of religious expression, practice, and authority that arose during the Great Awakening. Whereas previous historians have attributed the backlash exclusively to various examples of Moravian “distinctiveness,” early opponents articulated the nature of Moravian religious radicalism in tropes of gender and the body that actually expressed practical anxieties about living in the increasingly plural religious environment in colonial America. Pejorative feminizations of Moravian religious and social culture stemmed from hostilities related to perceived encroachments upon ecclesiastical territory, Moravian methods of engaging in embodied religious practices, and their perceived devotion to religious beliefs that advocated both alternative femininities and masculinities. The rhetorical strategies utilized by those who made these cases against the Moravians reveal how notions of the body, gender, and religious radicalism were inextricably interconnected in the early modern period.

Building upon the trend toward complicating modern definitions of early modern religious radicalism, this chapter will suggest that historians who have

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7 For my discussion of existing scholarship on early modern Pietist radicalism in Europe and British America, please refer to the Introduction on pages 25-30.
highlighted gender and the feminizing characteristics of anti-Moravian polemical pamphlets, though certainly important, have not sufficiently appreciated how conceptions of the body played a much larger underlying role in delineating the boundary between traditional and radical Protestantism. Historians also have not grasped the extent to which the nature and relative urgency of Moravian radicalism depended upon fluctuations in imperial and inter-colonial relations. In order to understand the deeper issues at stake in this debate, close attention must be paid to the various ways in which anti-Moravian polemicists deployed the spiritual and physical body, especially with regard to the beliefs and practices of ordinary believers. Anti-corporeal language operated as a persuasive rhetorical device that articulated, performed, and worked to reinforce traditional social, gender, and racial hierarchies. Ordinary Moravian believers had offended traditional concepts and behaviors associated with the body, which prompted their opponents to articulate arguments against them in terms that implicated notions of gender, sex, and sexuality. Attention to representations of the body also allows for the integration of many arguments against the Moravians that historians have neglected or deemed unimportant because they seemed to be hyperbole. Taking these elements seriously, this chapter will argue

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8 See, Aaron Fogleman, Jesus is Female: Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).
9 “Anti-corporeal language” variously connotes disputations with regard to constructions of the mystical body of Christ, the physical bodies, practices, and behaviors of believers, notions of sexuality with regard to the relationship between believers and Christ, and the sexual connotations inherent in certain practices of individual and collective piety.
that Moravians represented a menacing threat to widespread Protestant understandings of physical, spiritual, and political bodies.

The involvement of influential anti-revivalist and evangelical ministers, like Samuel Finley, in the polemical discourse demonstrates the gravity of the threat that Moravians allegedly posed to both traditional Protestant institutions and the new evangelicalism. Also, the Moravians appeared to be so dispersed in the British colonies and the Atlantic world that where Moravians were began to construct who they were, from the perspective of the larger community of Protestants. Numerous public reports testifying to this dynamic drove subsequent detractors to propagate half-truths and extravagantly misrepresent the nature and potential consequences of Moravian beliefs and practices.

In the context of the aftermath of the Great Awakening, the ecclesiastical and geographic diversity of anti-Moravian antagonists also demonstrates the disorienting and transformational chaos that the revivalism movement unleashed upon the British American public in stirring up fears of heretical Moravian bodies. The Great Awakening did not have a significant effect upon Moravian religious culture or identity in British America. Very few Moravians, after all, actually participated in or spent much time thinking about the revivals.10 The Great Awakening, however, did have an enormous

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10 Aaron Fogleman has evidence of a handful of Moravian men and women working as itinerant preachers in the countryside of Pennsylvania. He also claims that the Moravians held small revival style meetings and even a “full-fledged revival in the classic sense in and around Pennsylvania” in 1745, but the details remain vague. Beyond these few itinerant preachers, very little evidence exists of Moravians attending or participating in the larger evangelical revival meetings. Fogleman, Jesus Is Female, 98-102, 118.
impact on outside opinions about the Moravians in the 1740s and 1750s in ways that would compliment a significant reorientation of European sensibilities regarding the composition and proper function of religious bodies and the nature of Protestant radicalism in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Countervailing perceptions of revivalism and evangelical bodies became ecclesiastical lenses through which other Protestants evaluated Moravian culture, formulated contentious attacks against them, and, later, articulated sentiments of agreeable toleration toward them. Conversely, the coordinated campaign to publicly marginalize the Moravians ceased around 1760, just as colonial disagreements with the British monarchy over the nature and source of supreme executive authority began to heat up. After the American Revolution, the American public suddenly, though tepidly, embraced the Moravian Church because of the egalitarian social structures and ecclesiastical hierarchies that seemed to mirror the desired values of the democratic republic that emerged after the war. Thus, observing the realignment in perceptions of Moravians and the Moravian Church in the midst of evangelical and then imperial turmoil adds a deeper cultural dimension to our understanding of the Great Awakening and what it meant to be an American in the late-eighteenth century.

Utilizing English- and German-language polemical pamphlets and colonial newspaper articles both for and against the Moravians, this chapter will demonstrate how notions of the corporeal body increasingly informed the rhetoric of the opponents of the Moravians throughout the German- and Anglo-Atlantic until the
imperial crisis that culminated in the American Revolution averted the critical gaze of anti-Moravian detractors. I argue that spiritual and physical bodies constitute the conceptual foundation of the crusade against the Moravians and account for both the variety and absurdity of the arguments leveled against them. By tracking significant transformations in how opponents of Moravian culture marshaled notions of the body, this chapter will suggest that body politics lie at the heart of how early modern Protestants in British America constructed religious radicals. Inaccurate renderings and willful mischaracterizations of Moravian doctrine, beliefs, and practices served to support the anti-Moravian polemicist’s larger project of constructing the invisible boundary between Protestant radicalism and orthodoxy.

Anti-Moravian Sentiment in the 1740s and 1750s

Anti-Moravian sentiment in the middle decades of the eighteenth century in British North America ran parallel and subsequent to the frustrations and angst caused by the spread of Great Awakening evangelicalism. In 1742, William Bradford published a pamphlet by an anonymous (though probably Lutheran) author in Philadelphia entitled *A Compendious Extract* that claimed to summarize the current

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11 Adopting historian David Bebbington’s definition of “evangelicalism,” Thomas Kidd identifies five key characteristics: “conversion (‘the belief that lives need to be changed’), activism (‘the expression of the gospel in effort’), biblicism (‘a particular regard for the Bible’), and crucicentrism (‘a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross’),” to which he adds a “dramatically increased emphases on seasons of revival, or outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and on converted sinners experiencing God’s love personally.” Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 1-5.
state of the controversy raging against the Moravian Church on both sides of the Atlantic. Among the first of its kind to appear in British America, the pamphlet was meant to educate the public about the “Chiefest Articles of Doctrine” and the “most remarkable Transactions” conducted by the Moravians. The pamphlet claims to have collected and translated the German-language, anti-Moravian polemical literature that had been circulating in Europe and outlined “the most material Objections of some of their Antagonists.” It consists of a series of allegedly damning letters, supposedly written by, about, and to Zinzendorf and other Moravians living in both America and Europe. These letters supposedly “proved” that, despite their relatively small numbers, Moravians meant to perpetrate a “Spiritual conquest” in the New World and the author sought to render them “as suspicious as possible.”

Opponents of the Moravians used the language of conquest as a method of aggrandizing the Moravian menace and pointing out perceived intrusions upon the ecclesiastical territory of other, more respectable, Protestant groups. The unabashedly hyperbolic language has, rightly, caused historians to view the accuracy of these documents with skepticism. Many, however, have used this as an excuse to marginalize the discussions these pamphlets contain pertaining to the extravagance of Moravian beliefs and practices as unimportant “embellishments” because they, for example, denounced the Moravians

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as dangerous, satanic, “promiscuous perverts” who maligned the Trinity.\textsuperscript{13} To dismiss these accusations as exaggerated overstatement or simply religious propaganda undervalues the perceived gravity of ecclesiastical threat the Moravians allegedly posed to the more established Protestant Churches in British America and ignores the larger meta-critiques deployed by their opponents. To the contrary, these statements must be read as evidence of genuine concern and substantial import with regard to how early modern people constructed notions of Protestant radicalism.

Published on the heels of another pamphlet about various “confusions” caused by Moravian preachers in the town of Tulpehocken, Pennsylvania, the \textit{Compendious Extract} highlighted the principle transgressions of Moravian missionaries and Moravian religious beliefs, including alternative interpretations of the Holy Trinity, their doctrine of Universal Redemption, and the theological underpinnings of Moravian death culture.\textsuperscript{14} In early 1740, before the official founding of Bethlehem, one prominent critic characterized Moravian beliefs and doctrines as a “confused Medly [sic] of rank Antinomianism and Quakerism; [the Moravians] are the most subtle and plausible \textsuperscript{[read: ‘secretive’ and ‘deceptive’]} Sect that I ever saw, and like to

\textsuperscript{13} Fogleman, \textit{Jesus Is Female}, 94.
\textsuperscript{14} In 1742, the Moravians were accused of fomenting a “confusion in religious matters” among Lutheran and Reformed preachers, consisting of ecclesiastical differences of opinion that arose during the process of filling a clerical vacancy, in the region surrounding the town of Tulpehocken, Pennsylvania located just north of Lancaster. For the quote and an older treatment of the incident, see also, J. Taylor Hamilton, “The Confusion at Tulpehocken,” \textit{Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society}, Vol. 4, No. 5 (1895), 237-273. For an eighteenth-century Moravian account of what happened at Tulpehocken, see \textit{Die Confusion von Tulpehocken} (Philadelphia: Printed by Benjamin Franklin, 1742).
do much Mischief here; the pious People where they go they generally divide.”

Protestants on both sides of the Atlantic often placed critiques like these in the context of the increasingly troublesome grandeur of the Moravian mission program. Critics did not take issue with the concept of the Christian call to mission itself because of the New Testament stories of early Christians engaging in mission work shortly after the death of Christ. As the Moravian mission program continued to grow, however, it began to exceed its biblical mandate and became too ambitious.

Not all the early reports about Moravian movements were bad, however. One anonymous author published a “Private Letter” in the New-England Weekly Journal in Boston, explaining that the Moravians had “sent out their Evangelists or Missionaries into most of the known parts of the World.” The “known world” for this rather well traveled writer included “Estonia, Livonia, Greenland, St. Thomas, Georgia, Carolina, Pennsylvania, Suriname, Virginia, East Guinea, Lusatia, Saxony, Brandenburg, Alsace, Swabia etc. etc.” Another letter published earlier that same year in the Boston News-Letter by a writer from Edinburgh, Scotland explained that the Moravians “have several Missionaries thro’ the most parts of the known world… and even at the Cape of Good Hope.”


16 In the early modern period, however, mission work became associated with the Holy Spirit because this person of the Holy Trinity was traditionally associated with orchestrating the work of God the Father and the Son in the confines of the corporeal world. “The H(oly) Spirit thrusts a great many Apostiles abroad,” the pamphlet argued. A Compendious Extract, 14.

from Greenland to South Africa had “not [been] without Success” either, because
many Indigenous peoples had “made the Christian confession [and] have been
baptized” into the Christian fold.\textsuperscript{18} The ever-increasing Moravian presence and the
subsequent public awareness of that presence, coupled with their success in the
British colonies, signaled that God had begun “gathering in his Elect from all
Nations, bring[ing] his People out of Babylon, cleansing his Sanctuary, that has for so
long been trod under Foot by the People of the Nations, and \textit{hastening} His SECOND
COMING.”\textsuperscript{19}

Only two years later, echoing similar millenarian sentiments, \textit{The
Compendious Extract} painted a more ominous vision of expanding Moravian
missionary activities in the Atlantic world. The tactic, however, had shifted from
merely reporting on the physical location of the Moravians to blaming them for
“fabricating” reports and inflating the extent of their success. “Their [the Moravian]
missionaries \textit{ad propagandum fidem} [‘to propagate the faith’] travel through all Parts
of the World” and “their Success \textbf{seems} to be astonishing (so as it is recorded and
communicated by none else but by the Moravians themselves, throughout \textit{Europe;}).”
Proof of these achievements in the mission fields was lacking “as such to their
Antagonists, though the Moravians not only bring inferences from the most remote

\textsuperscript{18} “Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Scotland to his Friend in New England, dated Edinburgh,
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. For an excellent overview of millenarian prophesy in the latter half of the long eighteenth
century, albeit from the perspective of English people, see Susan Juster, \textit{Doomsayers: Anglo-American
Parts of the World, but from the very center of Europe.” Moravian missionaries had reportedly been so wildly successful at converting and baptizing so many different peoples in so many different regions of Europe and the Atlantic world that the reports had to be fake. Or so the argument went.20

The Moravian transatlantic correspondence network provided anecdotal evidence that adversaries used to corroborate these accusations. The network itself even became an object of critique in its own right. The process of appointing missionaries “to be sent for the Conversion of Souls” meant “forc[ing] a great deal of young Beginners, who are unexperienced People, over Lands and Seas, whereby one may calculate what successes there can be had.” These young missionaries produced “Heaps of vain glorious Letters [which they] trumpeted about and…the most Part of them come from the remotest Parts of the World.” Therefore, the Moravian “voluntary Missionary Zeal or Spirit” had surreptitiously produced “a Passage [read: ‘narrative’] about the pretended surprising Effects of Convictions at the Place[s] whereof nothing like [it] should have happened.” Outsiders viewed the Moravian transatlantic communication network as a dangerous propaganda machine and a positive echo chamber where unsubstantiated reports produced by young, inexperienced believers could be circulated from the margins of the Atlantic world. In this way, opponents of the Moravians linked the mission program with the suspicious

20 *A Compendious Extract*, 14. (Italics appear in the original; bold text is my addition)
worldly practices and inexperience of the missionaries as a method of raising awareness about the pernicious nature of their progress and intentions.\footnote{Ibid, 15.}

In addition to hinting at the self-aggrandizing nature of Moravian missionary activities in far off places, early critics of the Moravians in the 1740s raised the issue of lay preaching in New England and the mid-Atlantic colonies by linking it to the activities of itinerant preachers and conspiracy theories about Catholics. One resident of Boston complained that it was “too well known that several Persons among us of late [have been] set up [as] Exhorters or Preachers of the Gospel, without any Call to such a Work, [n]or one Qualification for it, having little else but Ignorance and Impudence to recommend them.” One of these itinerant preachers, who was “said to be a \textit{Moravian}” and who “calls himself a Preacher of the Gospel,” was “able to produce no \textit{Credentials}” and the “\textit{Episcopal and Congregational}” churches in Connecticut where he attempted to preach “\textit{one and all} refused him the Use of their Pulpits.” The author of the article questioned whether “the above-mentioned \textit{Moravian} is any sort of a \textit{Protestant}, [or] an Emissary of the Church of \textit{Rome},” and speculated whether he had “come hither to divide and distract us.”\footnote{“To the Publisher of the Boston Evening-Post,” The Boston Evening-Post, No. 344, March 8, 1742. \textit{America’s Historical Newspapers}, \url{http://infoweb.newsbank.com} (accessed January 14, 2017) (italics in original).} Accusations of Moravian preachers operating as secret agents of the Pope and sowing the seeds of discord tacitly connected them to both the traditional enemy of Protestantism, in the form of the Catholic Church, and a new enemy of Protestantism in the form of
evangelical preachers and prophetic exhorters who represented a palpable threat to the existing religious establishments. Given an opportunity, the author believed that Moravian preachers would go even further by “creep[ing] into private Families in the Country, and there broach Opinions destructive to the Peace of Society,” exactly as “has been the Practice of the Church of Rome.” The Moravians, like the papacy, seemed to be bent on corrupting “both Ministers and People” in the British colonies like “grievous Wolves in Sheeps Cloathing [sic].”

Itinerancy, to the clerical opponents of the Moravians, represented the possibility of losing loyal members of their congregations. Gilbert Tennent, famed Irish-Presbyterian evangelical preacher in New Jersey and Pennsylvania who propagated pietist principles in his own right, lamented the “spiritual Desertions, Temptations, and Distresses of various kinds, coming in a thick, and almost continued Succession” as a result of Moravian influence. To his credit, Tennent also faulted his own “excessive heat of Temper, which has sometimes appear’d in my Conduct” for this misfortune. After all, Tennent had been an ardent and vocal supporter of moderate- and radical-evangelical itinerants and worked as one himself before finally settling as the pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. But his own conduct, coupled “with the Trials I have had of the Moravians, ha[s] given me a clear

view of the Danger of every Thing which tends to Enthusiasm and Division in the visible Church.”

Despite being accused himself of dividing congregations and persuading people to leave their pastors for evangelical itinerants or other newly settled ministers, Tennent blamed the Moravians for desertions, temptations, distresses, and other fears related to the competition for believers in colonial America. Moravians who exhibited harmful ecclesiastical conduct and nefarious enthusiasm could only result in “Ministers, (who are in the main of sound Principles of Religion,)” becoming “divided and quarreling.” In this way, the “Enthusiastical Moravians” had begun “uniting their Bodies, (no doubt, to increase their Strength) [in order to] render themselves more considerable.”

Causing turmoil among ministers and the church-going public seemed to produce a unifying effect that made the Moravians seem more numerous. Moravian behavior and their ability to inflate their numbers, whether genuinely or falsely, offended Tennent and other’s sense of religious propriety, but the real fear was their influence upon believers.

25 Gilbert Tennent himself was a radical-turned-moderate revivalist preacher and a high profile participant in the revivalism movement. He had also been accused of dividing congregations and persuading people to leave their pastors for revivalist itinerants or newly settled ministers. In accusing the Moravians of doing these same things, Tennent was beginning to see the error of his ways. Quotes from, Gilbert Tennent. “Extract of a Letter from the Rev’d Mr. Tennent, to the Rev. Mr. Dickinson of the Jerseys; the Original of which is in the Hands of the Rev. Mr. Clap Rector of Yale-College, and was lately given him by Mr. Dickinson,” The Boston Weekly News-Letter, No. 999, July 15, 1742. America’s Historical Newspapers, http://infoweb.newsbank.com (accessed March 26, 2016).


Disapproval of Moravian conduct and the “enthusiasm” it generated prompted scrutiny of the content of Moravian beliefs. Heterodox interpretations of the Holy Trinity and the doctrine of universal redemption represent the two main critiques on this front, and both implicate the power of ordinary believers. Early critics of the Moravians had generally subordinated doctrinal issues to the more immediate problems of inter-denominational contact and the siphoning of believers posed by traveling preachers in the 1740s. Still, perceptions of Moravian teachings on theological and ecclesiastical issues supplemented these more pressing concerns. The Compendious Extract characterized the argument against the Moravians on the issue of the Holy Trinity in terms of their adherence to the articles of doctrine produced at the Synod of Bern, held in Switzerland in 1532, in partial opposition to the teachings of Martin Luther. The Articles of Bern, as recorded in the pamphlet, stress a Christocentric vision of Christianity that highlighted Jesus and his death as the main focal point for all issues of doctrine, belief, experience, and behavior. Citing the provisions of the Articles effectively accused the Moravians of attenuating the influence of God the Father and the Holy Spirit, promoting a direct connection

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28 A Compendious Extract, 18-19. The points of doctrine as listed in the pamphlet are: “I. That our whole Doctrine be CHRIST. / II. That GOD gives Increase to the People in Him. / III. That He Ground and Bottom. / IV. That (without medium) GOD under the TITLE of our Savior be preached. / V. That without CHRIST no WORD of GRACE. / VI. It BEGINNETH from His DEATH and SO ON. / VII. That SIN itself to to be learned FROM HIM / VIII. That the LAW CANNOT BE KEPT TOO DISTANT from our Doctrine. / IX. That this shews the true Difference betwixt the GENTILES and US. / X. That the FALSE Apostles arose FROM THENCE, that the LAW with it’s Ties was FETCHED BACK. / XI. That the true COURSE of GRACE be, that one receives the KNOWLEDGE (Conviction) of SIN out the DEATH of Jesus. / XII. This is the MYSTERY which must be sounded with Trumpets at present, without loss of Time.”
between believer and the divine “without medium” (meaning ‘without clerical influence’), and rejecting the authority of secular laws (see #VIII in note 29 below).

These accusations linked the Moravians with the anti-Calvinist radical reformers in Switzerland.29 Ironically, the Moravians supposedly clung to this particular confession of faith in order to “prevent…their being made Hereticks, and to set up a better Standard for true orthodoxy.”30 The pamphlet posited the radical nature of Moravian doctrine because of their adherence to these articles.

From the perspective of the opposition, ordinary Moravian believers who claimed to possess such a pure and direct connection with God did not require clerical guidance and were thought to adhere only to laws that transcended those made by man. Naturally, this dynamic represented a potent challenge to traditional ecclesiastical and political authorities, both in Europe and British America. As a method of denigrating notions of lay religious authority, opponents began to point toward general fears that Moravian believers had designs to overtake the Protestant Church as a whole. They charged “that all these Commotions” made by Moravians “all about over the World, aim at a general Hierarchy, or Universal Church Government unto which all the other Churches, should submit and be dissolved, into that one Universal Moravian Church.”31 A “general hierarchy,” one that upended

Zinzendorf visited Bern himself in 1740. See also W.R. Ward, The Protestant Evangelical Awakening (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 188.
30 A Compendious Extract, 19.
31 Ibid, 28-29.
traditional Protestant hierarchies by placing believers in charge, would effectively abandon “all outward Forms, Figures, great Appearances, Methods, Statutes, Constitutions, Regulations, Ordinances, and especially Authority in Matters of Religion.” This could not be tolerated.

Moderate and radical evangelical preachers during the Great Awaking in colonial America elicited similar indictments from more conservative opponents of revivalism. Samuel Finley’s theory of religious delusion can be considered a variation on the accusations of enthusiasm, albeit coming from the perspective of a prominent evangelical preacher and tailored specifically to the Moravian heresy. Delusion, for Finley, consisted of a malicious power to persuade, a willingness to deceive, to be deceived, and propagate ungodly falsehoods. Finley associated his notion of delusion with a whole host of Moravian religious teachings and practices. At its core, however, the deluded Moravian spirit “hurries the soul irrationally” and “in such a manner, as to neglect all other things in comparison.” “THE only inference from this doctrine,” Finley argued, “is that the Moravians are deluded.” Finley’s own efforts to rapidly spread the evangelical message to Presbyterian congregations in Connecticut and New Jersey, much to the displeasure of the anti-revivalist factions, apparently did not qualify.

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32 Ibid, 28.
33 Hall, Contested Boundaries, 18-19, 59-62, 123.
34 Finley, Satan Stripp’d of his Angelic Robe, 9, 10, 12, 15.
Delusion operated through an articulation of ordinary Moravian’s religious beliefs in corporeal terms. Believers thinking they could cultivate intimate relationships with God and be “near” him “without any medium” was absolutely scandalous and irrational because “God without any medium, can not [sic] be the object of faith to fallen men.” Moravians, according to Finley, believed that being near to Christ meant being able to physically observe him. “They plainly be[t]ray their delusion by describing their actings of faith in such a manner.” Moravian believers claiming to be physically near to Christ offended Finley’s Calvinist Presbyterian concept of the “elect” as the “invisible church,” a doctrine positing that only a small group of people elected by, and known only to, God could be saved. In his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin argued that “[w]hen we call faith ‘knowledge of God’s will’ we do not mean such a comprehension as people have of things which are perceived by their senses. For faith rises so far above every human sense that the spirit must rise up above itself to reach it.” Only the elect had been chosen to receive God's grace, so Moravians believing and saying they could be near to and in the presence of Christ — and perceive Him with their senses — demonstrated an alternative conception of proximity in Protestant culture that even revivalist Presbyterians could not tolerate. Making the world of the spirit physical and, thus, sensually perceivable in any way was delusion.

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36 Ibid, 25.
Nowhere was this delusion more apparent than in the Moravian devotion to
the blood and wounds of Christ as the genesis of redemption from sin. “The
Moravians want to boast that the doctrine of redemption…in their community of the
cross speaks of nothing but blood, Lamb, and wounds.”

Making Christ's blood and
wounds the focal point of the doctrine of redemption completely neglected “the rest
of the works, which belong to the satisfaction of our sins, and to the intervening
office of Jesus.” The Moravians had failed to holistically appreciate the saving grace
of Christ. Blood and wounds piety represented a crude compartmentalization of
Christ’s body that accentuated his death and distracted Moravians from the
resurrection. By focusing on the passion and death of Christ in the name of
redemption from sin and not on his victory over death and subsequent ascension into
heaven, Carl Gottlob Hofmann and others accused Moravians of subversively
glamorizing what he considered the violent disgrace of the savior. Thus, blood and
wounds piety made a mockery of both the body of Christ and the body of
communicant followers of the Church. “The Moravians have almost entirely forgotten
the state of Jesus’ exaltation [and] do not even meet the exalted Savior with the
reverence he deserves. They speak, sing, and pray as if Jesus were still a wretched

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38 UAH, NB.VIII.R.1.92, Carl Gottlob Hofmann, Gegründete Anzeigen der Herrnhutische Grund
Irrtümmer in der Helhre von der Heil. Dreieinigkeit und von Xsto. Wittenb. und Zeist 1752, 17 (on
seventeenth page of the document, the book in the archive is not paginated sequentially); “Die
Herrnhuter wollen sich zwar rühmen, als werde die Lehre von der Erlösung in keiner Gemeinde so oft
uns so erwecklich vorgetragen, als bei ihrer Kreuz=Gemeinde, die sonst von nichts als vom Blut,
Lamm, und Wunden rede uns singe…”

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man as he was in the state of his humiliation.” One “soon sees that their glory [in the blood and wounds piety] is vain and unfounded.”

Arguments about the unorthodox nature of Moravian piety served a political purpose. They built a case for excluding the Moravians from the larger body of Christianity on the basis of advocacy of antinomian principles. Associations of Moravian religious culture with antinomianism went back to Methodist preacher John Wesley’s accusations in 1738. Wesley had once admired the Moravian’s interpretation of justification by faith alone, the Christian doctrine that separates Protestantism from Catholicism by asserting that faith, not works (meaning exterior actions or behaviors), was the only requirement to free oneself from the burden of sin. Moravians, however, had taken this idea too far. While good works could not obtain salvation, other Protestant groups believed they had a purifying effect upon the moral compass of believers. The alleged purity of the Moravian idea that one needed only to believe in


40 Antinomianism, a term that dates to the immediate aftermath of the Reformation, pejoratively describes an alternative understanding of the Protestant doctrine of salvation by faith alone where obedience to moral laws should originate from an inward sense of spiritual duty, rather than being physically compelled from outside forces. David Como, Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 36.

41 One of the clearest indicators of being among God’s elect in Puritan religious culture was living a good Christian life and behaving as if one possessed God’s grace. Good works could never procure salvation, but performing them could operate as a social signifier that one was saved.
order to gain the benefits of a Christian life led opponents like Wesley, George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, Samuel Finley to denounce them as amoral libertines.\textsuperscript{42} The perceived absence of an obligation to live in a charitable Christian manner meant that Moravians could not be trusted to tell the difference between right and wrong and follow the rule of law.\textsuperscript{43} In terms of practical ecclesiastical politics, faith implied some measure of proper moral behavior and prompted believers to live according to the laws of man within respectable Protestant society. Faith that did not require at least a modicum of moral and lawful behavior could only lead to social disorder.

Anti-Moravian narratives of delusion and antinomianism that had been brewing in England, continental Europe, and British America found their most sophisticated expressions in a series of pamphlets published by John Roche and Henrich Rimius in the early 1750s. Roche and Rimius both situated their critiques in the context of the “rise and progress” of the Moravian Church in Germany, England, and the British colonies. Roche’s notion of antinomianism stemmed from an entrenched metaphysical confidence that faith only existed in the mind. Faith, for Roche, “is the evidence of Things unseen,” and it consisted of “an absolute Assent to the Mind, to Truths, the objects whereof, we can have no living Witness, rational

\textsuperscript{43} Robert Rix, \textit{William Blake and the Cultures of Radical Christianity} (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 20-22.
Evidence, or sensible Demonstration.” The mind, in other words, produced the only perceivable evidence of otherwise intangible truths. But the mind’s ability to discern true faith could only manifest in the physical world as virtue and, therefore, compelled the body to “produce good Works.” Good works could not obtain salvation, but they could (and should) serve as physical evidence of pure faith. As if to accentuate the Calvinistic nature of this critique, Roche cited the example of Anne Hutchinson, a Puritan woman who had lived in Boston in the 1630s and played a pivotal role in a theological debate known as the “Antinomian Controversy” over the issue of the ‘covenant of grace’ versus the ‘covenant of works.’ “Equal to” the Moravian notion of justification by faith alone “was a Tenet advanced by Mrs. Hutchinson in New England. — ‘That Faith is not receiving Christ, but a Man’s discerning that he hath received him already.’ (To wit, that he hath pardoned his

44 John Roche, *Moravian Heresy. Wherein the Principal Errors of that Doctrine, As taught throughout several Parts of Europe and America, by Count Zinzendorf, Mr. Cennick, And other Moravian Teachers, are fully set forth, proved, and refuted. Also, A Short Account of the Rise and Progress of that Sect. With A Second Appendix, wherein the chief Principles of Methodism are considered; and their Analogy to, and Differences from, Moravian Tenets explained* (Dublin: Printed for the Author, 1751), 180, Library Company of Philadelphia, Rare Books, Am 1751 Roc 65606.D.

45 Roche, *Moravian Heresy*, 189.

According to Roche’s wildly inaccurate rendering of Hutchinson’s (and by implication the Moravian’s) argument, the only thing humans had to do was believe that they had received divine grace and, accordingly, would have their sins forgiven.48 Roche's proclivities against embodied manifestations of faith led him to attack the inward-facing sense of pious authority espoused by Moravian believers. He believed that Moravian “heart religion,” because it emanated from the body and not the mind, caused believers to engage in the gravely heretical practice of pardoning themselves of their own sins and negating the role of God in this process. Moravian radical Protestantism exceeded the logical limit of Roche’s understanding of the nature of Protestant faith. In this case, the absence or presence of bodies and physical acts of virtue defined the parameters of the Moravian antinomian heresy.

Abrogating the power to forgive the sins of man from Jesus Christ and placing that power in the hands of ordinary believers constituted the “principal error of doctrine” that Count Zinzendorf, John Cennick, a leader of the Moravian Church in Ireland whose teachings initially prompted the composition of Roche’s pamphlet, “and other Moravian Teachers” in “several Parts of Europe and America” had committed. The Moravians, of course, practiced and believed no such thing. Roche’s accusations of antinomianism and other anti-Moravian rhetoric drew on the then-

48 Anne Hutchinson would never have said such a thing because of her strict adherence to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. In fact, Hutchinson sharply criticized the Puritan clergy in the Massachusetts Bay colony in the early seventeenth century for incompetence and, more specifically, for advocating a covenant of good works.
familiar public fears of “erroneous doctrines,” “false teachings,” and “antinomian enthusiasms” hurled at evangelical ministers and itinerant preachers who promoted and defended the transatlantic awakening movements. By couching his argument in terms of “right and wrong” and not “good and bad,” which characterized earlier arguments that placed purely ecclesiastical politics (e.g. the competition for believers) at the center, Roche’s pamphlet marks a transition in the campaign to disparage and discredit the Moravians toward the realm of civil politics. Attempts to expose this redistribution of power away from God and into the hands of ordinary believers, whether real or imagined, served to demonstrate the threat Moravians posed to traditional civil authorities.

Picking up this thread, Heinrich Rimius, an ethnic German from the Kingdom of Prussia, published perhaps the most widely read and widely influential anti-Moravian pamphlet in London in 1753. This pamphlet, entitled *A Candid Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Herrnhuters,* was subsequently transported and published by several printers in New York and Pennsylvania in 1753 and 1754. Having had first-hand experience with the Moravians and being quite familiar with the German-language polemical literature that circulated on the continent against

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49 Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 130
51 “Herrnhuter” was the common German-language term for “Moravain.” Herrnhut, of course, is the town in eastern Saxony founded by the Moravians in 1722.
52 Advertisement, “Just Published in Philadelphia… *A Candid Narrative…* by Henry Rimius,” New York Mercury, No. 75, January 14, 1754. America’s Historical Newspapers, [http://infoweb.newsbank.com](http://infoweb.newsbank.com) (accessed January 13, 2017). This particular advertisement announcing the publication of Rimius’s pamphlet in Philadelphia is only one among many in the colonial newspapers from this period.
them, Rimius argued that when the British Parliament passed the Moravian Act of 1749, which designated the Moravians as “an ancient Protestant Episcopal Church” and conferred official religious toleration upon them, it had publicly legitimated a group he viewed as openly subversive to civil society. In both their actions and religious tenets, Rimius argued that the Moravians “are likely to be very pernicious to Church and State.” True to the new Enlightenment political thinking, Rimius strived to situate the Moravians outside the realm of what he called “true religion” by characterizing the Moravian quest to establish and strengthen personal relationships with God as a formal disavowal of reason. “The Herrnhuters have this distinguishing Character of Fanaticism, that they reject Reason, Reasoning, and Philosophy.” Rimius believed that previous treatises published against “Fanaticism in general” did not adequately understand or include the Moravians and remained “in some Places inconsistent with the Meaning of the Writers of Herrnhutism.” Rimius set out to correct the record.

In contrast to many opponents of the revivalism movement who focused intently on the “physical symptoms of conversion” in denouncing the message of the

54 Heinrich Rimius, *A candid narrative of the rise and progress of the Herrnhuters, commonly call’d Moravians, or Unitas Fratrum; with a short account of their doctrines, drawn from their own writings. To which are added, observations on their politics in general, and particularly on their conduct whilst in the county of Budingen, in the circle of the Upper-Rhine, in Germany. By Henry Rimius, Aulic Counsellor to His late Majesty the King of Prussia, and author of the memoirs of the House of Brunswick. [Philadelphia]: London, printed: Philadelphia, re-printed and sold by William Bradford, at the Sign of the Bible, in Second-Street, MDCCLIII. [1753].* Historical Society of Pennsylvania & Library Company of Philadelphia (HSP in LCP), Am1753 Rim Api753 B68, 5.
56 Ibid, 7.
New Birth, Rimius blamed the radical nature of the Moravian conversion experience itself for the potential harm it could cause in the spiritual life of believers.\(^{57}\) In the Moravian conversion scheme, believers “ought not to be engaged to prepare themselves for it by any Action, good Works, [or] good Resolutions,” because “One Moment [was] sufficient to make [them] free to receive Grace, to be transformed to the Image of the little Lamb.”\(^{58}\) While Rimius calculated that this revelation would be met with opposition from Protestants on many fronts, he worried about the potential for corruption inherent in allowing ordinary believers so much autonomy from outside influence. “A Person regenerated” in this way “enjoys a great Liberty,” he wrote. “He doth what the Savior gives him an Inclination to do, and what he has no Inclination for, he is not obliged to do.” Believers, according to Rimius, should not be allowed to determine whether their behavior was or was not sanctioned by God because it encouraged a pernicious form of headstrong, self-willed obstinance. The lack of preparation for Moravian conversion, thus, empowered individuals with a

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dangerous freedom to “make criminal what is virtuous, and virtuous what is criminal.” In reality, as previous chapters have shown, Moravian missionaries did impose significant periods of preparation for conversion, baptism, and church membership upon non-European converts. But Rimius’s message was clear: the power to discern godliness from immorality should not reside with the uncultivated masses of common believers.

Rimius and others linked the undue “liberties” that the Moravian process of conversion bestowed upon ordinary believers with a modified and updated critique of the doctrine of universal redemption. Earlier writers grounded their arguments against universal reconciliation in the Moravians themselves, citing their alternative conceptions of the Holy Trinity, their associations with radical devotional writers like Jacob Böhme, or their alleged designs to establish a “universal church government.” After the Moravians settled in Pennsylvania in 1741 and the passage of the Moravian Act of 1749, these arguments fell away in favor of more explicitly political arguments that painted Moravian believers as “pernicious to a [civil] Government.”

This is a Doctrine [of universal redemption], [which] the Count preached about before one of the Synods, where, he says, the Doors are open for all Hearers, whether they belong to the Society or not. But it were to be wished, he had employed his Talents to better Purposes, than to instill such Notions into People’s Minds. As the Savior, according to him, manifests his Will to the Brotherhood, or rather to the Chiefs, who, under this Pretense, have an Opportunity to stir up their Flocks to any Attempt.

Delegating unfettered access to redemption in this way could only lead to disorder and chaos in the political system. “[W]hat Security [against these threats] can a

59 Ibid, 52.
Government have, that they will not make Use of this Doctrine?”\textsuperscript{60} Apprehensions about strange beliefs and unseemly consorts were replaced by fears that the Moravians posed a material threat to the integrity of the body politic. In similar fashion to the radical evangelicals in the early years of the Great Awakening, the Moravians had become a political “threat to a well-ordered society.”\textsuperscript{61}

Rhetorics of bodily integrity, whether referring to the whole of society, specific groups, or even individuals, permeated the political arguments that characterize this new turn in the polemical discourse. In his closing argument, Rimius accused the Moravians of failing to adequately explain how the “\textit{interior State} of the [Moravian] Brotherhood doth not agree with the \textit{external Appearance} it makes.” In other words, why should Rimius, the Lutheran Church, and the English government, in England or the colonies, believe that the disconnect between their claims to inward spiritual purity and their outward appearance as religious revolutionaries not be “reckoned [as] among the \textit{political Evils}; in the same Manner as their Doctrines have long since been accounted among the \textit{Evils of the Church}, by Divines of the greatest Integrity, and that upon very good Grounds”\textsuperscript{62} Rimius believed that Moravian teachings and doctrinal beliefs represented an attempt to foment a revolution that would tear down the very fabric of society. They captivated people “not by enlightening their reason, but by entertaining their Imagination and Passions, and by

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid, 84.
\textsuperscript{61} Kidd, \textit{The Great Awakening}, xv.
\textsuperscript{62} Rimius, \textit{A Candid Narrative}, 139 (italics in original).
making Use of [the] Doctrine of *Blood and Wounds* as a Kind of *Opiate* or *Charm*, tho’ it be really at the Expense of the *Discrimen honestorum & turpium* (‘the difference between good and evil’). How Moravian believers “made use” of blood and wounds piety represented a cultural borderline that separated good from evil. In an even larger sense, the Moravians had offended emerging concepts of Enlightenment rationalism by using implements of bodily corruption, in the form of “opiates and charms,” to disrupt the primacy of human reason. As a result, the virtue of unenlightened bodies, the body of the Church, and the body of the state were now at stake.

In January 1753, the *Independent Reflector*, a weekly newspaper in New York City, published *A Vindication of the Moravians, against the Aspersions of their Enemies* in order to address accusations that the Moravians had engaged in “controversial Points of Divinity.” The “speculative” crusade against the Moravians consisted of nothing more than the desire “of a particular Set of Christians” to “wage the wordy War, about the Externals of Religion, and to demonstrate their Devotion to the Prince of Peace, by virulent Rage, and open Hostilities, against the Brethren.” Zinzendorf and Peter Böhler, the probable authors of this article, clearly recognized the political nature of these new anti-Moravian arguments targeting the “externals of

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63 Heinrich Rimius, *A Solemn Call on Count Zinzendorf, The Author, and Advocate of the Sect of Herrnhuters, Commonly Call’d Moravians, To Answer all and every Charge brough against them in the Candid Narrative &c.; With some further Observations on the Spirit of the Sect. By Henry Rimius*, London: [Printed for A. Linde, Stationer to his Majesty and to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales; and Bookseller to her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, in Catherine-Street in the Strand, 1754], 4.
They worried that their detractor’s unrelenting focus on external bodily practices had the potential to lead to physical violence, were “it not restrained by the milder Law of the Land.”

According to Zinzendorf and Böhler, overzealous Protestant clergy bore the brunt of the blame for the rhetorical hostility toward the Moravian Church. These “cowardly Pulpit-Scolds” did nothing but “discharge…Rage, Invective, and Malevolence” while giving “his Antagonist no Opportunity of scolding back.”

Hoping to quell any lingering misplaced fears inflicted by these unreasonable (and unnamed) clergy, the letter attempted to reassure the public that Moravians were “a plain, open, honest, inoffensive People” who “profess universal Benevolence to all Men, and are irreprehensible in their Lives and Conversations: In a Word, their whole Conduct evidences their Belief, that the Kingdom of Christ is not of this World.”

Thinking this sentiment would soothe the anxious Lutherans and Congregationalists by alluding to the doctrine of the invisible church, the authors almost immediately reasserted the importance of bodily behavior in eighteenth-century Moravian culture. Other denominations, Protestant or Catholic, could disagree with “their peculiar Sentiments,” but Moravian beliefs and behavior rested on the assumption that divine judgement would be wrought, not on the basis of “a Man’s Opinion; but that every

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64 Zinzendorf and Böhler are the probably authors of this article because it is signed “Z. & B.” at the end.
One will be judged *according to the Deeds done in the Body.*” Two lines from a poem by Alexander Pope served to bolster this extraordinary statement: “*For Modes of Faith, let flaming Zealots fight; / He can’t be wrong, whose Life is in the Right.*” Many brands of Christianity existed, but righteousness could only be obtained through a virtuous life lived in the body.

Until 1754, Zinzendorf and the Moravians had mostly ignored the allegations contained in the mounting number of pamphlets and reports against them. Two pamphlets they did put out, the *Apologetische Schluß-Schrift* (‘Final Apologetic Word’) (1752) and *The Plain Case of the Representatives of the Unitas Fratrum* (1754) written by August Gottlieb Spangenberg and Zinzendorf, respectively, did not directly confront the specific accusations leveled against them out of fear that to do so would be to tacitly acknowledge their legitimacy. The sense of shock caused by Henry Rimius, Andreas Frey’s *A True and Authentic Account* (1753), and even the “Grand Itinerant” George Whitefield, who had also published a short *Expostulatory Letter* (1753) mostly taking aim at Zinzendorf’s financial dealings, meant that menial attempts by the Moravians to dismiss these accusations as hyperbole fell on deaf ears. The breadth and depth of research contained in Rimius’s first two pamphlets, *A Candid Narrative* (1753) and *A Solemn Call on Count Zinzendorf* [and] the

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66 Ibid, 2. The anonymous author of this letter wrote under the pseudonym “Philalethes.”
67 Frey’s pamphlet contains many of the same arguments proffered in more meticulous and developed fashion by Henry Rimius. His pamphlet, however, is significant and carried lots of weight with the opponents of the Moravians because Frey had actually spent a significant amount of time with the Moravians and used his first-hand experiences as support for his primary evidence.
Herrnhuters, commonly call’d Moravians (1754) caused such an uproar that they inspired other, less erudite, though no less forceful, writers to air their own grievances about the Moravians.68

Among the most prominent of this new group of anti-Moravian writers in the 1750s was George Lavington, bishop of the diocese of Exeter in England. As a stalwart anti-revivalist Anglican, Lavington came out strongly and publicly against George Whitefield, John Wesley, and the Methodists in 1749 and then again in 1751 with the publication of his two-part The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists, Compar’d.69 His disdain for the behavior of Methodist preachers and the emotionality of their followers transferred to the Moravians after reading Rimius’s pamphlet.

Lavington’s arguments in The Moravians Compared and Detected (1755) vacillate wildly between sincere, though often under-supported, ecclesiastical distinctions and malicious cruelty. As such, histories that address anti-Moravian polemics dismiss him as much too vulgar to be taken seriously. Lavington’s vitriol and hatred toward the Moravians, however, should not be dismissed because his pamphlet, which stretches over 179 pages, represents the clearest expression of how notions of bodily behavior lurked just beneath the literal surface of the opposition to Moravian culture on both sides of the Atlantic. Lavington had no known direct contact with the Moravians, but his pamphlet demonstrates how pervasive and persuasive the transatlantic polemical

discourse denouncing the Moravians had become. The method of argumentation that Lavington employed in his pamphlet represents an important window into the ecclesiastical parameters that defined Protestant radicalism in the early modern Atlantic world.

Even Lavington himself acknowledged the coarseness of the subject matter that populated his tract. On the title page, he included a quote from Cyril of Alexandria, a fourth-century C.E. Christian theologian, that explains his rationale for the vulgarity:

> We wallow indeed in the Mire, by publishing these Things. But lest any one should fall into the Mire of these Heretics, from mere Ignorance, I purposely and knowingly defile my own Mouth, and the Ears of the Auditors, because it is beneficial. For it is much better to hear Absurdity and Filthiness in accusing others, than to fall into them out of Ignorance.  

Better to dishonor himself by exposing the obscenities of heresy than to allow others to fall into them for lack of knowledge. Lavington felt that he was doing the public a service by exposing what he understood as the barbarous nature of embodied Moravian piety.

Acknowledging Rimius as his “chief Guide,” Lavington lamented the modesty of other polemicists who had “taken Care to leave out the greatest Part of [the] lascivious Sentiments and Expressions, [as well as] spiritual Carnalities and devout Obscenities” committed by the Moravians. The only thing Rimius and others had

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71 Ibid, vi.
truly left out was a detailed account of the bodily filth and sexual deviance Moravian believers were thought to have perpetrated through their religious practices. Lavington lacked the ability to speak or read German, so the true nature of Moravian religious culture remained opaque to him. As such, he was forced to rely on the English-language reports and translations of those originally published in German. His reliance upon secondary source material contributed to an unhealthy suspicion of Moravian “secrecy,” as if the Moravians were hiding something from him by communicating in their own language. The Moravian doctrine of the Holy Trinity, for example, was allegedly “intended to be imparted as a Secret” among themselves, not as “an Affair for the World.” Shrouded in German secrecy, the apparent vagueness of Moravian beliefs about the Holy Trinity and their ascription of the creator function to Jesus, as opposed to the more traditional God the Father, led them to misinterpret and misapply the sacrament of baptism. In order to “avoid Idolatry,” Moravians “did not baptize in the Name of the Father, Son, and H. Ghost, but in Christ’s Name only.”

Reversing centuries of tradition in this way had the heretical effect of degrading the importance of God the Father by subsuming his creative power under the purview of God the Son. Had he done more research, perhaps Lavington would have found that Moravians actually baptized believers in the “death” of Jesus, not merely in his name.

Accusation of false and secretive beliefs and practices, however, operated as evidential pretexts for the larger issue of Moravians subversively embodying and

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72 Ibid, 7-8 (italics in original).
gendering the persons of the Holy Trinity. Quoting Rimius, Lavington proclaimed that, “[t]he Holy Ghost is called by the Herrnhuters the eternal Wife of God, the Mother of Christ and of the Church.” The Moravians did ascribe positive feminine subjectivities to the Holy Spirit in the eighteenth century and believers often turned to the Spirit for maternal guidance. They did not understand the Holy Spirit as the “wife of God” nor as the “mother of Christ.” Though Lavington clearly had his facts wrong here, the Moravian gendering of the persons of the Holy Trinity just as clearly offended his traditional Protestant sensibilities. However, the real disruption caused by the gendering of the Trinity lay in the tacit embodiment of the three persons, who were also one. For “these three Things [referring to the three gendered persons of the Trinity] must be understood to be substantially, or essentially, and not in an allegorical Manner.” The gendering necessarily ascribed a corporeality to the Holy Trinity that existed outside the realm of the purely abstract and implicitly challenged traditional Anglican doctrine. Lavington labeled these principles a “common Theology” that was very “important and necessary” to the Moravians because they believed that it rectified “People’s gross Ignorance” as well as that of the “Divines” (referring to Lutheran and Reformed theologians) who had been “committing in this Article a very palpable Omission.” The gendered Trinity gave the “Children of Grace” (meaning the believers) “a careful Mother amongst the H[oly] Trinity, and also a dear Father, and faithful Bridegroom of their Souls.” A partially effeminate Trinity seemed to implicitly question the wisdom of traditional social
hierarchies by elevating the feminine to the realm of the divine and, necessarily, attenuating notions of masculine supremacy. Believers could not be trusted with this much power.\(^73\)

In addition, Moravian conceptions of the Holy Ghost were particularly problematic for Lavington, though inaccurately so, because they feminized and, thus, subordinated the person of Jesus. Lavington quoted one of Zinzendorf’s sermons in order to accuse him of making the Holy Spirit “a Mother of the Creator of all Things.” Seeking to discredit Zinzendorf’s talent as a theologian, he pointed out the logical absurdity of advancing the notion of a being that preceded the creator and thus advanced the ludicrous notion of a “Spirit, who is the Mother of all Things.” Even more absurd was the notion of a ‘mother creator,’ “who conceived the Man Jesus in the Womb of the little Maid” and thereby transformed the Holy Ghost into “the Wife in the Godhead, the Mother of Christ, and of us.” Investing the Holy Ghost with a feminine power of creation, according to Lavington, reduced the masculine authority of God the Father and God the Son and transformed the Holy Ghost, in this sense, into the new savior. For believers to sin, then, was to be “directly unfaithful,” but instead of asking Jesus for forgiveness, sin “must be looked on as Disobedience to the H[oly] Spirit…and the Lamb makes no Complaint, but remains silent.”\(^74\) A passive, feminine Jesus, according to this argument, made him blasphemously irrelevant.\(^75\)

\(^73\) Ibid, 12-13 (italics in original).
\(^74\) Ibid, 13 (italics in original).
\(^75\) In reality, of course, this “observation” and the “analysis” that followed are both patently ridiculous because of the Christocentric nature of Moravian religious culture.
Lavington believed the Moravians had completely inverted traditional gender roles by associating piety with notions of femininity. For him, this implied a direct association of the masculine with obscenity. Moravians did understand believers as occupying the feminine subject position in relation to God and they did associate that position with spiritual strength and purity. For their opponents, however, associating the Moravians with a gender fluid Trinity became the basis for the rhetorical feminization of other important aspects of Moravian religious culture. Citing parallels with the heretics of early Christianity who somehow “agree[d] with Zinzendorf in this Doctrine” of the “H. Ghost’s being a Woman, Daughter, Mother, Wife, &c.,”

Lavington expanded the scope of his criticism to encompass notions of “motherly compassion” that purportedly shielded Moravians from divine judgment and led to a condition of mystical gender equality that had dangerous implications for traditional social structures and interpersonal relations. The feminine Holy Spirit “affordeth equal Assistance with Jesus, and sometimes much more...[h]ence their Disputations, which saveth most, the Blood of Jesus, or the Milk of Mary.” The problem with all this was that it obligated believers “to seek Protection from her,” a backward state of
affairs where the “Mother of Christ is even requested to command her Son.”

Inverting the mystical gender order by placing the feminine subject in the position of power constituted another implied critique of the traditional European social order.

Allowing situational ascriptions of religious meaning invited the possibility of perverse interpretations of traditional theology as well as debauched constructions of how believers interacted with the God-head. Giving believers the ability to create these meanings meant that they could take Jesus into “a little Corner,” where “he [the believer] embraces and kisses his little Lamb. His Loins” they use as a “little bed, the Hands and Feet are [their] Pillows; — but one is the favorite Bit of the Little Lamb’s Corps[e].” Without directly accusing them of necrophilia, Lavington implied that Moravians metaphorically slept on and worshipped the genitals, their “favorite bit,” of their Savior’s dead body. Looking past the demonstrable fact that none of this was actually true of the Moravians, articulating anti-Moravian sentiment in this way was designed to offend traditional European sensibilities about the proper comportment of

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76 Lavington, *Moravians Compared and Detected*, 13, 16, 18 (italics in original). Comparisons of the Moravians to the Valentinian and Gnostic Christians in the first centuries of Christianity were meant to expose their inward-facing “heart religion” and their tendency toward mystical beliefs. The title “‘Gnostic,’” in the early Christian period, “referred to those who possessed ‘Gnosis,’ true knowledge: they knew more than did other Christians about the teachings that Jesus had first intimated to the innermost circles of his discipies.” The Valentinians ascribed to a notion of spirituality where believers “moved with ease in a system of thought where everything in the material world referred inward to the vivid reality of the spiritual Place of Fullness [i.e. heaven].” “What distinguished Gnostics, in the eyes of their enemeies, was their use of myth as a chosen vehicle of religious instruction.” Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, & Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 105, 106, 119, 103-129. Opponents of the Moravians often tried to equate Gnostic myth with Moravian mysticism and the relationship between believer and Christ.

77 As previous chapters have shown, Moravian religious culture absolutely did allow for the ascription of situational meanings to the ideals of Christian belief. Moravian believers did not, however, take this religious authority to the logical (or, really, illogical) extremes postulated by Lavington, Rimius, and others.
living and dead bodies, the proper foci of embodied piety, and especially conventional understandings of the body of Jesus. Accusations of erotic encounters with the divine drew upon larger critiques of common sexuality. “This likewise is their Bath,” where they “move and swim in the Blood of Jesus; a Condition inexpressibly stately!…They soak and melt in Rivers and Seas of Blood.”78 In similar fashion, moderate evangelicals constructed the potential dangers of the new evangelical piety by linking it with illicit sexual practices as a method of reasserting some measure of clerical control over proper methods of worship. As early as 1727, Josiah Smith in South Carolina, for example, preached against the “indulgent pleasures” of the “outwardly religious” because they “belied their pretensions to godliness.”79

Using the blood and wounds of Christ generically to invoke notions of justification and redemption was an entrenched aspect of the Christian tradition. The way Moravians talked about it, however, was another story. The blood and wounds “might, by a favourable Construction, seem to savour of Piety, however wild and fanatical: Or at least pass for a sort of Trap, for catching Children and Simpletons, the Superstitious and Enthusiastical.”80 The illusion of piety fostered by the Moravians constituted a conscious attempt to transform themselves into God, according to their detractors. Lavington accused the Moravians of “trying to take him [Jesus] down” by

78 Lavington, *Moravians Compared and Detected*, 37 (italics in original).
79 Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 71. The phrase “indulgent pleasures” comes from Smith himself in a sermon cited by Kidd in Chapter 6, note 9. The rest of the quoted text in this sentence are part of Kidd’s analysis.
“talk[ing] meanly, and even wickedly of him.” In doing so, a believer assumed authority over the God-head by “dictat[ing] to the H[oly] Spirit, and thereby to Mankind, merely as a Man.” Simply accusing the Moravians of speaking to God in this manner would have raised enough questions, but the example Lavington provided to support this assertion implicated the body as the primary instigator of malfeasance. Lavington quoted Zinzendorf as allegedly saying that, “Christ had not the least Power more than we have. He had laid aside his Godhead, and wrought Miracles as Men are able to do.” In doing so, Christ had “emptied himself so of his Divinity, that the Miracles he wrought, he wrought them only as Men.” The Moravian rendition of the Incarnation, according this assertion, implied that Christ had effectively cast off the burden of divinity and condescended to keep performing miracles anyway when he assumed human form. And so, humans could do the same things that Jesus could do with his human body. By accusing the Moravians of thinking themselves little Christs, Lavington suggested that they had taken the doctrine of the Incarnation to an absurd extreme and ascribed divine powers to the human body that broke with Protestant tradition, Anglican or otherwise. The human bodies of believers could not be divine or perform miracles anymore than Jesus could divest his physical form of divinity.81

Couching these blasphemies in the language of piety invited opponents to scrutinize the “ludicrous Manner, and contemptible Terms” with which Moravians

81 Ibid, 28 (italics in original).
“treat our Lord.” Moravians supposedly used crude and shameful words of familiarity that reduced God and the Church to the status of a lowly commoner. The language and style they used to talk about scripture, “’tis sometimes like that of a Peasant, sometimes of a Carpenter, sometimes of a Fisherman, sometimes of a Man brought up among Toll-gatherers.” Even Jesus Christ “spoke very meanly,” according to the Moravians, “and used many a Phrase becoming a Peasant, which is now looked upon to imply something of a quite different Nature; since we are unacquainted with the Manner of speaking, used by the Journeymen of Nazareth [referring to the Apostles].” By reducing God and his sacred scriptures to the level of common laborers, Moravians rhetorically depicted the body of the Church as a disorderly conglomeration of the masses, not an orderly hierarchy of the saved.82

Alexander Frey, one of the older and more outspoken members of the growing cohort of anti-Moravian polemicists from the late-1740s, also criticized the Moravians for operating outside the normal Protestant lines of religious and social authority by promoting the influence of ordinary believers. “[M]any English Tradesmen, formerly Methodists, are Bishops among them; and most of their Elders and Pastors, common Mechanics, Carpenters, Shoemakers, Cutlers, and the like.” Lavington added that “their making the Savior still a Man, and hearty carpenter in Heaven” only furthered the embarrassment because these diminutions degraded the

82 Ibid, 29 (italics in original).
sacred authority and bodies of both Christ and the Church.\textsuperscript{83} Aversion to the enlargement of lay ecclesiastical authority, a manifestation of the Great Awakening perpetuated by the Moravians, remained palpable among the larger Protestant community.

George Lavington, Alexander Frey, Heinrich Rimius, and other prominent and educated anti-Moravian polemicists used comparison as a method of evaluating Moravian beliefs, practices, and institutions. This tactic effectively established an adversarial dynamic that equated the Moravians with sectarian heresy and nonconformism, while the author, whether Anglican, Congregationalist, Methodist, or otherwise, became the standard representing vague notions of a Protestant mainstream. Anti-Moravian polemicists drew from various early Christian heterodox traditions, especially early Gnostic groups founded by theologians like Valentinus, as foils meant to place adherents of true Protestantism in sharp relief. It was not an accident that most of the available knowledge about the beliefs and practices of these groups came from their opponents, early Christian theologians like Hippolytus of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, and Ireneaus of Lyon. The early Church Fathers often characterized the beliefs and practices of the Gnostics in terms that painted them as sexual deviants. Quoting Clement of Alexandria, Lavington stated that the

\textsuperscript{83} Alexander Frey, \textit{Andreas Freyen seine Declaration, oder: Erklärung, auf welche Weise und wie er unter die sogenante Herrnhuter Gemeine gekommen; und warum er wieder davon abgegangen nebst der Beweg-Ursache warum ers publicirt}, Germanton [Pa.]: Printed by Christoph Saur, 1748, Historical Society of Pennsylvania & Library Company of Philadelphia (HSP in LCP), Am 1748, Fre Ac.228, 14; Lavington, \textit{Moravians Compared and Detected}, 30 (italics in original).
“Valentinians, and Followers of Prodicus, who falsely call themselves Gnostics, or the Knowers, say, that they are by Nature Sons of the first God; but abusing that Nobility and Liberty, they live as they will, and they will live *libidinously*; conceiving themselves to be restrained by nothing, as Lords of the Sabbath, and Royal Children. And Law, they say, is not ordained for the King.”

In point of fact, these accusations, especially the charges of lustful and aberrant sexuality, had precisely nothing to do with Gnosticism. Still, early Christian theologians often linked lawless behavior with wanton sexuality, a notion of aberrant behavior that was subsequently cast onto the Moravians.

Opposite characterizations of Moravians as deviant miscreants were simultaneous indictments of Moravian arrogance in purportedly thinking themselves mini kings who were not subject to the laws of society in the same way as true, obedient Protestants. Lavington linked both allegations to sexual deviance in arguing that the continued existence of the Moravians threatened to penetrate and breach the current religious and social order. “Such is the Difference between us *ordinary Christians*, and a *Moravian or Gnostic,*” he wrote, if “We aspire to a Crown of Glory, we must fight out our Way by Obedience and dutiful Behavior. They have an *indefeasible hereditary Right* to a Crown, and a Crown of a *more exceeding Weight of Glory,* than any of us are to expect; — however dissolute are their Lives and Actions;

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84 Lavington, *Moravians Compared and Detected*, 56 (italics in original; bold type my addition).
though they wallow in all Kinds of Uncleanness.” Tropes of contrasting themes, such as obedience versus misbehavior, merit versus hereditary right, clean and unclean depended upon metaphors of physical action and values inscribed on the body. They worked to create a tidy opposition between “We” versus “They.” Reference to the “lives and actions” of the Moravians highlighted their filthy disobedience, as opposed to the real Protestants who acquired God’s grace through dutiful and clean behavior.86

Implied sexual deviance based on vague notions of religious and political illegitimacy easily translated to the authority the Moravian Church conferred upon ordinary believers. If many of their opponents thought that Moravians believed themselves to be individual sovereigns, it was not difficult to believe that each individual Moravian believer thought him/herself superior to the most learned of church leaders. “And such is the case of our Moravian Gnostics. ‘Every one of them to a man knows more than any of their former teachers.’” Connected with his notion of Moravians as undeserving heirs of God’s grace, Lavington also accused them of believing that in this “new period, Christ hath resolved to declare his Will infallibly to the Brethren,” a charge meant to tug at the religious anxieties of members of Reformed churches who subscribed to John Calvin’s doctrine of predestination. How could Moravians be so arrogant as to think that they could know God’s divine plan, “of which even the Evangelists had been ignorant?” Through a willful misreading of

86 Lavington, Moravians Compared and Detected, 57 (italics in original).
87 Ibid, 56-60 (italics in original). The quote within the quote is a sentence Lavington borrowed from the appendix of Rimius’s A Candidate Narrative on page 8.
the Moravian doctrine of justification by faith alone, Anglicans like Lavington
accused the Moravians of haughtily assuming the mantle of universal knowledge and
requiring no pious participation in their faith. The bodily practices they did participate
in, however, marked them as outsiders to mainstream Protestantism.88

Characterizing the Moravians as presumptuous usurpers who claimed to know
God’s plan certainly did not mean that Moravians had a reputation for being
lackadaisical or inattentive to their spiritual obligations. On the contrary, the rigid
daily devotional schedule observed by visitors to Moravian communities, coupled
with innovations such as correspondence and diaries as implements of personal piety,
became emblematic of Moravians constantly struggling to maintain their relationship
with the Heiland. Believing and practicing this dissident Christian faith outside the
context of an acceptable range of prevailing norms, however, constituted lascivious
behavior. Moravians, other radical Pietist groups like the Schwarzenau Brethren, and
newly emerging Methodist groups had also debased and perverted sacred Christian
rituals such as the love feast, a ceremony steeped in ancient Christian religious
tradition and intimately associated with the sacrament of the Eucharist, by
transforming them into mundane elements of day-to-day, commonplace practice.89

George Lavington and Alexander Frey, who had observed these “Defect[s]…with his
own Eyes, and heard with his own Ears,” lambasted the Moravians for using love

88 Ibid (italics in original).
89 The Schwarzenau Brethren were known as the German Baptist Brethren in early America. They
were a group of millenarian Pietist radicals that emerged in 1708 as a result of their rejection of
Lutheran and Reformed doctrine.
feasts to practice “Revellings on Birth-Days,— a perfect scene of Gluttony, Drunkenness, and Debauchery,— throwing one another on the Floor, and struggling, with many filthy and gross Indecencies,— one Brother breaking Wind over another’s Tea-Cup, &c.” Without proper Christian tradition and leadership, eating, drinking, and ritual ceremony became gluttony, drunkenness, and debauchery. The “revelings” mentioned by Lavington and Frey, consisting of Moravian Brothers “struggling on the floor,” probably referred to “gross indecencies” they associated with homosexual behavior. Making a direct comparison to the laxness of early Christians, Lavington related a story about when “the Devil came among some Monks, who were not over-intent on their Devotion, and violently breaking Wind, said, As are your Prayers, such is your Incense.” A negligent devotional life stunk worse than cloistered flatulence. Lecherous self-indulgence could also lead to violent assault on the spiritual and bodily senses of wayward believers by the devil himself. Bodies that over-indulge in food and drink, bodies that engage in illicit behavior, and otherwise impious bodies all violated traditional norms and assaulted the sacred. If Moravians truly knew God’s plan, after all, they would not allow the devil to move them to such behavior.

Bodies that engaged in these sorts of immoral behavior were “natural” in all the wrong ways. Negative connotations of Moravian ‘naturalness’ became bound up with various rhetorics of unambiguously illicit sexuality, all of which implicated deeper meta-discourses of physical alterity. Instances of Moravians altering

90 Lavington, Moravians Compared and Detected, 61-62 (italics in original).
traditional worship ceremonies and the language of the blood and wounds of Christ melted into more general rhetorical indictments of Moravian bodily senses. In addition to “squander[ing] away the Alms-money” as a result of the “dangers of merrymaking and festivals,” the fault for bodily indiscretions lay with both “[t]hose whose Part it is to teach, and to practice these Enormities, without giving Way to any other Thoughts but the Savior’s Wounds.” The practitioners deserved just as much of the blame as the teachers. The blood and wounds of Christ had evolved into a brainwashing technique that made Moravians of all stripes, both believers and leaders, forget about the spiritual and bodily excesses that had become all too apparent to anyone viewing these practices from the outside. Through the blood and wounds, Moravians had lost their way by “giving themselves up to a natural Life, keeping at a Distance the Bible, and Biblish Matters,” and generally “wallowing in a sensual Security” of their imminent salvation. Salvation based on bodily senses and naturalness effectively turned “Virtue and Religion” upside-down and transformed them into “the pietistical Hobgoblin.” As such, the Moravians were “wretched Men and Women” who spent “day and night in pampering the Body; washing and perfuming, feasting and indulging in Drunkenness and Venery.” Moravian believers indulging their physical senses and focusing on “centering everything in corporal

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91 Too much uncontrolled “merry making” was a common criticism leveled at English Christians by the more conservative elites even before the English Reformation. See Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
92 Lavington, *Moravians Compared and Detected*, 64 (italics in original).
Pleasures, all manner of Lust, and abominable Actions” constituted “the most execrable of vice, not fit to be named; — even sodomy with men and women.”

Indulging his own palpable anger, Lavington’s pamphlet devolved into wild vacillations amidst disparate topics of derision that detract from the overall impact of his argument. He focused his energy on exposing what he considered the most vile aspects of Moravian bridal mysticism and the personal, even sexual, relationship between Moravian believers and God. He even took great issue with Moravian ascriptions of masculinity to the person of Christ. The Moravians, he said, were at pains “to shew that the Savior was of the male Sex, to sanctify the male Member in Mankind, and make it a proper Object of worship to the Ladies.” While Lavington, Rimius, Alexander Frey, Alexander Volck, Carl Gottlob Hofmann, Heinrich Joachim Bothe, Christian Hart, and others all believed in a masculine Christ, the Moravians had somehow transformed him into a hyper-masculine object of improper sexual desire. The Moravian Christ was so preposterously male that believers, especially women, were purportedly encouraged to worship and sanctify his penis, the “male member.” Moravians did believe that Jesus was, in fact, male because they adhered to the Gospel story of how Jesus was circumcised “at the appropriate time” and thus it was clear to them “that he had male sexual organs.” Furthermore, “the circumcision prove[d] the reality of the Incarnation, that God truly became a man.”

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93 Ibid, 83 (italics in original).
Lavington, also citing Rimius, wanted to draw attention to what Moravians “called by the hideous Name of Pudendum [a Latin term meaning both ‘external human genitals’ and also conceptions of bodily shame], the Savior has changed into Verendum [a term meaning ‘to be regarded with reverence’], in the proper and strictest Sense of the Word.” Moravians had transformed a shameful aspect of the human body, the penis, the masculine instrument of fornication and sexual immorality, into a natural aspect of physical human anatomy that should be revered as divinely awe-inspiring and intrinsically holy. “To the end he might hereby turn the Male Shame into Honour.”

Worshipping the “male member” created a clear spiritual and corporeal gender hierarchy that placed men above women, where women “are taught to make a Scruple of respecting Men for any other Reason, respectfully remembering the Man [Jesus] who wore the like Member.” Being taught the “Advantages of their happening to get a Sight of this Member,” perhaps could have been tolerated because of the social implication of this teaching in terms of maintaining traditional religious and social hierarchies. But the Moravians had, once again, taken this idea too far by applying it to female reproductive organs as well. “The Organ of Generation of the other Sex is no less honorable. It has been sanctified by the Birth of the Savior.— The Husband of Souls has lain in one of them,” Lavington and Rimius both quote Zinzendorf as saying in one of his sermons. The immaculate conception of Mary, the human mother of Christ, transformed the womb from a bodily site of “natural Depravity” into a

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95 Lavington, Moravians Compared and Detected, 68 (erroneously paginated; the quotation appears on a page with the number 68 at the top, but it is actually page 88); Rimius, A Candid Narrative, 55.
“venerable Piece of divine Worship, as [believers] can rejoice at in Soul and Body.”

Venerating human genitals reeked of Gnosticism and the “filthy” incestuous nature of Egyptian origins myths “where the Female Part was the Image or Representation of Isis, and the Male Part of Osirus.” The outrage resided in the perceived adoration of certain human body parts as a sort of pagan ritual, and less so with the implications for gender roles and social order. After all, the phallus, in this formulation, operated as a distinctive object of worship, while the reproductive capacity of the womb, not the vagina, which early modern physicians understood as an inverted penis, contained the elements of female divinity.

The critique of insurgent, bodily sexuality in the context of religious worship, however, served as the background for Lavington’s most sustained and most puzzling grievance. He absolutely could not stand the Moravian “Notion that all Souls are Females.” The concept of a feminine soul has a long history in Protestant religious culture. The Puritans, for example, also “regarded the soul as feminine and characterized it as insatiable, as consonant with the supposedly unappeasable nature of women.” All souls, regardless of the physical sex of the bodies they inhabited,
had to be feminine in order to maintain the eighteenth-century propriety of the union with the masculine Christ in mystical marriage. Moravians did believe the soul was feminine, but Lavington and Rimius, both highly educated pastors and theologians, considered this belief “most execrable and shocking” and a “peculiar Fancy of the Count’s own Brain.”

Zinzendorf, in accordance with many other Protestants, did in fact believe that “[t]o think that they are Male souls would be the greatest Folly….All that is of the Male Quality, and was adapted to our Body for a Time, is detached from it as soon as the Corps[e] is interred.” Believers did not “own” their own bodies. God endowed souls with corporeal form so that any physical quality that made some bodies masculine and others feminine would cease to exist upon the reunion of the soul with Christ. Lavington even said as much when he referred to how Jesus “wore the like [male] Member” as if his penis were an impermanent article of clothing. Biological sex, therefore, “was no Part of [the soul’s] natural and primitive State. ’Tis an Addition made to it afterward; an After-creation.”

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100 Lavington, Moravians Compared and Detected, 90-91; Rimius, A Candid Narrative, 59.
101 Ibid. The exact source of this quote remains unconfirmed, but the meaning does align with Zinzendorf’s thoughts on the matter.
102 Thomas Laqueur argues that the notion of a two-sex model for categorizing biological sex is a modern invention that originated with Enlightenment science. In pre-Enlightenment texts “sex, or the body, must be understood as the epiphenomenon, which gender, what we would take to be a cultural category, was primary or “real.” […] To be a man or a woman was to hold a social rank, a place in society, to assume a cultural role, not to be organically one or the other of two incommensurable sexes.” In other words, before the modern period, people understood sex as a cultural construct that existed as a continuum — some people were more feminine, some more masculine — rather than two distinct sexes. Laqueur, Making Sex, 9, 25-62.
103 Ibid, Moravians Compared and Detected, 88-89
104 Ibid, 90.
In Lavington’s mind, a feminine soul meant that bodies could only be physically female in their natural state. He had an extremely difficult time separating the gender of the soul and the sex of the body. With regard to the soul, Lavington related how the Moravians thought “[a]ll Souls are Sisters; the Mystery he, the Savior, knows. They are She-Souls, which are his Bride. She-candidates to rest in his Arms, and in the eternal Bed-chamber.”105 Having a female soul seemed to extinguish the masculinity of the male sex and effectively transformed men into “sisters” in a “shocking and blasphemous” manner. But the real scandal obtained from the implied physical sexualities of these sex-changed bodies. The mystical marriage between believers, both male and female, and Christ created a situation where they were “Created and redeemed finally to sleep in his Embraces.— That the Savior will hereafter celebrate his Nuptials with his Wife, whom the Father will then visit.” Though he could not bring himself to actually say it, Lavington seems to have envisioned Moravians, both male and female, lusting after corporeal copulation with the masculine Christ. In his mind, Zinzendorf made it very clear “that his Followers should understand all this in a carnal Sense, by [quoting Zinzendorf directly now] ‘the Right of the Savior to use their Bodies; and when our Spirit shall one Day re-enter our Body, he will then embrace us in our entire Nature.’”106

The Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus bridged the cosmic divide between humans and the divine, and the bodily death of Jesus made Him the savior of

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humanity. Corporeal sexuality with Jesus, however, even if only imagined, and even if initiated and sanctioned by Jesus Christ himself in human form, could only constitute the most “infamous Purposes” of the Moravians. “The Savior,” Lavington wrote, “then as a Man, in his human Nature, being the Husband of his Moravian Handmaid, the Church, to enjoy her in her human Nature, and in the eternal Bed-Chamber” harkened back to the worst religious crimes of the “Gnostic Heretics.” Moravians, in other words, had perpetrated an assault upon the masculinity of the traditional Protestant body. They had stolen the public prestige that the patriarchal social order ordinarily reserved only for the male sex. Making the soul female, in essence, simultaneously over-emphasized the male role in the Christian spiritual hierarchy and reversed the social hierarchy of men over and above women by placing women closer to God than men. A female soul compromised the traditional authority and importance of both the male and the masculine.

The feminine soul, far from being an accepted and expedient theological fix, assumed the tendencies toward physical excess and illicit sexuality normally associated with unattached women in the Old and New Worlds. Finding, of course, plenty of instances of heretics engaging in this type of behavior, the physically sexed Moravian body having sex as a method of communing with the Savior went far beyond the mere emotionalism of the evangelical body. After fixating upon these issues for dozens of pages, Lavington finally arrived at his central point. “But enough

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107 Ibid, 93.
of this: We may hence observe, that the Count and [the Moravian] Brotherhood may
justly be deemed *Anthropomorphitae, i.e. such as ascribe to the Deity human
Bodies, Parts, and Passions and those of the worst kind;* in agreement with the
Generality of the Gnostics.109 Believing that Christ had become human was a
mandatory, idealized, theological, even devotional element of religious belief that
defined Christians against other religions. However, engaging in strategies of
anthropomorphizing the God-man in specific ways such that Christ became a
reflection of the practices and beliefs of ordinary believers was far beyond the pale.
The embodied nature of Moravian piety — their tendency to ascribe physical forms
and qualities to the invisible God — constituted their ultimate, overarching
transgression. “Where in the *Scriptures* do you find *panegyrical Hymns* in Honour of
your *Phallus*?” Lavington asked, “Or where any *Prayers to God* for anointing your
*Member*, and that the Purple-red Oil may flow upon your *Priest’s Hole*? Where
especially (for the *Reader* should not lose Sight of this Passage, beyond Measure
infamous) do you read of the *Soporific Draught*, which throws *God the Father* into a
Sleep; while his *Wife the H[oly] Spirit, and her Son the Saviour,* are *kissing one
another at a Love-Feast, and passionately inclined, with mutual Resignation?*”110

Lavington’s entire case represents an attempt to feminize the Moravians by
using the categories of the body and gender to paint them as both religious and
worldly deviants. “And what is their final reward [for all this]? ‘They are all to be

110 Ibid, 140-141 (italics in original).
turned into women; created and redeemed to sleep in the arms of Jesus Christ, as a man, in his human nature, as a hearty carpenter, &c.” Groups like the Moravians who deviated from accepted non-evangelical and increasingly acceptable evangelical norms violated unspoken and mostly unconscious notions of the Protestant body in colonial America and the Atlantic world. Opponents grounded the Moravian menace in examples, both real and imagined, that operated at the intersection of alternative genders, politics, sexualities, and bodies. The extent of their alterity, according Lavington, Rimius, Roche, and others consisted of a sinister corporealization of the connected bodies of both Christ and believer as physical idols. “But I must not dismiss the Count and his Herrnhuters,” Lavington lamented, “with other Proofs of their Idolatries.” Moravians were perceived to have engaged in the “Adoration of Images, &c. and direct Prayers to the Side-hole, the Lips, the Cheeks, the Hands, [and the blood],” but “it behoveth us not to worship one, and not another; but that we are to worship each according to his Degree and Order. But he that leaveth any unhonored, confoundeth the whole.” The Son of God in holistically idealized human form constituted the ultimate blessing bestowed upon humankind by God. Worshipping Jesus through prayers and devotions that profanely compartmentalized his body and diminished it to undignified associations with that of ordinary humans, however, constituted not only a heretical Gnostic, but also “Papist” practice, among

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111 Ibid, 166-167.
whom “this Charge is notorious.”  

The Moravians, for their part, did believe in the spiritual power of the Incarnation of Christ. But the arguments proffered by polemicists like Lavington amounted to grievous exaggerations and sparsely supported attempts to pejoratively feminize Moravian beliefs and practices with the purpose of stirring the passions of the larger Protestant denominations against them. In this pamphlet literature, the Moravians become disorderly, highly emotional, lustful, irrational, sexual deviants, characteristics that were commonly associated with femininity in the early modern period.

The Protestant community believed that the Moravians had violated both the religious and social body. Using Zinzendorf’s own words to draw a stark contrast between religious insiders and outsiders in the Atlantic world, Lavington concluded that “we may then fairly submit to the judgment and conscience of every impartial person, whether the Society of the United Brethren do not richly deserve what the Count says ‘is the aim of their opponents, namely, to exclude the Brethren’s Churches from occupying any place in the general body of Christians; — and to deprive them likewise of all civil toleration in any nation of the globe, from south to north, from east to west.”

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112 Ibid, 166-167. Many opponents of the Moravians leveled the charge of “papism” as a method of portraying their religious culture as radical.

113 Ibid, 178.
Perceptions of the Moravians in British America Altered, 1760 - 1790

The fervor with which British and German Protestant groups attacked the Moravians via newspapers and pamphlets on both sides of the Atlantic did not last, but the negative reputation that the American public had bestowed upon them also did not completely disappear. The Moravian threat subsided at roughly the same historical moment that the existential dangers posed by itinerant evangelical preachers and their followers yielded to larger political and imperial issues. On August 25, 1760, the *Boston Post-Boy & Advertiser* printed an extract of a letter announcing the death of Zinzendorf, who had “got himself a Name by Methods which the best Heads of his Age have judged to be no longer practicable.” The larger Moravian Church, however, “whose Morals are yet a Problem,” was now known for its “diverse rich Settlements…which they are indebted to his Care and Endeavors.” Far from being celebrated as a Protestant victory over heretical evil, though, Zinzendorf’s death and the Moravian Church generated relatively little press.\(^{114}\) Twenty-four years later in 1784, one pamphlet described the Moravians as a people “who profess to belong to a church that has been preserved free from corruption ever since the times of the apostles,” and “nothing was found in them, either in doctrine or discipline, that was in

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\(^{114}\) The “Moravians” or “Herrnhuters” appeared in colonial newspapers roughly 200 times (alongside more than 500 mentions in the “Advertisements” sections) from 1760 to 1790. The vast majority of these mentions are fleeting, anecdotal mentions of Moravian in colonial British- and then US national society.
any great measure liable to censure. They are quiet and peaceable members of society.”¹¹⁵ A dramatic reversal indeed.

But why had the Moravian’s previous reputation as religious fanatics changed so substantially? How could the Moravians go from being the harbingers of secretive delusion, the reincarnation of Satan on earth, and the scourge of Protestantism in the Atlantic world in the 1740s and 1750s to just one among many quirky-but-respectable Protestant groups by the end of the century? In short, the Seven Years’ War and the American Revolution happened. The voluminous anti-Moravian pamphlets that appeared regularly in the 1740s and 1750s practically vanished from the colonial presses because their authors became wrapped up in other, more pressing disputes concerned with the larger imperial crisis. That did not mean, however, that the Moravians had simply been forgotten. Subsequent current events, combined with the Moravian transition away from touting embodied mysticism and toward more concrete observations of the physical world, produced a renewed appreciation of Moravians that emphasized their new status as inter-cultural “middlemen” because of their extensive experience with non-European peoples. Still, this new status could not completely erase the religious stigma they garnered in the mid-eighteenth century.

¹¹⁵ Jedidiah Morse, Geography made easy. Being a short, but comprehensive system of that very useful and agreeable science. ... Illustrated with two correct and elegant maps, one of the world, and the other of the United States, together with a number of newly constructed maps, adapted to the capacities and understanding of children. Calculated particularly for the use and improvement of schools in the United States. By Jedidiah Morse, A.B. [Five lines of quotations], Early American Imprints, Series 1, No. 18615, 1784, pg. 56. Paul Peucker offers a useful discussion of the influence of “primitive Christianity” upon early Moravian liturgical forms. Paul Peucker, “The Ideal of Primitive Christianity as a Source of Moravian Liturgical Practice,” Journal of Moravian History, No. 6 (Sprint 2009): 6-29.
By the early 1760s, colonial newspapers portrayed the Moravians as minor participants in larger issues of frontier contention with African and Indigenous peoples. Slave insurrection, both on British-controlled soil and beyond, was one issue that had captured the attention of the colonial reading public. On August 1, 1763, the Boston Post-Boy printed an extract of a letter from a “Gentleman in Surinam to his Friend in N[ew] Y[ork],” which informed the latter of “an insurrection of the Negroes in the Rio Berbice...a Dutch Settlement on the Coast of Gui[ana].”116 Vastly outnumbered by the Africans who had been transported to the region by force — “the whole Number of white Inhabitants, was about 500 Souls, and near 6000 Negroes,” — the letter attempted to raise the alarm to the recipient and, by extension, the white newspaper reading public in Boston that “if the most vigorous Methods are not pursued at Home to crush the Insurrection...I am afraid we shall in a few Years, be without any[more] [white Europeans] on this Continent.” The Moravians were not directly involved with the slave rebellion, but the letter mentions them as a positive force in the region for the Europeans because they had ministered to the “Indians, who are very numerous there, [and] are a quite, docile, tractable People.” The Moravians had played a role in cultivating the advantageous disposition of local Indigenous peoples in the region (from the European perspective) because “[n]umbers

116 “Extract of a letter from a Gentleman at Surinam to his Friend in N. York, dated June 15, 1763,” The Boston Post-Boy & Advertiser, No. 311, August 1, 1763. America’s Historical Newspapers, http://infoweb.newsbank.com (accessed January 14, 2017). The reference to the coast of “Guiana” actually reads "Guinea" in the original newspaper article, but refers to the region “lying 6D. 'N. Lat. 50 Leagues W. of Surinam, and 20 S.E. of Essiquebo, belonging to the City of Amsterdam; a very extensive Settlement.”
of them are [now] Christians, being converted by Moravian Missionaries settled on the Rivers Jamaica, Courantyne, and Berbecia.” The focus had shifted away from the mystical particulars of Moravian beliefs and mission practices that worked to syphon believers away from other Protestant congregations toward a dynamic where Moravians were having a palliative effect upon a potentially hostile population. In the realm of colonial race relations, the Moravian’s work with Native Americans, coupled with their complicity in the institution of slavery, now helped their reputation because the results of their efforts seemed to place them more in line with the traditional biases against non-European peoples held by the British colonials. Recurring clashes with Native American groups during the Seven Years’ War and the looming threat of slave rebellions only served to nurture British prejudices and prompted them to ‘make nice,’ as it were, with other European groups. Moravians, therefore, played a role, however small and brief, in the solidification of a common racial identity among white Europeans in the late-eighteenth century.

Lingering associations of the Moravians with religious radicalism, however, translated to much less positive associations with the British monarchy in the decade before the American Revolution. Making that correlation in colonial newspapers began in seemingly innocent fashion with a report in the *New Hampshire Gazette* published in December 1765 after the Moravians had assisted the newly arrived governor of Labrador, Admiral Hugh Palliser, in communicating with “36 of the

117 Ibid.
Esquimaux [Eskimo] Indians” with whom he had “several Conferences” in the hopes of establishing trade relations. Positive reports like this, however, did not last and associations with the British turned more hostile when the Moravians became unknowingly embroiled in the late stages of an event that historians have labeled the Anglican “Bishop Controversy.” Because they did have bishops in the New World as early as the 1740s, the Moravians became argumentative symbols for both sides of the colonial debate about whether Church of England ministers should have an administrative bishop to oversee Anglican pastoral affairs in America.¹¹⁸ For Congregationalists in New England and New York as well as other Protestant groups who opposed the strengthening of Anglican establishments, bishops of any kind, including Moravian bishops, represented the worst sort of ecclesiastical tyranny. The Anglican “episcopalian bigots” who considered themselves “universally absolved of ignorance, pride, hypocrisy, and superstition” and “in spite of the acknowledgments of those OLD WOMEN, Archbishop Usher, Bishop Burnet, and many other old womanly bishops…would condemn even Moravian and Popish episcopacy, did they not want zeal to subject all denominations to what they profess to believe to be

Bishops, in other words, Anglican, Moravian, Catholic, or otherwise, represented inevitable monarchical oppression under the guise of conformity to the unbroken apostolic succession. The author of this opinion piece attempted to feminize the idea of transporting episcopal power to colonial America as a method of associating bishops with arbitrary monarchical authority in similar fashion to the “misogynistic feminizing” of Tory political identities in late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Whig propaganda. “Ignorance, pride, hypocrisy, and superstition,” after all, were traits commonly associated with both corrupt politicians and women, in contradistinction to the competence, humility, trustworthiness, and rationality that supposedly “exemplified” honorable masculine authority and behavior in this period.

Implicitly denigrating the Moravians in gendered terms by associating them with the “old women” who currently served as Anglican bishops also manifested in other ways in this debate. Opponents of Anglican bishops in the British colonies held up Moravian bishops as examples of their superfluousness. Moravian bishops did not possess the vast powers of “prelates commissioned by his Majesty, as supreme head of the Church [of England], and authorized by the nation, as branching from the ecclesiastical establishment in England.” Diocesan bishops in the Church of England


oversaw the regulation of both civil and religious morality through church courts, which had been common practice in England since the 1570s and represented a real fear among members of dissenting denominations. Anglican bishops “are not to be mere voluntary bishops, such as the Moravians,” and should not be thought of as such, because opponents feared they would possess the vast powers bestowed by the English king and the corresponding religious establishment. In the debate over what powers a potential Anglican bishop should possess in the American colonies, Moravian bishops became examples of ecclesiastical administrative excess and redundancy because of their perceived powerlessness.

On the other side of the Bishop Controversy, Moravian bishops represented much needed practical stability. Anglican preachers on American soil put a positive spin on anti-bishop arguments by proclaiming that weakened bishops would only be empowered to facilitate the administration of common church matters, such as “keeping up a succession of ministers, and [maintaining] order, in the body ecclesiastical, whether lodged in one or many [bishops].” A limited administrative bishop, they argued, was “no novel-invention, but known in the purest ages of the church.” Many Protestant churches had “bishops nearly on the same foundation. The Danish bishops have neither temporal jurisdiction, nor ecclesiastical courts; nor have the Moravian bishops; and yet they have the ordination and government of their

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inferior clergy.”123 The perceived weakness of Moravian bishops and their inability to enforce any punitive measures upon civil society, coupled with their ability to perform necessary administrative and pastoral tasks, operated as a positive argument in favor of bringing Anglican bishops to America.

In response to these arguments, the American Whig published a long piece in the New-York Gazette in which he attempted to refute calls for the importation of Anglican bishops to America based on spurious claims that episcopal bishops represented the integrity of the apostolic succession. He sarcastically argued in closing that because Parliament had already deemed the Moravians to be a “truly episcopal and apostolic church,” utilizing Moravian bishops who already resided in British America could be one “method in which both ordination and confirmation may be obtained without…crossing the western ocean.” “[A]s there are generally one, two, or three Moravian Bishops on the continent, the candidates for [Anglican] holy orders, can never be at a loss for ordination, nor any layman for confirmation.”124 This would supposedly solve the Anglican’s chronic problem of the scarcity of properly educated and ordained preachers in the New World.125 In reality, of course, all Protestants knew that ordinations and confirmations did not cross denominational boundaries, regardless of apostolic continuity or Parliamentary acts of toleration, so

this argument should be seen as either ignorance or pure insult. As the transatlantic imperial crisis deepened in the late-1760s, Moravian bishops had become symbolic of both the positive and negative pastoral and political consequences of an Anglican prelatical presence in colonial America. Moravians, thus, played a role in shaping the public discourse about political and ecclesiastical power in colonial America.

With the commencement of hostilities in 1775, colonial newspapers utilized similar strategies of painting the Moravians in both positive and negative lights based upon the relative level of their perceived support for the revolutionary cause. Much like the Quakers, the Moravians garnered a significant measure of suspicion because of their dedication to pacifist principles and their very practical aversion to oaths of allegiance. The Pennsylvania Packet published an excerpt of the meeting minutes of the Pennsylvania General Assembly in May 1778, which detailed the reasons “for not granting the petitions of the Moravians and Schwenkfelders” as it related to their formal request to “dispens[e] with the abjuration of allegiance to the King of Great Britain, contained in the Test of allegiance, [and] required by law, of the inhabitants of this state.” As non-English colonists in a foreign land, the Moravians attempted to walk a fine line of neutrality rather than prematurely cast their lot with either the English colonists or the British crown. Colonial governments, not surprisingly, took

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an ill view of neutrality and associated it with secretive opposition. The Declaration of Independence, after all, had dissolved “all allegiance to the British Crown,” so the Moravians asking permission to exempt themselves from the necessity of renouncing their allegiance to King George III cast a new cloud of suspicion over them.¹²⁷

After the war, however, the American newspaper reading public received much more consistently positive reports about Moravian activities in different regions. The Independent Chronicle, a weekly newspaper printed in Boston, published a letter from London that praised the way Moravians treated African slaves in the Caribbean as a method of supporting an early abolitionist movement in Great Britain.

And in the Danish settlements of St. Croix, and St. John, the Moravian Missionaries have proselytized near 6000 Negroes. In Antigua, they have a congregation of several hundreds and a gentleman, who saw them in public worship, has declared that their deportment was remarkably serious, devout, and edifying; And they do greatly surpass all the other slaves, in sobriety, diligence, quietness, fidelity and obedience, that the Planters are anxious to have their Negroes put under the direction of the Missionaries.¹²⁸

The Massachusetts Spy published a series called the “The History of America,” which celebrated the Moravians for integrating the continent of Greenland into the Atlantic world community through the establishment of a “communication with that country” wherein the “Moravian missionaries, prompted by zeal for propagating the Christian faith, have ventured to settle in this frozen and uncultivated region. To them we are

indebted for much curious information with respect to [Greenland’s] nature and inhabitants.”

A newspaper in Rhode Island published an extract of a letter from Boston by a man who had recently visited “Moravian towns” in South Carolina, “which are in a very flourishing state.” This man almost could not say enough about his admiration for the Moravian behavior he had witnessed.

[S]implicity of manners prevail among these sober [Moravian] people in a very remarkable degree: This sect have every thing in common, and are possessed of very large and valuable property […] The younger of both sexes are totally secluded from intercourse until the day of marriage, when a house, land, utensils, &c. are allotted them, and the produce of their labor, after deducing for necessaries, is thrown into the general repository. Near Bithania, one of their towns, is a new large manufactory for earthen ware, which they have brought to great perfection. This industrious fraternity, by unremitting labor, have within a few years brought a wild barren extent of country into a high state of population and improvement.

The sense of surprise expressed by the author could possibly be a reaction to the bad press the Moravians had received in the past. Contrary to the notion that the Moravians consisted of a radical band of unrestrained deviants, they appeared as mannerly, devout, honorable, tasteful, enterprising, and, perhaps most surprising of all, traditional in their views on pre-marital sexuality, marriage, labor practices, and commercial participation in local markets, despite being organized on communal principles. No longer agents of disorder, Moravian bodies were composed and in-


control, they worked, they produced value, and they followed the rule of law in North Carolina.

In the northern states, the Moravians had become just one among many German Protestant groups that thrived in Pennsylvania because of laws against religious intolerance. The author of “An Account of the Manners of the German Inhabitants of Pennsylvania” characterized the Moravians as “a numerous respectable body of Christians in Pennsylvania.” Moravian bodies remained objects of fascination, but they retained their newly conventional character. In Bethlehem, “there are two large stone buildings, in which the different sexes are educated in habits of industry in useful manufactures.” The sex-segregated choir houses did such a great job in this regard because “[t]wo of them watch over the rest, in turns, every night, to afford relief from those sudden indispositions which sometimes occur, in the most healthy persons, in the hours of sleep.” Segregating the sexes with the aim of preventing illicit sexual activity had a positive effect on commercial productivity and could only be the result of a religion “which produces so much union and kindness in human souls.” Most importantly, the Moravians now focused on producing inhabitants that were skilled in manufacturing. “They inure their children, of five and

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131 It is fascinating that by the end of the eighteenth century, Moravians still had a reputation for having such a large following. By 1775, the total number of Moravians who had migrated to the original thirteen British colonies numbered in the low 800 (Fogleman gives 830 as the number). This figure, of course, does not include Moravians born in British North America, nor does it include Moravians in the Caribbean or South America. Still, the total population of Moravians in the New World could not have been more than a few thousand total. Aaron Fogleman, _Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775_ (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 105.
six years old, to habits of early industry. By this means they are not only taught those
kinds of labor which are suited to their strength and capacities, but are preserved from
many of the hurtful vices and accidents to which children are exposed.”

The American public now viewed Moravian bodies as an asset to civil and religious
society, not a hinderance.

BY THE DAWN OF THE EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD, the Moravians had all but
shed their reputation as dangerous and immoral deviants. The proclamation of their
newfound respectability stood in stark contrast to the ferocious public vitriol they
attracted in the 1740s and 1750s. Since then, the critical gaze of the American public
had shifted away from inwardly scrutinizing the esoteric minutiae of Moravian
beliefs, practices, and religious experiences, and toward the outward behavior of
Moravian missionaries and believers in the real world within the context of the
transatlantic network they had built. Moravians ingratiated themselves into late-
colonial and early national American society and commercial markets to the point that
even the choir system, the most prominent symbol of the Moravian communal
economy, was no longer controversial. By 1789, the Moravian Church in
Pennsylvania had not officially operated on the basis of a communal economy for

132 “An Account of the Manners of the German Inhabitants of Pennsylvania,” The Daily Advertiser
almost thirty years. Changes in public opinion of the Moravians more often reflected the geo-political impacts of the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution than any substantive changes in Moravian religious beliefs and practices. The positive public reports about Moravian choirs that highlighted the beneficial effects the choir system had on the productivity of Moravian bodies, however, signify just how far the reputation of the Moravian Church had come since mid-century in contrast to the severity of their radical past.

Though the Moravians never completely rid themselves of associations with religious radicalism, Moravian bodies had come to be seen as productive and useful, not subversive and dangerous. In Pennsylvania, Moravians created commercial growth instead of insurgent delusion. In the Caribbean and South America, they pacified what many viewed as potentially dangerous non-European peoples instead of rousing the incendiary emotions of the masses. The Atlantic world identities Moravians had spent the previous six decades constructing for themselves had not changed. Those identities only grew stronger with time. Outside opinions of the Moravians, however, had changed quite substantially. Where the Moravians were, in

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133 The Moravian Church officially abandoned the communal economy in 1762, shortly after Zinzendorf’s death. For the best available discussion of the Moravian transition from a communal to private economy in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, see Beverly Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem* (1988).

134 The point about Moravians not being able to completely rid themselves of associations with religious radicalism will become clear in the conclusion chapter that follows.
terms of physical location, and how outsiders perceived their behavior now constructed who they were within the larger Protestant community.\textsuperscript{135}

The American public, in other words, had experienced a cultural transition similar to the one embraced by Moravian missionaries and other common believers in the 1760s and 1770s as they became more confident in their ability to navigate the uncertainties of living on the physical and cultural margins of the Atlantic world (see chapter four). Late-colonial and early national Americans no longer fixated on the inward, mystical qualities of Moravian piety. They observed the outward bodily behavior of Moravians and came to new understandings of them based on these observations. The Moravian Church, much like the Atlantic world from the perspective of believers, had become less mysterious. By 1790, the radical nature of Moravian religious beliefs had been sufficiently litigated in the public sphere so that little more explanation was needed. Moravian bodies, in other words, had become much less radical.

From the ashes of the chaos inflicted upon Protestant culture by the Great Awakening and the trauma imposed on American society by the devastation of the Seven Years’ War and the American Revolution rose a plural religious environment and, subsequently, a Moravian Church that seemed much less daunting and enigmatic. The public feminization of Moravian religious culture in the mid-eighteenth century operated as a rhetorical instrument of cultural catharsis that aimed to collectively

\textsuperscript{135} As opposed to consensus opposition to the Moravians based on wild speculations about the mystical nature of their religious beliefs and every conceivable negative consequence of them.
redefine the new parameters of Protestantism in the wake of the evangelical assault on traditional forms of preaching and worship. Fiery denunciations of Moravian radicalism eventually yielded to more rational observations of the social advantages that could be gained from their behavior. The ontological focus of early modern conceptions of religious radicalism had changed, not the Moravians. Historians tend to associate radicalism with elements of perceived cultural extremism that are intrinsic to and define a person or group deemed radical. On the contrary, the evolution in perceptions of Moravian religious culture over the course of the eighteenth century demonstrates that early modern Protestant radicalism only really existed in the eyes and pens of the beholder.

Vacillating public perceptions of Moravians over the latter half of the eighteenth century also suggest that the contours of early modern religious radicalism partially depended upon the direction of the current geo-political winds. In relative peacetime, as the sectarian fires stoked by the First Great Awakening began to calm, the Moravians became the purest expression of the inherent dangers of according ecclesiastical authority to lay believers. As threats of bodily harm from Native American and African peoples once again became real to British people living in North America and the Caribbean, the Moravians suddenly transformed into favorable allies. With their political and physical lives on the line during the American Revolution, rebellious British colonials questioned the loyalty of the non-British Moravians and tried to force their support for the revolutionary cause. As
peacetime returned to North America, the Moravians largely became valuable
contributors to the new republic. The ascriptive nature of religious radicalism in the
eighteenth century became most urgent and unstable at times when larger physical
and political threats seemed most imminent and present. Thus, radicalism not only
emanated from the observers of groups deemed radical. The radicalism of groups like
the Moravians, as proclaimed in the public sphere, waxed and waned with the very
same cultural proclivities and biases — with regard politics, gender, race, class, etc.
— that caused physical opposition to their detractors. Perceptions of bodily condition,
in times of peace, in times of war, in times of controversy, dictated the relativistic
nature of early modern religious radicalism in early America.
In September 1789, only months after the commencement of the revolution in France, the *New York Packet* printed a “Striking instance of the shocking effects of fanaticism in the account of a tragical event, which happened in South Carolina in 1724,” for which the Moravians allegedly bore responsibility.\(^1\) The article accused “a strolling Moravian preacher” of “insinuating himself into” an unsuspecting local Protestant family called the Dutartres, who were “descendants of French refugees,” by providing them with copies of “the writings of Jacob Behmen,”\(^2\) which “filled their heads with wild and fantastic ideas.”\(^3\) This preacher could not have actually been a Moravian because the Moravians did not begin arriving in British North America until 1735. The author of the article, however, clearly had the Moravians in mind because he connected the preacher to the writings of Jakob Böhme. One of the quintessential devotional writers who famously influenced the more radical wings of the German Pietism movement, Böhme’s tracts on mystical themes of personal

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\(^1\) Though the connection is not made explicitly, the structure of this particular issue of *The New-York Packet* makes the connection between this story and the onset of the French Revolution clear because the very next article the reports of “REVOLUTION in FRANCE,” and discusses the aftereffects of the separation of the Third Estate from the Estates-General on June 17, 1789. “FOREIGN ADVICES. By the latest Arrivals at this Port, from Europe. REVOLUTION in FRANCE. FRANCE, June 17.” The New-York Packet, No. 954, September 1, 1789. America’s Historical Newspapers, [http://infoweb.newsbank.com](http://infoweb.newsbank.com) (accessed January 14, 2017).

\(^2\) “Behmen” is an eighteenth-century English-language rendition of the name “Böhme” that attempted to replicate the pronunciation of the German umlaut.

holiness and individual experiences of grace scandalized the early seventeenth-century Lutheran establishment in Saxony and Silesia because of his alternative interpretation of the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone.

The influence of this unnamed Moravian preacher and the subversive literature he supposedly gave to the Dutartres family caused them “to withdraw themselves from the ordinances of public worship and all conversation with the world around them, and strongly imagine that they were the only family upon earth who had knowledge of the true God.” Renouncing worldly ecclesiastical institutions would not have aroused much suspicion outside the context of their local village had Peter Rombert, the husband of the Dutartres’s eldest daughter, not subsequently began to extemporaneously preach in public. Preaching in the streets led to “open visions, and revelations: God raised up a prophet among them ‘like unto Moses,’ to whom he taught [the Dutartres family] to hearken.” Channeling the authority of a divine prophet, Rombert preached that, “the wickedness of man was again so great in the world, that he was determined again, as in the days of Noah, to destroy all men from off the face of it, except one family, whom he would save for raising up a godly seed upon earth.” Absolutely certain that his millenarian prophesy would come true, Rombert “felt it as plain as the wind blowing on his body,” a sense of assurance which quickly translated to “the rest of his family, with equal confidence and presumption,” who, “firmly believed it.”

4 Ibid.
Tragedy struck, however, as a result of a second revelation received by the prophet. Rombert related to his family that God told him to,

put away the woman thou hast for thy wife; and when I have destroyed this wicked generation, I will raise up her first husband from the dead and they shall be man and wife as before; and go thou and take to wife her youngest sister, who is a virgin; so shall the chosen family be restored entire, and the holy seed preserved pure and undefiled in it.

Upon hearing this, the father, who initially “staggered at so extraordinary a command from heaven,” eventually acquiesced, “took his youngest daughter by the hand, and immediately gave her to the wise prophet, who, without further ceremony, took the damsel and deflowered her.” The family continued for some time “in acts of adultery and incest, until that period which made the fatal discovery & introduced the bloody scene of blind fanaticism and madness.” This wayward prophet had “deluded these wretches,” by convincing them “of their own righteousness and holiness, and of the horrid wickedness of all others, that they refused obedience to the civil magistrate, and to all laws and ordinances of men.” 5

The bodies of these followers of radical millenarian prophesy were now out of order. Accusations of “fanaticism and madness” referred to very specific bodily actions and behaviors that placed the Dutartres family outside the boundaries of colonial law. A pacifist streak ran them afoul of a law compelling compliance with the local militia. Physical disengagement with their local community also placed them in violation of a “law for repairing the highways.” And, when Judith Dutartres became

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5 Ibid.
pregnant from the prophet, who was not, according the law, her husband, she had violated “laws of the province, framed for preventing bastardy,” as well. Perhaps worst of all, however, the prophet told the Dutartres family that, “God commanded them to arm and defend themselves,” despite their pacifist principles, “against persecution,” and that “no weapon formed against them, should prosper.” After a tense shootout with the “constable and his followers,” who had come to arrest them on the other charges, the militia was finally called to quell the tensions. Witnessing the arrival of the local Justice of the Peace, the Dutartres family barricaded themselves in their home and “fired from it like furies, shot Capt. Simmons dead on the spot, and wounded several of the party.” The militia responded by storming the house, killing one woman family member, and taking the rest into custody by force.6

Not fearing worldly judgement, the family confessed to the accusations leveled against them, but “pleaded their authority from God, in vindication of themselves.” In defiance of all secular authority, those condemned to death for their crimes “told the spectators,” who gathered to witness their executions, that “they should see them again, for they were certain, they should rise again from the dead on the third day.” The Moravians, in other words, had perpetrated a situation where normally good people “pretended they had the spirit of God, leading them to the truth; they knew it and felt it: But this spirit[,] instead of influencing them to obedience, purity and peace, commanded them forsooth to commit rebellion, incest

6 Ibid.
and murder.” This “tragical scene of fanaticism” was not the fault of God. The actions of these individuals constituted a “signal and melancholy instance of the weakness and frailty of human nature, and to what giddy heights of extravagance and madness an inflamed imagination will carry unfortunate mortals!” Moravians had a long reputation for believing that they possessed bodies synonymous with Christ’s divine body, so accusing them of creating the conditions for the emergence of a millenarian cult with murderous inclinations based on false prophesy did not need much qualification. Human nature, in this instance, had failed God because ordinary people, at the prompting of the Moravians, began believing they possessed too much power.7

The fate of the Dutartres family resurfaced in 1789 at the same historical moment as the onset of the French Revolution. Once again, in times of religious, political, and social discord, the Moravians became newly controversial, regardless of the fact that this allegedly Moravian preacher could not have actually been in South Carolina to lead the Dutartres family astray. While the millenarian and prophetic religious beliefs the Dutartres family adopted may have been controversial, their subsequent practices and physical behavior, just like that of the Moravians and the Third Estate in France, were what, ultimately, put them in conflict with the colonial public. By scapegoating the Moravians for this unfortunate incident, the author of the article demonstrated how notions of bodily behavior operated as a catalyst for

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7 Ibid.
mobilizing both conceptions and accusations of religious radicalism by the end of the eighteenth century.

In general, radical religious groups in colonial America worked to create extra-worldly churches where the boundary between heaven and earth became blurred in the process of practicing ritual observances and celebrations. They also tended to de-emphasize the importance of intra-community social distinctions in defiance of the traditional hierarchies that governed British colonial society. In these ways, religious radicals championed early modern Enlightenment notions of individualism by allowing people to choose alternative methods of worshipping Christ for themselves while circumventing traditional authorities. Radical evangelicals, especially during the Great Awakening, attempted to mitigate the backlash they received for innovations in methods of preaching and worship by arguing in favor of sharp distinctions between the spiritual and physical worlds in defending their beliefs and practices. Existence in the physical world was only temporary, but the soul was eternal. How souls came to be saved did not matter, they argued, just as long as they were, in fact, saved. In addition, perhaps the most important distinction that set religious radicals apart from the rest was their tendency to promote separation from more entrenched, and often officially established, Protestant denominations.⁸

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Moravian religious culture in the eighteenth century contained many, though not all, of these hallmarks of religious radicalism. Ordinary Moravian believers played an enhanced role in the official dissemination of Christian doctrine and beliefs as compared to other Protestant denominations. The Moravian communication network, in the form of epistolary correspondence, personal and travel diaries, and institutions like the Gemeintag service, supported this dynamic and also facilitated the integration of Moravian transatlantic identities. Furthermore, the choir system instituted an alternative social arrangement that minimized the traditional social hierarchies maintained by the nuclear family, which British society depended on for political and economic stability. The Moravians wanted to create a community based upon religious principles that would allow individuals to focus on and continuously cultivate their personal relationships with the Heiland over and above other worldly relationships. The Philadelphian influences that produced Moravian ecumenism, however, prevented any inclinations toward ecclesiastical separatism. Moravians preferred a more ephemeral vision of community where believers transcended the traditional divisions of Protestant denomination. The real tragedy of the Dutartres family, from the perspective of those who opposed Protestant radicals, inhered in their falling victim to these Moravian challenges to traditional Protestant spiritual, ecclesiastical, and social authority.

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9 For a description of the Moravian choir system, please refer to the Introduction on pages 8-9 and note 18. For a more detailed discussion of the Moravian choir system during the communal period, see Beverly Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem* (1988).
The Moravians incurred such extravagantly adverse reactions to their presence in colonial America and the Atlantic world and in response to their alternative religious and social arrangements because they were perceived to have exceeded the criteria that defined the parameters of Protestant radicalism. Above and beyond the most radical evangelical separatists who rejected church establishments as intrinsically corrupt, outsiders saw the Moravians as advocating a new and egregious form of individualism. The Great Awakening had produced radical itinerant preachers who actively challenged the religious authority of traditional ministers and promoted the idea that believers should be free to choose which church they attended. Moravian individualism seemed to afford common believers an active role in actually shaping the nature of religious beliefs and practices, a function traditionally reserved strictly for trained theologians and clergy. Accusations of separatism and the way opponents articulated their reactions against the religious authority of common believers actually expressed latent fears that the Moravians wanted to conquer confessional culture and form a pan-Protestant church with themselves at the top of a new spiritual and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Also, Moravian women not only held leadership positions in the Moravian Church — the only title they could not hold was that of bishop — but they also possessed the responsibility to teach and mentor other women and some

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10 Johannes Wallmann partially observed this dynamic in connecting Pietist radicalism with notions of Philadelphianism in Europe. His analysis, however, only looks inward at the idiosyncrasies of radical Pietist groups. He does not connect this dynamic to outside observers, the consequences of the emergence of evangelicalism, or the transatlantic revivalism movement. See Johannes Wallmann, Der Pietismus (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1990), 101-102.
even possessed the authority to preach to both Moravian men and women. Their most heinous and oft-cited offense, however, involved the embodied nature of their spiritual practices.

The body played a major role in eighteenth-century evangelical culture in British America and the Atlantic world, a role that historians have only begun to appreciate. How bodies moved, spoke, acted, reacted, prayed, and otherwise behaved had enormous consequences for how traditional religious authorities treated those who advocated and practiced the progressive new modes of preaching and worship that began to appear in the 1730s. Evangelical bodies shouted improvised exhortations proclaiming the saving grace of the New Birth to adoring, or at least eminently curious, audiences at outdoor revivals. Many of the bodies that converted, quaked, fell, and cried out upon listening to the message of the New Birth initially found themselves at the revivals in the first place because of curious advertisements in colonial newspapers that depicted George Whitefield’s famously crossed eyes. Fear, angst, shock, shrieks, moans, and spiritual ecstasy all manifested in the bodies of those in the throws of the early stages of the conversion process. Itinerant ministers caused trouble by moving freely through the countryside and preaching outside the

11 While this dissertation does not, by design, focus upon the Moravian Church leadership, the participation of Moravian women in the transatlantic correspondence network, by writing letters and keeping diaries, implicates their capacity for spiritual leadership and their ability to shape Moravian religious culture. For example, the testimony of female Greenlandic converts (in chapter two) became an edifying aspect of Gemeintag services in Europe. Anna Johanna Piesch (from chapter three) wrote in her travel diary about worship services she led for the Moravian women aboard the ship that took them across the Atlantic in 1752. Also, Barbora Bruckerin’s (from chapter four) deep spiritual devotion had an enormous influence over her husband’s decision to engage in mission work in the New World. 12 Frank Lambert, Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
traditional boundaries of the parish church. Even bodily death by suicide, as a result of the inability for some converts to obtain an acceptable level of assurance of their salvation, led to the dissipation of some local revivals and prompted expressions of grief and despair in the bodies of family members, loved ones, and members of the deceased’s congregation. Rationalist preachers, those whose sermons appealed to the reason rather than the emotions of their followers, articulated critiques of excessive religious zeal and enthusiasm through observations of the evangelical body and its behavior.

Moravians, for the most part, did not participate in or significantly influence Great Awakening revivals in any meaningful way. Still, after the initial fervor of the revivals died down, the perception of Moravian successes in mission fields beginning in the 1730s, both on the margins of the Atlantic world and as close as the Pennsylvania backcountry, prompted a virulent backlash from both anti-revivalists and pro-revivalist veterans of the transatlantic awakening movements. Even some of the most prominent supporters of the revivals, including George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, and Samuel Finley could not tolerate the Moravian interpretation of these new forms of worship. The object of their contempt, however, had to consist of more than esoteric theological differences that were difficult for the colonial reading public to understand. So, anti-Moravian polemicists unintentionally adopted the rhetorical body as their blunt-force instrument to sway hearts and minds against what they

perceived as the Moravian heresy. The subversive, unrestrained religious and social bodies of Moravians had to be exposed and brought under control lest they become too numerous and unmanageable.

Moravian believers, for their part, did articulate religious sentiments through the language of the body in their correspondence. Craig Atwood has argued convincingly that the body of Christ operated as the central metaphor in Zinzendorf’s Christocentric theology.\textsuperscript{14} But believers also adopted this language of the body of Christ in diverse, non-theological ways that usually applied to their most immediate circumstances. From the early 1740s to roughly the 1770s, believers drew upon rhetorical images of the body of Christ, often in the form of the blood and wounds, to convey notions of deference to divine authority, to beg forgiveness for sins or for the sins of others, to ascribe mundane day-to-day interactions with deep religious significance, or as a method of searching for meaning in the successes and failures they experienced in the mission field. Moravian believers mediated bodily illness, injury, cleanliness, nourishment, protection, and survival through blood and wounds piety and a gendered vision of the protective, pastoral, and edifying roles of Christ.

The blood and wounds of Christ are a central facet of the Christian tradition that most historians of the early modern period completely neglect as inconsequential, unchanging, and without a history because they are generally associated with the

And yet, Moravian believers often coupled blood and wounds piety with a particularly gendered Jesus, outside of the context of the Eucharist, to fit their current and ever-changing spiritual and worldly needs. In times of uncertainty, perhaps in the midst of a storm while traveling across the Atlantic, for example, Moravian diarists often talked about Jesus in his capacity as a decisive leader who would be able to deliver them to safety. In times of personal anguish, while in the midst of personal doubt with regard to their spiritual state, believers tended to invoke Jesus and the Holy Spirit in their capacities as motherly nurturers and caring educators. When proclaiming or exploring the state of their relationship with the Heiland, believers always emphasized the masculinity of Jesus in his capacity as their spiritual husband and the husband of the Church, while at the same time appealing to one or more of his feminine pastoral roles. Moravian believers, in other words, used cultures of written correspondence to perform the gender of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in either masculine or feminine and/or feminine and masculine terms. For believers, the mystical gender of Jesus conferred practical meaning in their day-to-day lives.

Abstruse theological arguments and debates about which person of the Holy Trinity possessed the ultimate power of creation in the universe simply had no direct bearing upon immediate worldly circumstances. Outside of formal worship services, Jesus

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15 For the association of the blood and wounds of Christ with the Eucharist and a useful discussion of how historians of the medieval period have characterized it, see Carolyn Walker Bynum, “The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages,” *Church History*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Dec., 2002): 685-714.
Christ mattered in the context of immediate circumstances just as much, if not more, than he mattered as a timeless ideal.

The combination of embodied blood and wounds mysticism and a gendered Holy Trinity constituted a powerful assurance of spiritual redemption and bodily salvation in the face of the extreme uncertainties of Atlantic world travel and settling in foreign lands. These forms of piety survived the Sifting Time of the late 1740s, public condemnations from outsiders in the 1750s, Zinzendorf’s death in 1760, and attempts to suppress and eradicate these methods of devotion by Moravian Church officials shortly thereafter. The nature of these alternative forms of piety did, however, subtilely change over time. Despite official decrees, Moravian believers and missionaries did not cite directives from the Church, Zinzendorf’s death, or any other reason for individual or collective shifts in their epistolary rhetoric. After thirty years in various mission fields on the edges of the New World, Moravian missionaries and the Moravian Mission Board gradually built up a collective confidence in their ability to navigate adversity and began to trust God in a deeper and less direct manner in their correspondence. Gushing mystical dedications to the body and blood of Christ that occupied the first page/s of many letters that crossed the Atlantic at mid-century steadily gave way to more measured and empirical observations of the environments that surrounded them and the physical bodies and behavior of those converts and potential converts in their charge.
Blood and wounds piety endured in Moravian religious culture during this transition period. It had simply reverted back to the form it took in the late 1720s and 1730s when it existed as a fleeting, non-controversial refrain, usually connected with the Eucharist, in normal worship services just as it existed in many other Protestant denominations in colonial America and Europe. Some Moravian believers held on to the more effusive connection to the blood and wounds of Christ longer than others, but a noticeable shift toward observations of bodily physicality began to manifest in missionary letters beginning in the late 1760s. Affective blood and wounds piety operated as a deeply meaningful, though ultimately impermanent, expedient for relieving religiously and socially inflected anxieties associated with the pioneering Protestant undertaking of implementing such an expansive Atlantic world mission program. Embodied mystical piety initially helped to relieve symptoms of physical and emotional uneasiness in those who invoked it. The circulation of these anxieties, the expressions of curative piety, and the new information about distant places and unfamiliar people obtained through multiple forms of transatlantic correspondence made these knowledge formations more general and publicly available within the confines of dispersed Moravian congregations.

Organic processes of religious knowledge creation, gendered constructions of the Holy Trinity, and the corresponding subjectivities attached to believers — European, African, or Indigenous — translated to simultaneously tolerant renderings of the equality of all souls and the inequality of non-European bodies. Histories of
Moravian tolerance and benevolence must be tempered by more localized and regionally focused understandings of Moravian cultural biases with regard to race and their attention to the bodily behaviors of non-European peoples in their charge, whether as converts, potential converts, or in their capacities as slaves owned by the Moravian Church. While the unfortunate case of John Montgomery might represent an extreme example of this dynamic, separating the equality of bodies and souls in the late-eighteenth century, even if unconsciously, had real consequences for vulnerable populations and also partially contributed to the de-escalation of rhetorical attacks on Moravian religious culture by the late 1750s. The Imperial Crisis and the America Revolution certainly took the focus off of them, but the striking lack of arguments in the major works of polemical literature on the issue of Moravian treatment of Native Americans and African slaves, combined with the well known fact that Moravians did not advocate against the institution of slavery in the eighteenth century, strongly suggests that Moravian treatment of bodies eventually became a point in their favor with regard to the larger evaluation of the threat Moravians posed to German, British, colonial, and then early national American society. The retreat of the polemicists after the 1750s also contributed to the Moravian assurance that they continued to enjoy God’s favor on these issues.

By the dawn of the early national American republic, the Moravian transatlantic correspondence network that had facilitated the production of so much personal and collective meaning, undergirded and reinforced so much controversy,
and fostered so much distinctiveness would undergo a period of expansion as the population of Moravian settlements began to grow in the Atlantic world and beyond. As the Moravian Church of the 1740s and 1750s increasingly faded from view by the turn of the nineteenth century, and as it transitioned toward a more mainstream Protestant denomination, the nature and purpose of the correspondence network also began to change. Fewer and fewer letters contained language that read like a prayer book as Moravians engaged in new struggles to cope with their status, no longer as outsiders, but as a seemingly minor presence in the expanding free market of religion in early national America.

Bodies and elements of embodiment never faded from Moravian religious culture in the eighteenth century, but the way that believers understood, articulated, and used these notions did change over time. In this way, Moravian believers meaningfully contributed to a larger realignment in early America, occurring in the mid- to late-eighteenth century, away from the Protestantism of the Reformation, which emphasized the authority of the ancient apostolic church, in favor of the “interiorized faith” propagated by the evangelicals. David Tripp argues that the Reformation “left its heirs no settled comprehensive system, only with many unresolved questions of principle and usage, not least in decisions relating to the body.”

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self-understanding toward a “mission-oriented and socially engaged version of western Christianity that seemed to herald a promising future.”

The expansion of the Moravian mission program and the corresponding empowerment of common believers partially contributed to this shift. After all, Moravian claims to Protestant legitimacy relied on much more than an institutional insistence on the authenticity of the apostolic succession. The maturation of Moravian missions in places like the Caribbean, Greenland, Labrador, South America, Africa, and the nineteenth-century expansion to new places like Central America, India, and Australia transformed the Moravian Church into a truly global religious missionary enterprise that increasingly depended upon the communication of local knowledge, gained through personal experience, over vast distances. The expansion of the mission program necessitated the formation of a system of Unity- and Mission Provinces that transferred some of the administrative power away from traditional centers like Herrnhut and Bethlehem and conferred a measure of independence in the management of regional affairs. The transformation from the language of embodied mysticism toward more empirical observations of bodily behavior in the eighteenth century would continue to characterize the nature of Moravian missionary communications into the nineteenth century. The timing of that transition also roughly maps onto the chronology of their transition from dangerous radicals into a much less controversial Protestant group.

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The bodies of ordinary believers as they emerged in transatlantic correspondence in the eighteenth century, thus, played a consequential, and heretofore unacknowledged, role in both the radicalization of Moravian religious culture and the formation of transatlantic Moravian identities.
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