

HOW METHODISTS WERE MADE: *THE ARMINIAN MAGAZINE* AND  
SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE  
TRANSATLANTIC WORLD, 1778-1803

by

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the spiritual autobiographies and biographies in *The Arminian Magazine* (later *The Methodist Magazine*) first published by John Wesley in 1778. The study will cover such narratives through the year 1803, thus covering the transatlantic movement of early Methodism from the American Revolution up to the Napoleonic Wars. A brief background in the field of transatlantic history is provided, followed by descriptions of anthropologist Victor Turner's theory of ritual transformation and cognitive structuralist James Day's understanding of narrative strategies as frameworks for examining these narratives. Methodism's theoretical construct behind the transformations sought by Methodists, namely John Wesley's

theology and his regimen of transformation, is presented next. This regimen began with awakening and conviction as first, preliminal to the transformation of pardon and new birth, and secondly, preliminal to entire sanctification; both received through the *limen* of faith. Puritans in the seventeenth century offered similar narratives with which early Methodist had some familiarity, and these are examined briefly first. The role of reading and writing within Methodism is then discussed, as well as common initial reactions to Methodism in the narratives and the extensive use of the motif of supernatural communications in dreams, visions and scripture verses being strongly impressed on the mind of a subject. Each basic element of the early Methodist transformation process is discussed at length, using many examples. The final part of the research is that relating to Methodist expansion. First attention is given to the Yorkshire revivals that led to some controversy regarding various aspects of transformation. These issues are revisited in the extensive reports on revivals in the United States, revivals that would later be called the Second Great Awakening. These reports included many from Presbyterian ministers so prominent early on in the revivals as well as many accounts of Methodist revivals in the United States. Special attention is given to the issue of race, particularly the attitudes reflected toward slavery and toward Africans and African Americans in general. This is especially true in the examination of the narratives from the West Indies. The study concludes with relevant conclusions and areas for further study.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Approaching Methodist Narrative

While early Methodism has been studied from many angles, it would be difficult to avoid studying the movement without reference to the transatlantic context in which it thrived. Bernard Bailyn has written a historical overview of the development of transatlantic history as a distinct field of history. In Bailyn's view, transatlantic history was not an outgrowth of imperial history or of the history of discovery, both of which had become well-established by World War II, offering little room for further development. Instead, Bailyn traces the rise of transatlantic history to a 1917 editorial in *The New Republic* by Walter Lippmann, who believed that the United States was driven to intervene in World War I to preserve the "profound web of interest which joins together the western world." The second world war inspired further development of what had appeared to be the moribund ideas of Lippmann's editorial. Forrest Davis published *The Atlantic System* in 1941, a detailed study of the "Atlantic Charter." Lippmann followed by publishing *U.S. War Aims* in 1944, suggesting that soon the world would be structured according to "great regional constellations of states which are . . . of the historic civilized communities," primary the Atlantic community.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 5-8.

Bailyn outlines how political events continued to give impetus to the development of the field of transatlantic history. The Marshall Plan, Truman Doctrine and NATO all made the reality of transatlantic interconnection apparent. The nature of these connections, however, was not so obvious. In 1955 Jacques Godechot and Robert Palmer presented a paper suggesting that while Atlantic culture was neither static nor monolithic, it was largely one culture rather than several cultures. They further suggested that Atlantic culture of the Americas and Europe was closely united during the eighteenth-century revolutions, but had been drifting apart since. Many historians immediately expressed strong disagreement at the time, some suggesting the paper was merely a Western apologetic. Nonetheless, Bailyn catalogs many examples of creative areas of study for individual aspects of Atlantic culture that arose from the investigation of new sources and the asking of new questions. In Bailyn's opinion transatlantic historians should not limit themselves by seeing transatlantic history as simply a sum of the history of several European empires and certain West African and American Indian cultures. Transatlantic history is more than the sum of these parts. Secondly, transatlantic historians should resist the temptation to think that "formal, legal structures reflect reality," structures such as specific mercantilist economies, government institutions or organized religions. Rather, it is "beneath the formal structure" where one may find "the informal actuality, which has patterns of its own." There are no characteristics that are present throughout the Atlantic world for all three centuries of the early modern era.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 9, 24-56, 60-1.

Bailyn further suggests that the first stage of Atlantic history was the unfolding of new “marchlands” of European civilization. Following the turmoil in establishing these marchlands was a long period of development and integration, involving vast informal networks in a wide variety of areas. Bailyn discusses the role of religion in forming and maintaining these networks. While he dwells on Puritanism, Anglicanism and German Pietism, Bailyn does not mention Methodism specifically. The final phase of Atlantic history was that of the rise of various Creole cultures and their ideas of reform, equality and freedom.<sup>3</sup>

Methodism plugged into various existing networks stretching across the Atlantic, including the network of evangelical revivalism, to form its own growing transatlantic network. The story of early Methodism is not essentially about their numbers, structures and statements of belief. Rather, this study will investigate the underlying reality of Methodism, its process of personal transformation. The time period of the study (1778-1803) reflects a fairly early example of Bailyn’s third stage of transatlantic history, occurring during the vast transatlantic war that included the American Revolution and the equally vast set of transatlantic wars of the French Revolution. While Methodism was clearly an extension of Anglo culture (part of a European “marchland”), it would be particularly successful as “Creole” Methodism in North America and the West Indies. Methodism’s process of transformation, and the eclectic doctrinal system underlying it, fit well, up to a point, with the revolutionary values of various newly independent nations, such as democracy, freedom and equality.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 62-111.

Transatlantic historians, in focusing on the complex interconnections and informal networks, have often dwelt on contact between cultures, races, classes and genders. Naturally, such studies have often reflected quite badly on Europeans, prone as they have been to imperialism, colonialism and slavery. European religious movements have not fared well in many of these studies. An example of this is Frederick Turner's *Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit Against the Wilderness*. Turner divides religions between those with a timeline (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and those with a cyclical approach to time, including not only Hinduism and Buddhism, but the indigenous religions of West Africa and the Americas. This, Turner believes, partially explains how Europeans became so aggressive, patriarchal and exploitative. While most historians do not paint as one-sided and negative a picture of European spirituality as Turner does, yet the facts themselves have contributed to a very negative view of transatlantic Christianity. There can be no denying, for example, the role of both the Catholicism and Anglicanism not only in condoning slavery, but, in the case of Anglicanism, actively defending it in order to gain access to preach to the slaves. Bailyn himself details how Anglican Virginians and Puritan New Englanders were just as brutal to the Indians as the Catholic conquistadors were.<sup>4</sup>

It is not my intent to defend transatlantic Christianity in general or transatlantic Methodism in particular. However, transatlantic history has done what other disciplines have so often done when examining religion, proceeding from a set of assumptions that almost inevitably leads authors to negatively assess the beliefs and practices of any

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<sup>4</sup> Frederick Turner, *Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit Against the Wilderness* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994) and Bailyn 64-5.

religion. While absolute objectivity is neither possible nor, perhaps, desirable, this study will employ models more useful in taking seriously the statements of believers without sharing their beliefs. Early Methodism is a particularly useful subject of such a study because its initial substantial transatlantic growth happened at such a critical time in the transatlantic world, the last quarter of the eighteenth century. During this time period the United States completed its revolution, adopted a constitution and began the Jeffersonian Era just as the Second Great Awakening was getting under way. The West Indies was being bitterly contested by European powers and, in 1795, witnessed several Creole or Indian revolutions. I will use anthropologist Victor Turner's theory of ritual transformation and cognitive structuralism James Day's approach to narrative strategies as frames of reference to study early Methodist narratives in an effort to avoid functionalism and reductionism.

Historical research of religion, particularly research of religious experience, is extremely difficult. Historians, transatlantic and otherwise, have been more comfortable investigating religious movements than religious experiences, yet religious experience is often prominent, or even at times dominant, throughout human history. Researchers often adopt perspectives from other disciplines as interpretive tools, such as psychological behaviorism, Marxism, feminism or literary criticism. While an interpretive method of some kind is helpful, many such methods reflect a reductionistic view of religion, reducing religious experience to the function served in the underlying theory behind the method. Thus, to use a notorious example, William Sargants' *Battle of the Mind* reduced revivalism to brain washing. Much more complex in his

arguments, E. P. Thompson's chapter on Methodism in *The Making of the English Working Class* used models from two different disciplines. According to Thompson, urban Methodist workers become devout as a way of sublimating psychodynamic sexual issues, which was a useful tool of control by their bourgeois management.<sup>5</sup> Such efforts can make real contributions, but their limitations are obvious. Religion, like the humanity that experiences it, is much more complex and multi-faceted. Models borrowed from other disciplines to study religion tend toward functionalism with an underlying assumption that the only alternative to this functionalism is uncritical adherence to the religion being studied. If religion can at times function as a method of control, for example, then can it not also be seen as serving many other purposes of the individual and community?<sup>6</sup>

If religious expression is studied solely as a means to understand the ideas and states of mind behind such expression, then serious limitations are immediately imposed. Such a method requires a presupposition that external forces are unconsciously dealt with by societies that develop seemingly unrelated, other-worldly beliefs in response to those forces. These beliefs in turn spawn practices and states of mind that aid societies in coping with these same external forces in a self-deceptive way. Rationally, these methods of coping seem largely arbitrary, and the religious

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<sup>5</sup> William Sargant, *Battle for the Mind: A Psychology of Conversion and Brainwashing* (Cambridge, MA: Malor Books, ISHK, 1997) and Thompson, E. P. *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964).

<sup>6</sup> See the introduction to *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, eds. Arthur C. Lehmann and James E. Myers, (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1989), 1-5, which also describes psychological and sociological approaches to religion as functional, and thus too limited in their focus on emotion and social structure. Anthropological approaches, however, tend to be inherently more holistic.



practitioner is also assumed to be unaware of the connection between the religious beliefs and practices and the outward forces they are meant to address.

This approach's negative implications regarding these practitioners and the faith they value are immediately obvious. Condescension is inherent. I propose two ways to sidestep this familiar pattern: 1) understanding religious narrative as a method of shaping the self and the community; and 2) seeing religious crises as ritual transformations within a culture. The first borrows from the fields of literary criticism and cognitive structuralism, the work of James Day in particular, and the second reflects ritual studies in anthropology, especially as outlined by Victor Turner. Both models see religious experiences as intentionally creating a certain kind of person and community. The specific religious beliefs and practices serve these *intentional* purposes of the believers, no matter how much they may also *unconsciously* serve a variety of seemingly unrelated purposes. How successful these shaping efforts are is a matter for investigation.

For shaping narrative and transforming ritual to be most useful, the religious tradition being studied needs a large array of consistent, accessible narratives as well as clearly-defined religious crises. Early Methodism meets these requirements. Far from an isolated, marginal movement, even in its first century, it was quite prominent for a time in the transatlantic world. These traits also gave rise to an offshoot of Methodism, with similar emphases on narrative and crises, and an even higher level of prominence. Globally, Pentecostalism is a belief system whose number of adherents grew larger in its first 75 years (well over one hundred million by 1981) than any other voluntary

association in human history, making the study of its antecedent Methodism that much more important.

The first twenty-six years of *The Arminian Magazine* (AM, 1778-1803) saw not only the massive political upheaval of the American Revolution, but also the commencement of the Napoleonic Wars. Market changes as the industrial revolution loomed, but these years also saw a radical transformation of religion in the transatlantic world. Within the English-speaking world, a historically high level of literacy and a loosening of rigid class placement allowed not only an increase in the number of religious communities to choose from, but generally a much more engaged and informed laity. Religion would challenge and eventually change the state, rather than the reverse.<sup>7</sup>

Methodism began with John and Charles Wesley's experiences of assurance of salvation in 1738 during the Great Awakening in Great Britain.<sup>8</sup> John Wesley's

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<sup>7</sup> Beginning with volume 21, the magazine was renamed *The Methodist Magazine* (MM). David Hempton, *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion, c. 1750-1900* (London: Routledge, 1996) 6-7.

<sup>8</sup> For John Wesley's accounts of these experiences in his published journals, see *The Works of John Wesley: Complete and Unabridged* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), vol. I, pp. 112-20. This source hereafter will be referred to as *Works*. While traditionally John Wesley's experience at the Aldersgate Street meeting in 1738 was regarded as his conversion, more recently many other possibilities have been suggested. Here it will be referred to as his experience of assurance, which it overtly was, no matter what else it might be. Examples of the debate include David L. Cubie, "Placing Aldersgate in John Wesley's Order of Salvation," *Wesleyan Theological Society* 24 (1989): 39-44, Howard Alexander Slaate, *Fire in the Brand: An Introduction to the Creative Work and Theology of John Wesley* (New York: Exposition Press, 1963) 86-7, Clarence Luther Bence, "John Wesley's Teleological Hermeneutic" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1981) 116-9, Kenneth J. Collins, "Other Thoughts on Aldersgate: Has the Conversionist Paradigm Collapsed?" *Methodist History* 30:1 (Oct 1991): 20-3, and Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 155-6. It should also be noted that Wesley himself dates the beginning of Methodism several years earlier, with the Holy Club in Oxford, possibly to stress the consistency of his understanding of heart religion as the goal of religion and to de-emphasize the role of the Moravians. This is traced by Frederick Dryer in "John Wesley: Ein English Pietist," *Methodist History* 40:2 (Jan 2002): 74-5. As the influence of the Moravians

constant preaching in numerous venues, effective writing and skillful organizing resulted in 73,342 Methodists in Great Britain when he died in 1791, with 66,148 Methodists in North America as well as 5,577 Methodists in the Caribbean and Africa, for a total of 147,067 worldwide. The success of Methodism would substantially increase over the next several decades, with an approximate membership of 225,000 by 1803, with about 5% of the total in the West Indies and Sierra Leone.<sup>9</sup> In the United States Methodism would continue growing, totaling over 5% of the United States population by 1840, and remaining close to that percentage ever since. Methodism had become so pervasive in the United States that the antebellum period has been referred to as the “Age of Methodism.”<sup>10</sup>

Early Methodism was quite aggressive in the promotion of its cause, and it sustained long-term, substantial growth for at least three reasons. First, Methodism’s message was different not only from established Anglicanism but also from other intensely revivalistic traditions. These differences between Methodism and its Calvinist competitors allowed Methodism generally to be more appealing in the transatlantic world of the late 1700’s and early 1800’s. The citizens of the British Empire and the United States were naturally drawn to the more pragmatic, spontaneous and democratic

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and Wesley’s experience of assurance was essential to the ongoing beliefs and practices of Methodism, it seems most logical to date the beginning of Methodism at this time, May, 1738.

<sup>9</sup> The 1791 statistics can be found in *Arminian Magazine* 15:9 (Sep 1792): 489-92. The 1803 totals are based on a US membership of 104,000 in *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1975), 391-2; 70,000 in 1800 for England found in Hopfe, Lewis M., *Religions of the World* (Macmillan Publishing Co.: New York, 1983), 413 (I have projected to 110,000 for all of Great Britain for the year 1803); and 11,000 in missions, as discussed in Chapter Four. The figure of 250,128 for the United States, Great Britain and Ireland for 1805 can be found in David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 216.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Dayton makes this observation in his article, “The Use of Scripture in the Wesleyan,” for religion-online.org, begun in 1997, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=13>.

Methodism. Methodism generally avoided a serious problem that Puritans had often faced, that is, a tendency for dynamic reform movements to splinter into very radical groups, going much further than the general public was willing to go. John Wesley, who saw himself as restoring “primitive” Christianity, was quite a moderate reformer, and his system of checks and balances in his belief system furthered his goal of real but well controlled reform.<sup>11</sup> Methodists who went “too far” faced discipline. Indeed, Wesley himself split early on from the Moravians because their beliefs and practices seemed too extreme to him. Until then the Methodists can be regarded as having been part of the Moravians.<sup>12</sup> Thus, for a time, Methodism was in an enviable position of being willing to go further than the increasingly irrelevant established traditions on the one hand, but not willing go as far as groups uncomfortably far from the mainstream on the other.

Secondly, religious transformation was different in Methodism. The characteristically long period of repentance in seventeenth-century Puritanism was shortened. People did not have to wonder all of their lives whether they were part of the

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<sup>11</sup> Luke L. Keefer, Jr., “John Wesley: Disciple of Early Christianity,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19:1 (Spring, 1984): 24-5; Neil D. Anderson, “The Influence of Clement of Alexandria Upon the Thought of Clement of Alexandria upon the Thought of John Wesley.” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1999), 62-4; Ted Campbell, “Christian Tradition, *John Wesley*, and Evangelicalism.” *Anglican Theological Review* 74:1 (Winter, 1992): 60-2 and Ted A. Campbell, “Wesley’s Use of the Church Fathers,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 50:2, 51:1 (Fall 1995, Spring 1996): 57-70.

<sup>12</sup> Regarding the relationship between Wesley and the early Moravians, see Frederick Dryer, *The Genesis of Methodism* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1999); Frederick Dryer, “John Wesley: Ein English Pietist,” *Methodist History* 40:2 (Jan 2002): 71-84; F. Ernst Stoeffler, “Religious Roots of the Early Moravian and Methodist Movement.” *Methodist History* 24:3 (Apr 1986): 132-40; F. Ernst Stoeffler, *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley* (Zurich: Gotthelf, 1953), Kenneth Collins, “John Wesley’s Critical Appropriation of Early German Pietism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 27:1 (Spring-Fall, 1992): 57-92 and Karl Zehrer, “The Relationship Between Pietism in Halle and Early Methodism,” trans. James A. Dwyer, *Methodist History* 27:4 (July, 1979): 211-24.

elect, since in Methodism God could supernaturally empower anyone to freely choose to become one of the elect. Assurance of being one of the elect was not simply gained by reasoning from one's experience that salvation was likely. Rather, assurance was a certainty to Methodists and typically came in a dramatic moment, seen as the result of a direct act of God rather than the efforts of the human mind. And conversion, as dramatically transforming as Methodists viewed it, was only the first of two normative spiritual crises taught by Wesley, the second being entire sanctification. This second crisis also was to occur in a moment and to be accompanied by a dynamic assurance.

Thirdly, even more so than the Puritans before them, early Methodists told the story of these crises over and over. Testimony was prominent in many Methodist meetings, notably at the required weekly class meetings as well as the very popular love feasts and quarterly meetings. There remains little record of these oral narratives, but the quantity of published spiritual narratives of the early Methodists is astonishing. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, Puritans had become exceptional in the number of spiritual biographies and autobiographies published. This would become greatly magnified within Methodism, in part due to the increase in the number of periodicals and to their increase readership. As vast as the number is of biographical and autobiographical books produced by Methodist preachers and lay people alike (over one hundred editions covering over forty subjects by 1803), this number was greatly augmented by the sheer volume of narratives in Wesley's *Arminian Magazine (AM)*, which in its monthly issues often had three or four such narratives. These narratives provide very detailed and rather homogenous accounts of conversion and entire

sanctification. Isabel Rivers places these narratives in the context of earlier Puritan narratives, as well as in the context of Wesley's emphasis on reading as part of the process of "making" Methodists. These narratives told people what to expect in their religious experience, or if they had already had an experience, how to interpret, maintain and communicate this experience.<sup>13</sup>

Before exploring the usefulness of James Day's understanding of narrative and Turner's understanding of ritual transformation, some defense must be made for focusing on crisis. The "crisis vs. process" debate has become perennial in Wesleyan studies. This debate has focused largely on the relative importance of each, and often has been a springboard for defending differing visions of original Methodism, and thus, differing visions of Methodist "apostasy."<sup>14</sup> However, while the concept of shaping narrative is nearly as well suited to describe process (the period of growth before and after crises) as it is to describe crisis, using Victor Turner's understanding of rites of passage clearly requires a focus on crises. For historical study, crisis is a more accessible starting point and a more productive area of study than the much more nebulous area of process. Unlike theologians, historians must remain unmoved by concerns that emphasizing crisis over process will not make the right kind of Methodists.

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<sup>13</sup> Isabel Rivers, "'Strangers and Pilgrims': Sources and Patterns of Methodist Narrative" in *Augustan Worlds: New Essays in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, eds. J. C. Hilson, et al (New York: Barnes and Nobles, 1978). 189-203.

<sup>14</sup> A recent example of this debate is the exchanges between Randy Maddox and Ken Collins. See Collins, Kenneth J., "Other Thoughts on Aldersgate," 10-25, Maddox, Randy L., "Continuing the Conversation," *Methodist History* 30:4 (Jul 1992): 235-241.

## 1.2 Role of Narrative and Ritual Transformation

A study of narratives requires attention to the concept of audience. Rather than merely trying to discern who the intended audience of a narrative is and how the narrative is structured to appeal to this audience, Day has explored other implications of having an audience. For Day, the concept of audience is always present. A person acts only in ways one can imagine recounting to someone else, and thus depends on the narrative strategies available in one's communication network. "Our action is a function of the stories we can imagine telling about it; both our conduct and our speech are shared constructions." Being a cognitive structuralist,<sup>15</sup> Day is concerned with the mental processes involved in human development, but unlike most other cognitive structuralists, Day is not concerned with how stories represent certain ideas in the mind of the story teller, but how the stories are being used to shape both the teller and the audience in the process of discourse and relating. Thus religious discourse concerns the development of faith and of religious relating to the faith community. A narrative approach depicts the subject "as an inhabited, decentered actor, in a theatrical world of possible stories, in which all action is rehearsed, justified and reviewed according to the narrative possibilities inherent to the actual context(s) in which action occurs."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Cognitive structuralism sees children's thought processes developing through discernable stages made possible by their advancing neurological development. This led Jean Piaget to arrive at different moral stages people can go through, further detailed in the work of Lawrence Kohlberg. James Fowler then used Piaget and Kohlberg to formulate stages of faith development. Day has also researched faith development making use of Fowler's cognitive structuralist approach, but significantly reworking it. See Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (New York: Free Press, 1965); Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice*, vol. 1 of *Essays on Moral Development*. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981) and James Fowler, *Stages of Faith : The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> James M. Day, "From Structuralism to Eternity? Re-Imagining the Psychology of Religious Development After the Cognitive-Developmental Paradigm." *The International Journal for the*

Day's approach is a constructivist rather than representationist understanding of thought, speech and action. We create words and are created by them. Religious terms do not refer to isolated ideas in an independent mind but accomplish things in social life. Language is a social and inherently performative strategy. All we do is enacted, reflecting poses and roles designed to persuade an audience, be it a mental or actual audience. Language exists and has meaning only in the social realm, solely in terms of relationships. Religious language systems affirm relationships and principles of interaction. Thus they tell us much more about the communities than the interior of individuals. This is precisely what makes Day's approach useful to a historian. Seeing narratives as comprised of narrative strategies employed by performers to persuade and shape individuals and communities into a negotiated form is rich with historical implications. For example, what kind of a society were the Methodists trying to create, and how successful were they? What kind of individuals? What impact did their strategies and their envisioned faith community have on discourse between races, sexes and classes? If 225,000 people were actively engaged in the specific movement of Methodism by 1803 in North America and the British Empire, with many times that number well acquainted with Methodist individuals and the Methodist vision, the impact on historical events was far from negligible. What was the connection between what was most important to a Methodist (centering on their transformations) and issues important to society generally?

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*Psychology of Religion* 11:3 (2001): 180-1, and James M. Day, "Role-Taking Revisited: Narrative and Cognitive-Developmental Interpretations of Moral Growth." *Journal of Moral Education* 20:3 (1991): 308.



Day provides three principles underlying his constructivist approach. The first, that all language (including religious language) is as performative as it is informative, has already been noted. Secondly, for Day, language is a “set of signs,” to shape, establish and maintain relationships. The concept of signs or symbols is also of significance in ritual transformation. To examine a narrative strategy is to clarify what these signs are, what they meant to communicate, and, even more importantly, what they are meant to accomplish, that is, what results are intended by the narrator. Finally, Day asserts that speech causes the speaker to be “spoken into being,” and changes what speaking and being can mean. This, of course, can be extended to written as well as verbal communication, a much more directly accessible medium for later historical research. Day’s concept of narrative allows a meaningful comparison of the faith community’s role within a society at large by focusing on the intended results of discourse, and the differing visions of humanity and society.<sup>17</sup>

The use of Day’s understanding of narrative places focus on transformation, but in some religious traditions, this transformation is not gradual or ultimate. At least in part, such transformation is marked by a sudden intense experience that becomes for that individual a moment of tremendous change. Sudden conversion, a common religious concept, is intended to result in the kind of person the narrative strategies are designed to create in a very short span of time. To qualify, conversion is not generally seen as entirely accomplishing this result but as partially accomplishing it. This part, however, is a vital and large part of the intended transformation. Conversion, especially

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<sup>17</sup> James M. Day, “Speaking of Belief: Language, Performance, and Narrative in the Psychology of Religion,” *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 3:4 (1993): 213-6.

sudden conversion, is ubiquitous in early Methodism. These conversions, and the similar experiences of entire sanctification, were not just sudden, but often quite intensely emotional and dramatic. Besides tears and other more generally common emotional displays, fainting, shaking and even convulsions could be part of the process. Commonly spending entire nights in prayer and going into a trance or experiencing a dream or vision leading up to the transformation were not particularly unusual. This suggests the need for an additional tool other than narrative constructivism, a tool that like Day's understanding of narrative will not be loaded with the reductionist functionalism so often seen in psychological and sociological perspectives on religion.

Significant contributions to the understanding of the ritual structure of religious experience were made by cultural anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner believed that ritual did more than hold society together. Turner described ritual as a constructive process, reflecting his view of the social world as "a world becoming, not a world in being." Ritual is not merely a derivative of social structure but is a set of meaningful structures portrayed by symbols. For Turner, ritual actually works not just because the participants believe it to work or because it provides an emotional release but because it gives order to their lives. The central concepts of Turner's approach to ritual were borrowed from Van Gennep's work on *rites de passage*, which suggested three stages of ritual: the pre-liminal (separation), the liminal or margin (in between the old and new state), and the post-liminal or aggregation (the new state). This model has been applied to rites of many cultures used to declare a child to be an adult. One common pattern present in several cultures is for the village men to ceremonially take the boys who are

old enough (often around 13 or 14 years old) from the women and isolate them a few days while they are instructed by the men in being men. Then some dramatic act is performed on or by the boys, such as circumcision, in the presence of the village. This act is the *limen*, the threshold. Following the act, individuals now go their way as men rather than boys. Their role and status have drastically changed. During liminality, between the old and new state, the *sacra* or secret symbols are revealed to the subject(s), or special ritual are actions performed, such as a dance. An aspect of liminality particularly interested Turner was its simplified social structure. At such a time there is a kind of radical equality, and status is temporarily set aside while even the position of ritual instructors over the ritual subjects fades into a radical equality that Turner called *communitas*.<sup>18</sup>

In liminality the subjects are ambiguous, a paradox, a confusion of categories. Turner referred to Mary Douglas' work that suggests contradiction or ambiguity is seen as impurity, as dangerous, hence the unclean animals in Leviticus are those that defy categorization. Also such neophytes have nothing, no property or status, to distinguish one from another. Thus they are radically equal to each other, but for a time in complete submission to the instructor. Liminality removes the arbitrary (yet ultimately necessary) structural order while imparting a sacred power and a sacred knowledge, which includes the core of the culture and the new role to be assumed "in the complex semantic systems of pivotal, multivocal symbols and myths which achieve great

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<sup>18</sup> Mathieu Deflem, "Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner's Processual Symbolic Analysis," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30:1 (1991): 11, 19-20, and Robert A. Segal, "Victor Turner's Theory of Ritual," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 18:3 (Sep 1983): 333. Van Gennep's major work was *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

conjunctive power.” The ritual subjects thus receive the core identity and purpose of the community, which thus became *their* core identity and purpose through traditions of myth, ritual and symbol. They are then to base the rest of their lives on what they have received.<sup>19</sup> In the case of Methodism, their understanding of God’s salvation and deliverance was read in the pages of the bible, especially the gospels, and heard in the course of many sermons and testimonies. These dramas of deliverance were re-enacted in the lives of Methodist seekers and believers, often with disembodied voices, dreams and visions, just as seekers and believers in the bible often experienced.

I propose to take Turner’s model a further step and look not at a geographic or political community or culture, and its rituals ushering children into adulthood, but at voluntary faith communities gathered out of a larger society, and their rituals for bringing individuals fully into that faith community.<sup>20</sup> In associating with such a volunteer community by attending its meetings, a person is separating from the broader society. The Methodist class meeting allowed those interested two visits before they had to join to attend, but preaching services were open to everyone. Such faith communities provide ways for the interested to begin this pre-liminal stage of

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<sup>19</sup> Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), 96-9 and Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1979), 259. Turner refers here to Mary Douglas’ *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology, With a New Introduction* (Rutledge: London, 1996), first published by Barrie and Rockliff, 1970.

<sup>20</sup> I am not the first to apply Turner’s work to volunteer religious groups. See Bobby C. Alexander, “Correcting Misinterpretations of Turner’s Theory: An African-American Pentecostal Illustration,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30:1 (May 1991): 26-44. I am also not the first to apply Turner’s work to a historically distant setting. Edward Muir relies in large part upon Victor Turner’s model for his chapter on “Rites of Passage” in his study, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe: New Approaches to European History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 19-52.

separation.<sup>21</sup> By attending class meetings, visiting with one's class leader or other Methodists, reading Methodist material, and hearing Methodist sermons, testimonies and hymns, the neophyte was receiving the *sacra*, the symbols. This was the message of Methodism, largely what I call the Wesleyan synthesis, which comprised their narrative strategies. Unlike coming-of-age rituals, there was no set time to begin the ritual process. Methodists had to "leave the door open," as it were, so that anyone interested could respond and begin the transformation process. Thus, also unlike coming-of-age rituals, Methodists had to establish liminality not once a year but perhaps several times a week! Their meetings, even spontaneous ones, involved intentional liminality to facilitate the transformation they desired for everyone. Hence, there was a greater tendency toward equality among Methodists. Those with less status, wealth and/or education were able to exercise more leadership in Methodism than in the more established traditions (but not as much as more radical groups). A consistent pattern in the history of religion is that the greater the transformation expected, the more intense and dramatic the experience. Additionally, the more frequent and open the invitation to outsiders to the experience, the more liminality experienced in the community and thus the greater tendency toward egalitarianism. Finally, in the post-liminal phase the new Methodists would structure their lives around their newly received identity and purpose, living their lives quite differently than before.

Methodist doctrine, practice and structure were designed to move individuals first from being "careless" (unaware or unconcerned regarding their sinfulness) to being

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<sup>21</sup> D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1997), 107.

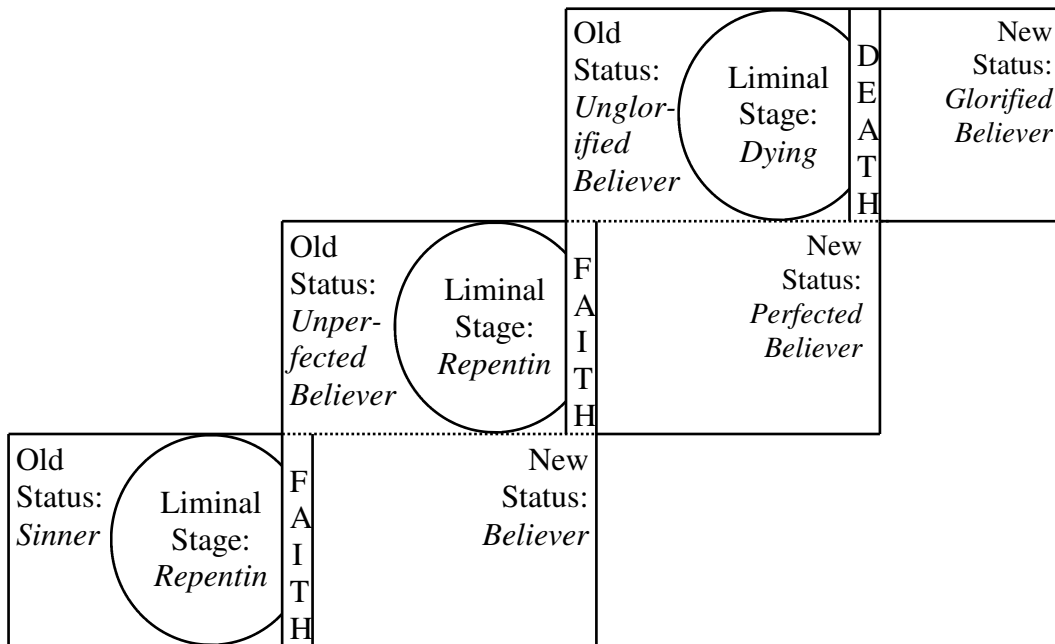
“awakened.” This was not generally a radical transformation, but rather the beginning of being separated, or the pre-liminal stage. Next, the subject was to go from an awakened condition to becoming a believer.<sup>22</sup> This was the vital transformation. A second process began, following the first transformation. This second process was designed to move converts to the next normative transformation, from conversion to Christian perfection (entirely sanctification). Wesley had even constructed different groups to accommodate different stages in the process, and to encourage adherents to move to the next step. All members, whatever their spiritual status, were assigned to a weekly class that was designed to move the awakened through the transformation process. All who had experienced pardon were to be members of the band, which was designed to move believers through entire sanctification. Finally, these entirely sanctified attended the select society to encourage maintenance of that state and prepare for the final transformation, when the perfected believer become glorified upon their death. While the class meeting would be maintained until well into Methodism’s second century, the bands and the select society did not last nearly as long, and never were in universal use.<sup>23</sup>

Immediately prior to each successful stage is a time of liminality, with a specific kind of Methodist small group (class, band, or select society) to facilitate the transition. This process can be charted as seen below.

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<sup>22</sup> Rather than use the term “conversion,” I will use terms that the narrative subjects themselves more frequently used, such as, “becoming a believer,” “receiving pardon,” or “experiencing the new birth.”

<sup>23</sup> Henderson 83-126.



**Illustration 2.1: Wesleyan Stages of Transformation**

### 1.3 The Wesleyan Synthesis

The designs of the various kinds of Methodist small groups could not have accomplished their purpose without the symbols communicated during liminality, without the narrative templates employed during the constant teaching, preaching, testifying and reading. The early Methodist narrative structures had little in religious content that was original. However, in the course of his own spiritual quest, navigating his way through various historic theological controversies, John Wesley had cobbled together a quite original combination of older ideas.

John Wesley (1703-1791) was the son of an Anglican rector in a devoutly religious and highly-structured atmosphere. At the age of six Wesley was trapped in his second-story room when the rectory caught fire. He was saved at the last moment, and

his mother instilled in him that he was a “brand plucked out of the fire,” a phrase of sufficient impact to be chosen as his epitaph when he thought he was going to die at age fifty-one.<sup>24</sup> Despite two grandfathers who were Dissenting ministers, sudden dramatic religious crises were foreign to the faith of the Wesley home.<sup>25</sup> The narrow escape from the rectory fire may have fed his desire for a transformational experience. At least it likely encouraged Wesley’s intensive search for assurance of salvation by feeding Wesley’s fear of death.

Early in his education, in 1725, Wesley responded to three authors; Thomas á Kempis, a medieval English mystic, Jeremy Taylor, a Caroline (seventeenth-century Anglican) divine, and William Law, a contemporary Anglican mystic. As a result of reading these authors, Wesley made a commitment to devote all of his energies to serving God. While at Oxford, John Wesley took over the leadership of his brother Charles’ “Holy Club.” Members of this club were called Methodists because of their meticulous and structured approach to religion. At this time John Wesley’s search for assurance of salvation remained unfulfilled, as he and his cohorts immersed themselves in the writings of the Eastern Church fathers, Christian mystics, Caroline divines and Cambridge Platonists, in short, the contemplative tradition.<sup>26</sup> Immersion in the

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<sup>24</sup> *Works* 5:33, the scripture allusion is from Zechariah 3:2.

<sup>25</sup> Dissenting refers to being members of Protestant churches other than the established Church of England. Dissenters, such as John Wesley’s grandparents, were Puritans. Calvinist in theology, they emphasized lay preaching, religious reading and conversion. In the time of Wesley’s grandparents, many of the practices of the Puritans, such as lay preaching, were banned by law.

<sup>26</sup> Regarding the influence on Wesley by á Kempis, see Onva K. Boshears, Jr., “John Wesley, The Bookman: A Study of His Reading Interests in the Eighteenth Century” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1972), 66-76, 222-3; by Jeremy Taylor, see Gregory Scott Mesimore, “The Way of Salvation: A Comparative Analysis of John Wesley’s and ‘Jeremy Taylor’s Doctrine of Sanctification (with special reference to Jeremy Taylor’s *The Rules and Exercises for Holy Living and Holy Dying*,” (M.A. Thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1984), 94-9, 132-9, and by William Law, see John R. Tyson, “John



contemplative tradition did not provide assurance of salvation to Wesley. Nor did Wesley find this assurance in the Holy Club's good works of aiding the poor, sick and imprisoned, nor in the frequent resort to the spiritual disciplines of reading the Bible, prayer and the Eucharist. Seemingly in desperation, Wesley spent two futile years as a missionary in the Georgia Colony. While at Georgia Wesley continued his "Methodist" practices.

The beliefs and practices of Wesley before his 1738 experience of assurance were never entirely abandoned, but incorporated largely into his theological synthesis wholesale. Two over-arching concerns of the contemplative tradition were being forgiven for sin (justification), and being clean of sin (sanctification, holiness). The understanding of sanctification in the contemplative tradition stressed the acts of charity and spiritual disciplines, but the contemplatives were also concerned with inner holiness, with having a mind and heart entirely devoted to God, free from all other motivations. To experience this was to be *entirely* sanctified, a teaching of many authors in the contemplative tradition. Some authors held out the possibility of experiencing entire sanctification, also known as Christian perfection, in this life, though usually it was seen as being accomplished at death. This made assurance of salvation problematic, as contemplatives, particularly Jeremy Taylor (so influential to Wesley's 1725 commitment), taught that one could not be assured of justification until sanctified to a very high degree, or even until entire sanctification. The implication was

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Wesley and William Law: A Reappraisal," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 17:2 (Fall 1982): 59-63, 71-2. For a wider study of the influence of the contemplative tradition upon Wesley, see David Bundy, "Christian Virtue: John Wesley and the Alexandrian Tradition." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 26:1 (Spring 1991): 139-63.

that one had to experience entire sanctification before knowing one was justified, postponing assurance until approaching death.<sup>27</sup>

Wesley's encounter with the Moravians would lead Wesley to significantly rework his contemplative spirituality without entirely abandoning it. During his Atlantic voyages to and from Georgia, Wesley was impressed with the devotion and joy of the Moravian missionaries on board. Wesley was even more impressed with their fearlessness during life-threatening storms and their assurance of salvation. Wesley would first accept the Moravian teaching of justification by faith alone and assurance of justification, that both justification and assurance occurred apart from any experience of entire sanctification. Charles and John Wesley's experience of assurance of salvation in May, 1738, began the Methodist movement in its continuous structure and beliefs. Within a few years the Methodists split from the Moravians, almost entirely because of what Wesley had retained from the contemplative tradition. The Moravians that met with the Methodists at Fetter Lane in London disturbed Wesley with their understanding of works. The Fetter-Lane Moravians taught that human works before conversion were harmful, and those seeking salvation were to make no efforts at good works, but to wait until experiencing conversion by faith alone. What was even more disturbing to Wesley was that the Fetter-Lane Moravians believed that, even after conversion, good works and spiritual disciplines were unnecessary. Entire sanctification was precluded, as conversion made believers as sanctified as they were ever going to be in this life.

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<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey S. Chamberlain, "Moralism, Justification, and Controversy over Methodism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44:4 (Oct 1993): 670-6. Chamberlain notes that Anglicans did not actually teach that good works were required for justification, just for assurance. The practical difference, however, is difficult to discern.

Wesley's system was more complex and dynamic. While Wesley's synthesis was not quite fully developed when he left the Moravians in 1740, in its final form it began with the concept of prevenient grace. In assessing the human condition, Wesley had borrowed from the seemingly contradictory Eastern and Western understandings of human sinfulness. Wesley agreed with Western Christianity's teaching that all humanity was born sinful and deserving of damnation. For Wesley, however, infants were not, as Western Christianity taught, entirely lacking in all aspects of the image of God originally bestowed on humanity. Only the moral image was entirely lost, but to fit the more optimistic view of Eastern Christianity, Wesley maintained that fallen humanity did not entirely lose the natural image of God (immortality, free will), or the political image of God (rule of creation). This is a classic example of Wesley's knack for a both/and solution to a thorny problem, or, to use Albert Outler's terminology, to arrive at a "third alternative."<sup>28</sup> Another softening of total depravity's implications was Wesley's belief that, as a function of prevenient grace, Jesus' death provided an initial justification (forgiveness) for all humanity. Thus, while all are born deserving of damnation even before being capable of intentionally committing conscious sin, all are forgiven because of Christ. However, once intentional sins begin to be committed, another justification was required, a justification by faith.

This is the point at which Wesley's synthesis can begin to apply to the pre-liminal stage of the first transformation – new birth. For Wesley every step of human

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<sup>28</sup> See *Works* 6:77, as well as Mesimore 107-9, 122-8, and Kelley Steve McCormick, "John Wesley's Use of John Chrysostom on the Christian Life: Faith Filled with the Energy of Love." (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1983): 297-304. Regarding Outler's terminology, see Albert Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources), 1975, p. 35.

salvation involved an initial step by God in the form of a special kind of grace, in this case, convincing grace. Once a person responded to this grace by accepting the truth of the law (human sinfulness and guilt) and the gospel (God's plan to save humanity through Christ's death), then the requirements were first repentance and then faith. Repentance for Wesley was far different from the passivity of Moravian repentance. Wesley strongly believed in the importance of works "meet [appropriate] for repentance." People were to seek God while engaging in good works and spiritual disciplines. One's sinfulness was to be renounced and any possible restitution made. Wesley would often have to explain how this was salvation by faith alone rather than the Roman Catholic understanding (or what eighteenth-century Protestants regarded as the Roman Catholic understanding) of salvation by works. For Wesley these works during repentance could not properly be said to be good, because no action of an unconverted person can be regarded as good. Works "meet for repentance" were required, according to Wesley, in order for the heart to be prepared for faith. In terms of ritual transformation, this belief extended the transformation process, requiring the subject not only to hear and believe the *sacra*, but also to begin acting on it even before being actually transformed.<sup>29</sup> Wesley preached salvation by faith (as instructed by Peter Bohler, his Moravian mentor at the time) before actually being assured of salvation by faith. Bohler famously advised, "Preach faith till you have it; and then, *because* you

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<sup>29</sup> Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960) 59-71; Carob Koerber, *The Theology of Conversion According to John Wesley* (Rome: *Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana*, 1967) 13-14 and Messimore 160-7.

have it, you *will* preach faith.”<sup>30</sup> Wesley incorporated this powerful tool of preliminality to this understanding of repentance.

Wesley taught that while repentance was a *sine qua non* of salvation, faith was the only *meritorious* cause of salvation. Wesley had abandoned the contemplative understanding of the role of faith as basically a possible hope just before or at the time of death. Yet Wesley’s view of faith was also not entirely in line with the Moravian’s passive form of waiting on God for faith. Here Wesley’s synergy, God and believer working together, particularly comes into play. While believing would seem to be a human choice, for Wesley believing was also an act of God. Wesley believed humanity was actually without any natural capacity to respond to God. The balance to this Western, even Calvinist, view of humanity was his belief that God enabled a response. This teaching was part of Wesley’s understanding of prevenient grace, later termed “gracious ability.”<sup>31</sup> When this faith would be granted was a bit mysterious and proved difficult to predict or categorize offhand. This, of course, contributed to the sense of awe in the transformational experience, yet it also left the vital moment in the synthesis easily subject to re-interpretations. For Wesley, believing meant accepting not only that the law and the gospel were true but also accepting that Christ’s sacrificial death was specifically for oneself. Hence Wesley’s thoughts at the Aldersgate Street meeting: “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved

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<sup>30</sup> *Works* 1:102

<sup>31</sup> *The History of American Methodism*, ed. Edmond Burke (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964) 1:355.

*me* from the law of sin and death.”<sup>32</sup> More than an intellectual assent or even a deep conviction, it was a personal confidence in Christ, trusting in Him alone. Faith involved committing oneself entirely not only to the plan of salvation but to the Savior.

A difficulty with the post-liminality of this first experience was the role of assurance. It was a small step from teaching that divine assurance was available to all people to teaching that since people cannot know if they are justified until they experience assurance, they were *not* justified *until* they experience assurance. This placed assurance well within the *limen* rather than the post-liminal stage and was explicitly rejected by Wesley. Faith was the requirement for transformation, not assurance. However, Wesley did seem to regard assurance as quite important for arriving at a healthy completion of the transformation.

Several expectations were placed on new Methodist converts. With a new identity and a new role came new responsibilities. The Methodist had numerous prohibitions, although what Methodism prohibited was generally what was prohibited in other revivalistic traditions. Besides the standard expectations of frequent Bible reading, prayer and attendance of church services, Methodists had distinctive religious meetings to attend, including class meetings, love feasts and quarterly meetings. Although many Methodists had secular jobs and were attending members of non-Methodist churches, Methodists still spent many hours each week immersed in their adoptive faith culture.

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<sup>32</sup> *Works* 13:491 and 5: 103.

The outward requirements for Methodist converts were derived from the Methodist understanding of what occurred in the transformation of the new birth. Upon exercising faith, the new believer was forgiven of sin (justification/pardon), and was spiritually reborn (the beginning of sanctification). The believer became God's adoptive child, and God's Spirit now lived within that child. The Spirit's indwelling gave believers a desire for God as their father and gave them strength to resist committing sin. Wesley would retain the teaching he had received from Peter Boehler, "sin remains, but does not reign." However, in contradiction to Moravian leader, Count Zinzendorf, Wesley insisted that living without committing acts of sin was the Spirit-empowered privilege of every believer. This privilege was also Wesley's expectation for Methodist converts.<sup>33</sup>

It was the remaining but not reigning sin that gave rise to a second transforming experience, Christian perfection. While Wesley strongly desired perfection to be the experience of all Methodists, not all who received pardon moved on to perfection. Nonetheless, this experience distinguished Methodism from all contemporaneous movements, becoming widely adopted by other Evangelicals during Methodism's second century, and the basis for Pentecostalism's distinctive experience of being baptized in the Spirit.<sup>34</sup>

The pre-liminal stage of entire sanctification involved the convert sensing inward sin, also called original sin by Wesley, who described it as a "bent toward

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<sup>33</sup> *Works* 6:13-26.

<sup>34</sup> This is carefully outlined in Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987). Dayton also recognizes the significance of the interdenominational movement of Dispensationalism.

sinning.” It is here that the depth and intensity of transformation expected by early Methodism becomes apparent. Wesley aimed for far more than specific behaviors, as people could exhibit such behaviors and miss what for Wesley was the real point, the real purpose of religion. Wesley described this purpose as “heart religion.” Since 1725, long before encountering the Moravians, Wesley regarded heart religion as the only genuine religion. Believers needed to be free of unholy tempers and affections and replace them with holy tempers and affection. True religion, then, was to follow Jesus’ summation of the law and the prophets, to “love God with all your heart . . . and your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>35</sup> This is one of the scripture passages most frequently quoted by Wesley.

For Wesley the heart was the center of the person, with affections and tempers being the true indicators of what was in the heart. Thus Wesley moved beyond what people said or what people thought to what they loved, what they hated, what they enjoy or feared. Wesley’s understanding of tempers and affections involved a different perspective on human emotion than most contemporary perspectives. Wesley believed in changing or educating human emotions. Such emotions could be formed and reformed through Christian practice and discipline. In repudiating certain emotions, such as anger, Wesley was not intending to repress them but reform them. People were responsible for the make up of their heart. Their decisions led to preferences for specific objects to which they directed their attention, shaping their hearts. Wesley’s use of the term *tempers* indicated a “fixed posture of the soul,” what Kenneth Collins

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<sup>35</sup> Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:31 and Luke 10:27.



describes as “standing orientations toward behavior that are not easily shaken,” something related to, yet distinct from, the will. Wesley saw the affections as less enduring or habituated than tempers. There is a certain range of emotions that a Christian is capable of and required to exercise. This for Wesley was the great promise of the Christian life. Holy tempers displaced unholy tempers. Unholy tempers were uneasy tempers, such as those which came from hatred, envy, anger or greed. Thus certain tempers were themselves a kind of unhappiness, or a character imbalance. These uneasy tempers were in conflict with each other and thus prevented coherent character. While seekers were justified and given the ability to obey God's commands in a moment, they did not necessarily consistently follow through. The new believer must persist, developing those dispositions, those patterns of behavior, to continue on in the experience. To be righteous was to love, and love only grew by targeting the heart toward God, through faith. In the experience of pardon God restored the ability to obey and do good but did not install within fully developed holy tempers or affections. This was only accomplished during the ensuing process, and so salvation by works was avoided, as was the “fanaticism” of quietism of the Fetter-Lane Moravian. Believers must cease from sin in order to avoid evil tempers and develop holy tempers instead.<sup>36</sup>

With this more developed understanding of the Methodist *sacra*, it was the task of the unperfected believer to once again repent. This repentance, however, was

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<sup>36</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, “John Wesley's Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers, and Affections,” *Methodist History* 36:3 (Apr 1998): 165-75; Mark Lewis Horst, “Christian Understanding and the Life of Faith in John Wesley's Thought” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1985) 41-5; David L. Cubie, “The Theology of Love in John Wesley,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20:1 (Spring 1985): 133-5 and Gregory S. Clapper, “John Wesley's ‘Heart Religion’ and the Righteousness of Christ,” *Methodist History* 35:3 (Apr 1997): 149-150.

believer's repentance, a turning away not from an unchristian lifestyle but from anything internally inconsistent with completely loving God and loving others.<sup>37</sup> The *limen* was much the same as for justification, faith. Again, subjects were to wait for faith from God, and yet they had to choose to exercise it. Also in line with the previous transformation of conversion, exercising faith was to be followed by receiving assurance from God that the transformation has actually been accomplished. This largely constituted the post-liminal stage. Wesley was more circumspect about telling one's story of being perfected than about telling one's story of justification and assurance. While Wesley widely broadcast his experience of assurance of justification, there is no record of Wesley claiming an experience of entire sanctification, leading to much speculation among scholars as to whether Wesley ever actually experienced it.

Wesley's most distinctive teaching was entire sanctification as a transformational crisis closely mirroring the transformational crisis of conversion. Wesley took the Moravian model of sudden transformation followed by assurance and attached it to the grand aim of the contemplative tradition, perfection of the heart. This made Methodism the first Christian movement to have a clear method for ordinary believers to become fully holy as a natural and expected part of their spiritual development. It is intriguing that Wesley's basic model of transformation – repentance, faith, and then assurance – was shared by the Puritans (with some significant differences) but also had been a serious area of controversy among Moravians. As

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<sup>37</sup> See Wesley's sermon, "The Repentance of Believers," *Works* 5:222-35.

Pietists,<sup>38</sup> Moravians originally had the same understanding of the conversion process as the Pietists in the German city of Halle, the recognized center of Pietism in continental Europe. Following his experience at Aldersgate but previous to his separation from the Moravians, Wesley visited not only the Moravian community at Herrnhut, but the Pietists at Halle as well.

When the Moravians first moved to the Zinzendorf estate at Herrnhut, they followed the Halle model of *bußkampf* as the pre-liminal stage of conversion. *Bußkampf* was the struggle against one's sinfulness. Once this effort inevitably failed, the seeker recognized the justice of damnation and that only faith could save. This faith resulted in the *limen* of conversion, called *durchburch* by the Pietists. The Moravians even had originally organized themselves into *bußkampf* categories. Those who had not even entered the pre-liminal stage of *bußkampf* were in the "dead" group. Those in the midst of *bußkampf* were in the "awakened" group, and the converted were in the *durchburch* group. However, Zinzendorf's personal conversion had not involved *bußkampf*, so Herrnhut rejected *bußkampf* in 1734, replacing it with *versöhnungslehre*, simply focusing the seeker's attention on Christ's sacrificial death rather than exercising any effort to end one's sinfulness. *Versöhnungslehre* came to be regarded by the Moravians as their distinctive doctrine, although this teaching led some Pietists at Halle to deny that Zinzendorf's conversion had been genuine. Wesley, under Moravian tutelage, experienced assurance in 1738 after a very long *bußkampf*, only four years

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<sup>38</sup> Pietism was a movement on the European continent largely in response to the perceived staleness of established Lutheranism. It emphasized transformational conversion, intensive devotion, active evangelizing and meeting together in small groups. The largest groups of early Pietists were in what are now the nations of Germany and the Czech Republic.

after Moravians had rejected this teaching. Thus it was clear that the Methodists separating from the Moravians would be likely, with Methodism following the more active, dynamic model of *bußkampf*.<sup>39</sup>

A different kind of pre-liminality, active rather than passive, made for a different kind of liminality, and a very different kind of post-liminality. The *sacra* received during a *versöhnungslehre*-style pre-liminality would focus on God's role and work far more than the neophyte's role and work and would suggest a new identity more focused on the abstract. Wesley bequeathed his practicality and his strong ethical impulse in part through a *bußkampf*-style liminality that balanced human and divine roles and responsibilities. The struggle between *bußkampf* and *versöhnungslehre* within traditions requiring transformational conversions (*durchburch*), is a perennial one. In time Methodists veered away from *bußkampf*, part of a natural streamlining tendency, especially in the United States. The very practicality Wesley bequeathed to Methodists through the *bußkampf* eventually led these practical-minded Methodists toward a less complicated model.

While the implications of *bußkampf* and *versöhnungslehre* are significant in understanding the ritual transformation among the Moravians and the Methodists, it was shaping narrative that led their respective leaders, Zinzendorf and Wesley, to choose to abandon one for the other. Zinzendorf persuaded the entire community of Moravians, who had adhered to their Protestant faith as a persecuted, underground movement for the last three hundred years, to reject *bußkampf* in favor of *versöhnungslehre* based on

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<sup>39</sup> Dryer, *The Genesis of Methodism* 106-16, Dryer, *Methodist History* 71-82.

his own experience. No doubt appeals to scripture and Zinzendorf's role as leader and provider of refuge played a role as well. Wesley, of course, could hardly be persuaded that passive waiting was a sufficient prelude to faith, given his intense ethical impulse and his many years of effort. Thus, the dilemma of Wesley so successfully promoting a program of spiritual transformation that did not seem to fit his own testimony can be partly resolved. True, Wesley never claimed to have experienced entire sanctification, and seemed ambiguous later in life as to whether he had actually been converted at the Aldersgate meeting, yet Wesley was more than Methodism's leader and theologian. The experience of Wesley's striving, having to rely on faith alone, and then engaging in good works and spiritual disciplines every bit as faithfully after being assured of salvation as before being assured, was a powerfully shaping narrative for Methodism, despite any "holes" in his narrative.<sup>40</sup> Thus, by 1803 there were at least six different biographies of John Wesley written by Methodists, as well as several editions of Wesley's journal. Wesley's narrative became the most published narrative by far of Methodism's first century.

There was a third "transformation" in Methodism – death. Certainly Methodists perceived death as a religious crisis, but not the dark, gloomy struggle medieval western

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<sup>40</sup> The occasion of Wesley's distinctive understanding of the process of salvation can be seen as the result of the disappointment the Wesley brothers following their experiences of the witness of the spirit to their new birth. At that point they had experienced what Peter Bohler had taught them, but their experience in the area of post-conversion sanctification did not match that of London Moravians, whose teaching and behavior came to dismay them. This is outlined by Richard P. Heitzenrater in *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 106-49. Wesley's brother Charles would eventually disagree with him in the area of entire sanctification on some significant points, having come to a different resolution to the disappointments, setting the standard of entire sanctification higher (the full recovery of the image of God), and the timing to the article of death, requiring more emphasis on the gradual rather than instantaneous reception of entire sanctification. See John R. Tyson in *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), 360-97.

Christianity had perceived it to be.<sup>41</sup> Although historical study is obviously limited to the pre-liminal stage, still the event of death, and the understanding of the post-liminality of “glory,” or glorification, determined the Methodist approach to impending death. As Methodists had the intervening crisis of perfection between conversion and death, a dying Methodist hopefully did not have to face remaining inward sinfulness. Thus the only struggle, if any, was to be a brief wrestling with final temptations. The emphasis was on “dying well,” on triumph expressed as joyous anticipation of being with God and the final declaration of one’s faith in God and resolution to serve God forever.

#### 1.4 Scope of the Study

In examining the transformational process in Methodist narratives, a fuller picture of Methodism emerges, and the reason for such a large number of generally very similar accounts becomes apparent. Using the tools of shaping narrative and ritual transformation, it can be determined how successful early Methodism was in creating the kind of Methodism Wesley desired. Wesley wrote that

The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinions of any sort. . . . A Methodist is one who has “the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him;” one who “loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength.” . . . And he accordingly loves his neighbor as himself; he loves every man as his own soul. . . He “loves his enemies;” yea, and the enemies of God, “the evil and the unthankful.” . . . For he is “pure in heart.” The love of God has purified his heart from all revengeful passions, from envy, malice, and wrath, from every unkind temper or malign affection. . . Agreeable to this his one desire, is the one design of his life, namely, “not to do his own will, but the will of Him

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph Klaitz, *Servants of Satan: The Age of Witch Hunts* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 31-2.

that sent him.” His one intention at all times and in all things is, not to please himself, but Him whom his soul loveth. . . . All the commandments of God he accordingly keeps, and that with all his might. . . . As he has time, he “does good unto all men;” unto neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies: And that in every possible kind; not only to their bodies, by “feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those that are sick or in prison;” but much more does he labor to do good to their souls.<sup>42</sup>

Chapter Two is a study of the narratives of British Methodism. The chapter begins with an introduction to British religious narratives prior to Methodism. This chapter continues by providing context, namely that of Methodist writing, responses to Methodism and the use of supernatural elements in the narratives. Chapter Three investigates the transformations of repentance, the new birth and Christian perfection in the narratives. Methodist expansion is the focus of Chapter Four, including the challenge of new Methodist revivals and narratives from North America and West Indies. Chapter Five includes a brief summation, conclusions and areas for further research. This study will observe how closely actual experience matched, or could be interpreted by the subject as having matched, the transformation processes set forth by Wesley. If there are variations from Wesley’s standard, these will be examined, with an investigation of possible explanations.

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<sup>42</sup> Taken from Wesley’s “Character of a Methodist,” his definitive statement on what he wanted a Methodist to be, *Works* 8:378-385.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE WRITTEN NARRATIVE

#### 2.1 Literacy and Written Puritan Testimonies

Some general background will be useful before directly examining the narratives. Given the argument that Methodists made use of testimonies to shape people into the desired Methodist pattern, an examination of the reading and writing of Methodists is necessary. Considering the time period, even this needs the context of English literacy rates at the time. Methodist also had a useful pattern to follow in the publishing of Puritan biographies beginning several decades before Methodism. Finally, two prominent characteristics of Methodist narratives that color their understanding of transformations were the way many initially responded to Methodism (which critics often described as being “bewitched”) and the extensive reference to supernatural events.

Literacy in early modern England generally has been measured by the ability to sign one’s name in marriage registers, as this is the only wide-spread objective measure available. During 1641-1644 counties generally had a “signature literacy” from about 25-35%, with the notable exception of London at 78%. Measuring rates from 1580-1700 in the Diocese of London City and Middlesex; tradesman, craftsman and servants



had a signature literacy of about 30%, with laborers and husbandman at just over 20% and women at 24%. Comparing signature literacy approximately one century before Methodism, at the approximate beginning of Methodism in 1740, and a century later, David Cressy provides the following for estimated literacy throughout England, broken down by sex:<sup>43</sup>

**Table 2.1: Literacy by Sex in England**

Year	% of Men	% of Women
1640	30	10
1740	55	35
1840	65	50

The religious and political strife that marked the English Civil War in the 1640's led to a tremendous increase in available printed material. This increase was accelerated when the issuing of royal patents, which were required to sell books, came to an end. From its beginning in England, Protestantism had promoted private reading, up to a point. Henry VIII ordered a copy of the Great Bible be placed in each church, and public interest was dramatic and overwhelming until their removal a few years later. Elizabeth I replaced the Bibles. Puritanism increased the importance of the Bible in England, and thus the importance of reading. According to historian Richard Altick,

They reached into the minds, and even more the passionate emotions, of great numbers of ordinary people, who were as stirred by them as later generations would be by purely political furor. And the controversies were carried on by floods of tracts and pamphlets, arguments and replies and rejoinders and conterrejoinders – printed matter which found a seemingly limitless market among all classes that could read.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 73, 177.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Daniel Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 24-26.

An examination of Puritan biographical and autobiographical tracts and pamphlets shows not only the conflict of ideology but also the conflict of piety. Puritans were forging a different kind of person and a different kind of church than traditional Anglicans. In contrast, examining seventeenth-century Anglican (and Catholic) testimonies reveals almost none of the crises that make application of Turner's model feasible. While Quaker testimonies did include such crisis experiences, their impact on England as a whole, and Methodism in particular, was significantly less than Puritan testimonies.

The seventeenth-century narratives of the Puritans formed a significant body of work for the Methodists to build on. Many in England had been dissatisfied with the extent of Protestant reform in the new Church of England, desiring more simplicity in worship and lifestyle. Almost universally Calvinist in theology, most desired at first to practice their version of Protestantism while technically remaining in the Anglican Church. Increasingly these *Puritans* (like *Methodists*, originally a term of derision) would separate from the established church to form various Calvinist Non-conformist churches. Thus *Puritan*, although a somewhat vague term, here signifies those Calvinists who remained in the Church of England as well as those who separated from it to form Baptist, Presbyterian and Independent churches. As Calvinists, they believed in Calvin's doctrine of election, that God had decreed before creation that specific individuals would be saved and the rest would be reprobate (damned) eternally. The elect would irresistibly believe in Christ and persevere in their faith. Puritans also emphasized personal conversion and elevated the role of Scripture, opposing liturgical

rites in favor of lengthy, fervent praying and preaching. Obviously, given the English Civil War and the Commonwealth, Puritanism left a deep and lasting impact on the religious life of England.

Testimony played a central role in Puritanism as it later would with Methodism. The Puritans understood the church to be the *gathering* (the original meaning of the words *congregation* and *church*) of the elect, of the saints. More particularly, the church was seen by Puritans as the gathering of *believers* rather than, as Anglicans officially understood the church to be, the gathering of the *duly baptized and confirmed*. Anglicans knew clearly who was in the church, as it was easy to identify those who had been baptized and confirmed. Puritans, however, had to identify believers to determine eligibility for church membership. Identification of believers required testimony possessed at least some of the “marks of a believer,” what Puritans regarded as the collection of traits every believer had. Of course, not only did testimonies vary, but what constituted the marks of a believer varied widely as well. Testimonies were expected to include an awareness of one’s sinfulness, a recognition of one’s dependence on Christ for salvation through faith alone, and an account of some of the marks of a believer present in the testifier’s life.

Like Methodist testimonies, most Puritan testimonies were never committed to writing, much less published. Thus, also like the Methodists, most published narratives were the narratives of prominent leaders, usually ministers. Vavasor Powell published a

prominent exception to this in 1652.<sup>45</sup> Powell asked various members to write down their testimonies, and he published a collection of sixty-one of them. Included in this volume is Powell's account of the meetings, called "days of humiliation," where potential church members discussed how to rightly constitute themselves as a church. The participants needed to be convinced of each other's faith. Examining whether each one had faith meant examining their personal piety as well, by determining who had the marks of a believer. One day of humiliation was to provide sufficient proof to each other that they constituted a genuine church, and if so, they had another day of humiliation. The purpose of this second meeting was to create a list of those people who had given a testimony sufficiently persuasive to the others that they should become members of a new and "rightly-constituted" church. "They then each of them, one after another, give an account of their faith and experiences of the grace of God by his Spirit wrought in them." If there was sufficient evidence that they were "visible saints," then they were entered into fellowship, and agreed upon a covenant.

That so many middle-class Puritans could write their testimonies is significant for historical research because it reflects the value Puritans placed on literacy. Books (and the general ability to read them) provided three valuable resources to the church: personal exposure to the Bible, to doctrinal teaching (such as the many sermons Puritans published) and to testimonies of "visible saints" not part of one's own congregation. All three represent ways to shape people, to construct individual visible

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<sup>45</sup> Vavasor Powell, *Spiritual Experiences, of Sundry Beleevers, Held Forth By Them at Severall Solemme Meetings, and Conferences to That End, With the Recommendation of the Sound Spiritual, and Savoury Worth of Them, to the Sober and Spirituall Reader* (London: Printed by Robert Ibbitson, 1652). When quoting any text, the original spelling, capitalization, punctuation and use of italics are retained throughout.

saints as well as “rightly-constituted” churches. The importance of doctrine was not simply to ensure correct beliefs, but, more significantly, to promote the right values, attitudes and behaviors. Published (and to a lesser extent, spoken) testimonies were not so much about demonstrating that the testifier was a genuine believer but to help the listeners to become or to grow as believers. Oral promotion of doctrine in religious conversation, sermons and testimonies occupied a great deal of the time of individual Puritans, but the practice of reading Scripture, sermons and testimonies provided a vast supplement to these oral practices. The fact that something was written had the added value of allowing readers to return to the material time and again (without the inaccuracy of remembering what had been spoken), as well as requiring discipline in learning to read and continuing to read.

James Janeway published accounts of the experience of twenty-one children. Nearly all of these accounts involve conviction and/or assurance resulting from the child’s own personal reading, as well as from conversations and hearing sermons. Nearly all the children were presented as having the capacity to read and being deeply touched by their own readings. Indeed, the intense desire to learn and doing well school was a virtue frequently praised in Janeway’s narratives. In the preface, Janeway asked, “Now tell me, my pretty dear child, what will you do? Shall I make you a book?” That is, will they respond to reading his book in such a way that their testimony could be placed in an additional collection of experiences? Janeway advised his listeners to “Hear the most powerful ministers; and read the most searching books; and get your father to buy Mr. White's book for little children, A Guide to Heaven.” An account of a

child “between two or three years Old” tells how he loved learning, and quickly learned to read the Scripture, and “would, with great Reverence, Tenderness and groans read, till tears and sobs were ready to hinder him.” Mary, two years older, was particularly focused on the Bible.

Her Book was her delight, and what she did read she loved to make her own, and cared not for passing over what she learned without extraordinary observations and understanding. . . She took great delight in reading of the Scripture, and some part of it was more sweet to her than her appointed food; she would get several choice Scriptures by heart, and discourse of them favourably, and apply them suitably.

She read many other “good books” as well. Another child even learned shorthand so as to be able to transcribe the sermons he heard. Reading was preferred even to playing for one five-year old, who “could not endure the company of common children, nor play, but was quite above those things which most children are taken with; her business was to be reading, praying, discoursing about the things of God.”<sup>46</sup>

Traditionally, biographies were to be written about “important” people, such as the apostles, church fathers, reformers and bishops, making autobiographies problematic, as there was the appearance of pride in writing and then publishing the story of one’s own life. Given the value of testimony, Puritans felt less of a need to defend biographies and autobiographies than traditional Anglicans, but their understanding of the usefulness of them is similar. Ignatius Jurdain was a city alderman in Exeter, and a traditional Anglican rather than a Puritan. His biographer, Ferdinando Nicolls, in the Epistle Dedicatory, described Christian biographies as “the light side of a

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<sup>46</sup> James Janeway, *A Token for Children: Being an Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths, of Several Young Children* (London: Printed for Dorman Newman, 1676), Preface (no page numbers), Book I:19-21, 29, Book II: 9, 16-17.

cloud,” that enlightened others, directing their way through the “wilderness of this world towards the heavenly Canaan.” While Nicolls recognized that the Bible provided a more perfect example to follow, yet even the Bible encouraged following the example of good men, our “imitation and pattern.”<sup>47</sup> Powell also noted the inherent value of experience.

Also amongst the various ways of God's teaching, *Experience* is one of the chiefest; that is the inward sense and feeling, of what is outwardly read and heard; and a spirituall and powerfull enjoyment of what is believed. *Experience* is a Copy written by the Spirit of God upon the hearts of believers. . . The Christian believes strongest that hath *Experience* to backe his faith, . . . for that which cometh from once spirituall heart, teacheth another's spirituall heart.<sup>48</sup>

The testimonies in Powell's *Spirituell Experiences*, although often quite brief, usually include each stage of the transformation of conversion in classic seventeenth-century Puritan form. Many describe their period of conviction as a time when they could get no comfort from “the ordinances,” particularly Bible reading, prayer and church attendance. This, of course, was reversed following the exercise of faith, as receiving comfort from the ordinances was commonly regarded as a mark of a believer.<sup>49</sup> Every single testimony in *Spirituell Experiences* includes specific verses that gave the subjects reason for hope and encouraged their faith. Most testimonies indicate at least one sermon they heard that helped them, usually giving the name of the preacher, the text of

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<sup>47</sup> Ferdinando Nicolls *The Life and Death of Mr. Ignatius Jurdain, One of the Aldermen of the City of Exeter; Who Departed This Life July 15th, 1646* (London: Printed for Thomas Newberry, 1654). Note Isabel Rivers' exploration of both Puritan and Methodist narratives as pilgrimages.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface (no page numbers).

<sup>49</sup> This was included in some other Puritan accounts, such as Samuel Clarke, *A Looking-Glass for Good Women to Dress Themselves by: Held Forth in the Life and Death of Mrs. Katherine Clarke, Who Dyed, Anno Christi, 1675, Late Wife of Mr. Samuel Clarke, Minister* (London: William Miller, 1677), 4-12, where the subject's faith weakened as soon as her use of the ordinances declined, and increased when she returned to her former conscientious observance.

the sermon and the subject. Each testimony also includes specific marks of a believer, often as a numbered list. Such a list indicates that these published accounts were a bit closer to an original oral testimony than many of the testimonies of Puritan ministers.

The beginning of spiritual transformation in Puritan experiences was quite similar to that of Methodist experiences. The pre-liminal stage was awakening and conviction. The emotional and even physical intensity of the conviction of Puritans in the seventeenth century rivaled the conviction of Methodists more than a century later. Many of the experiences published by Powell and Janeway reflect this intensity, an awareness of the seeker that his or her nature was corrupted, and was both beyond human ability to conquer and an offense to God. Powell described in his own testimony how he came to accept his need to have his heart changed, to have his “corruption mortified and subdued.” He set about this task with “many deep sighs and bitter tears, self-loathing, and self-effacing, confessing of former sins, sorrow, and judging myself for them, and striving against them and seeking to kill them by long abstinence from meat, by much watchfulness, by drinking cold water only, many months together.” The author of one of the longest and best-written experiences published by Powell wrote,

My sorrow was then doubled, and I was dejected, not only for my outward crosses, but more especially for my carnall heart, and for my vaine conversation, whereby I had stirred up the anger of the Lord against me. . . . Yea the Lord was pleased to worke in my heart a loathing of sinne, as well as a trouble for the affliction it hath brought on me.

Another account described the condition of Hanserd Knollys, who for over a year was “filled with great horrour, and fears of hell, sore buffetings and temptations of



the Devil,” and of Katherine Clarke, who was in such constant distress that when she visited her parents after six months absence they hardly knew her.<sup>50</sup>

The children’s accounts published by Janeway are even more dramatic. The emotionally-charged descriptions were clearly influenced by Janeway as editor. All sixteen of his subjects were included in part not only because of their conversion at a young age, but also because they died young as well, directly connecting their conversion to their dying well and going to heaven. Janeway asked whether the reader had done as these children had done in seeing their “miserable state by nature,” and getting by one's self and weeping for one’s sins and praying for forgiveness. Janeway asked,

Are you willing to go to Hell to be burned with the devil and his angels? Would you be in the same condition with naughty children? O Hell is a terrible place, that's worse a thousand times than whipping; Gods anger is worse than your father’s anger; and are you willing to anger God? O child, this is most certainly true, that all that be wicked, and die so, must be turned into hell; and if any be once there, there is no coming out again.

Continuing, Janeway asked would not they do anything rather than experience hellfire, or do anything in order to “get Christ, and grace and glory?” Janeway also asked, “how do you know but that you may be the next child that may die?” Therefore, the child

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<sup>50</sup> Edward Bagshaw, *The Life and Death of Mr. Vavasor Powell, That Faithful Minister and Confessor of Jesus Christ, Wherein His Eminent Conversion, Confession of Faith, Worthy Sayings, Choice Experiences, Various Sufferings, and Other Remarkable Passages in His Life, and at His Death, Are Faithfully Recorded for Publick Benefit, With Some Elogies and Epitaphs by His Friends* (London: s.n., 1671), 2-6, *Spirituell Experiences*, 18-25; Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffin, *The Life and Death of That Old Disciple of Jesus Christ, and Eminent Minister of the Gospel, Mr. Hanserd Knollys, Who Dyed in the Ninety Third Year of His Age, Written With His Own Hand to the Year 1672 and Continued in General, in an Epistle by Mr. William Kiffin, To Which is Added His Last Legacy to the Church* (London: Printed for John Harris, 1692), 5-7; and Clarke 8.

should delay no longer but run into his or her chamber and beg God for salvation, “that thou mayest not be undone forever.”<sup>51</sup>

Many of the children responded to the discovery of their “natural corruption” with a great deal of private prayer marked by constant crying. The term “weep bitterly” was used in several of the testimonies. One girl, ironically enough, heard a sermon from one of the most common verses used to provide comfort, Jesus’ invitation, “Come unto me all ye who are heavy laden and I will give you rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light,”<sup>52</sup> and then “wept bitterly to think what a case she was in; and went home and got herself into a chamber, and upon her knees. She wept and cried to the Lord, as well as she could, which might easily be perceived by her eyes and her countenance.” She spent the better part of the night in praying and crying, getting little rest the next several days and nights. Then at fourteen she became seriously ill, and when asked by her mother concerning her sorrow over sin, she told her mother that it was not any particular sin that bothered her, so much and as “the sin of my nature; that without the blood of Christ, that will damn me.”

Similarly, Janeway also wrote of a two- or three-year-old who would weep profusely in private prayer. He was concerned over his heart’s “naughtiness,” more worried about the corruption of his nature than about specific sins he had committed. Another child, without anyone having talked to him, would break into tears and, when questioned would say that he was crying because of Christ’s suffering and love for sinners. Before six he was praying in private, “and when he prayed, it was with such

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<sup>51</sup> Janeway, Preface (no page numbers).

<sup>52</sup> Matthew 11:28, King James Version.

extraordinary meltings, that his eyes have looked red and sore with weeping by himself for his sins.” The “self-loathing” that Powell described was exhibited by the children as well, including one who “grew exceedingly in knowledge, experiences, patience, humility, and self-abhorency, and he thought he could never speak bad enough of himself; and the name that he would call himself by, was a Toad.”<sup>53</sup>

That even some of the children would have such intense pain over their “corrupt nature,” more so than over their physical acts of sin or their specific sinful thoughts, illustrated the relevance, role and sheer power of narrative strategies. Outside of a Puritan context it might well happen that children would feel guilt over their behavior or even would feel that they were inherently bad, but normally children would not focus, especially with such intensity, on their bad nature due to their guilt for specific acts and thoughts. Nor would they have such lengthy and intense negative responses to either their own nature or behavior without some example or instruction to do so. Nevertheless, such a priority placed on the corruptness of nature was important for the Calvinist theology of the Puritans. More traditional Anglicans, for example, believed in the total depravity of humanity as well, but this concern, exhibited even by children, about their sinful nature over their sinful behavior was not present in their contemporary narratives. Nor was it common in the Quaker narratives of the time. The distinction of Calvinism was its stress on every person was, by God’s sovereign and arbitrary choice, either one of the elect or one of the reprobate. That even their own children had such a pre-occupation with their corrupt nature not only encouraged Puritans that the reprobate

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<sup>53</sup> Janeway, Book I: 1-3, 6, 19-21, 53, 65-66.

deserved damnation – even though they were powerless to be in any other state – but also clarified for them how dependent a potentially elect seeker was on the mysterious and sovereign help of God.

While similar, Puritan conviction of a corrupt nature went beyond the later Moravian *bußkampf*, the pre-liminal stage of inevitably unsuccessful striving for salvation in order to understand one's sinfulness and complete dependence on Christ. Moravians, like the traditional Anglicans and Quakers, did not believe in unconditional election. Puritan seekers had to always wonder if they were of the elect, just as generally Puritan converts had to do for the rest of their lives, although with more hopefulness. Children raised in Puritan homes may not have had anything other than the Puritan narrative strategies as their template for describing their experience, unless they invented their own, or read more widely, which was quite unlikely. Indeed, these strategies did not just provide children with a way of describing their spiritual experiences, they shaped the children, limiting the range of possibilities.

The liminal stage for Puritans was central to their religious experience, yet problematic due to both their Calvinist and Anglican heritage. Not only were Puritans seekers unclear as to whether they could receive faith from God, they were often unclear, to some extent, as to whether they had actually received faith. The passive term *receive* faith rather than *exercise* faith is used not only because even the elect cannot have faith until God chooses, but because Anglicanism itself saw faith as a gift from God rather than a choice that could be made at any time by a seeker. Thus various forms of the word *hope* are often used rather than forms of the words *faith* or *believe* in

Puritan testimonies. However, as Protestants, the Puritans did require faith as the sole condition, on the human side, for salvation. Some accounts do have straightforward statements that they did in one moment both exercise faith *and* experienced conversion. For Powell, who had examined his life for the marks of a believer and found himself wanting, “upon a suddain, and unexpectedly, a power, no less than that Spirit which raised Christ Jesus from the dead, and which declared him to be the Sonne of God, did enable me to believe, and witnessed effectually in me that I did believe.” Katherine Clarke, however, looked for marks of a believer, and while dismayed that she did not have the marks of strong faith, took comfort that she at least had the marks of weak faith. However, the marked negative change in her appearance to her parents after six months of mourning her sinfulness occurred *after* her conclusion that she did possess a weak faith. Clear statements of a moment of believing and the resulting conversion are largely absent from Powell’s *Spirituell Experiences* and Janeway’s accounts.<sup>54</sup>

With such uncertainty concerning faith, assurance of salvation became a high priority, usually extending the time of liminality into years. This made delineating the marks of a believer very important. Powell’s lists thirty-nine marks of a believer, as recorded by Bagshaw, and the vast majority of testimonies in Powell’s *Spirituell Experiences* provide a numbered list of usually about six or eight. The most frequently used of these are loving God more than the world, empowerment by the Spirit to fight the flesh, ability to rejoice in the ordinances, peace, joy, trust in God, love of God’s people, unwillingness to sin and willingness to sacrifice one’s life. This list is similar to

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<sup>54</sup> Bagshaw 13, Clark 7.

Powell's brief list in the confession of faith in his biography: "Love to God into his people; respect to all God's commands; and hatred to, sorrow for, and power against own in-bred corruptions, and so on. Yet the chiefest and most undoubted evidence is the Spirit itself." Powell also noted that this assurance comes usually not upon first believing but some time afterwards. Puritans were so often looking for marks of a believer because of the overwhelming priority of assurance.<sup>55</sup>

The comparison with the traditional Anglican biography already mentioned provides a useful comparison on these issues. Jurdain was known, when encountering people early at the market, to suggest that if they were going to rise early, instead of pursuing worldly interests they should be praying for assurance. It would seem that Jurdain saw his life revolving around the pursuit of assurance. His biographer indicated that by carefully applying the means of grace, and receiving God's blessing in response, Jurdain attained a high level of assurance. "If we consider the measure, and the constancy of it, there would be few Christians who obtained so much." Encouraging other Christians to seek and receive assurance was a particular focus of Jurdain. He recommended to those seeking assurance that they persistently request it from God,

and then, they should daily try themselves by some marks, and to three he did often mention trying himself thereby: 1. A sincere desire to fear the name of God, as Nehemiah 1. 2. A sincere endeavor to do the will of God and all things required, Psalm 119. 3. A full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord, Acts 11.

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<sup>55</sup> Bagshaw 32-2, 43-8.

This freed Jurdain from the fear of death. Indeed, death through Christ had become a friend, a friend who opened “the gate to heaven.”<sup>56</sup>

The Puritans can be seen as a middle stage from traditional Anglicanism to Methodism in regard to spiritual transformation. In the seventeenth century, spiritual transformation was problematic for both traditional Anglicans and Puritans because of the issue of assurance. Both traditional Anglicans and Puritans stressed how utterly corrupt humanity was by nature, yet believed that genuine Christians lived holy lives, albeit solely by God’s grace. The question was, how did one move from such corruption to such holiness, and perhaps more importantly, how did one really know this had happened? In Anglicanism, seekers were hopefully raised in the church and had spent their entire life exercising the means of grace until this holiness was achieved, thus providing assurance of genuine salvation. This left little likelihood of dramatic conversions, or at least, of sudden conversions. However, the pre-liminal phase of repentance still occurred, as did the post-liminal phase of assurance, usually upon one’s deathbed or occasionally earlier. Yet, the liminal phase was mysterious or even absent. Without a clearer and more conscious commitment to the Protestant dogma of *sola fide*, faith was likely to be subsumed into repentance or assurance, or both. Obviously there can be little transformation without actually crossing the threshold.

Puritans, however, experienced ordinances not so much as means of grace but as a mark of a believer. Ordinances were not consciously fruitful until the latter part of the pre-liminal stage of repentance, at the earliest. If the ordinances were fruitful before

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<sup>56</sup> Bagshaw 32-33, 43-8, Nicolls 8-9.

faith then God's sovereignty was weakened. Still, ordinances were probably seen at some level as a means of grace even before they began to be consciously helpful. Puritans did not completely reject any and all use of ordinances during the pre-liminal phase, as the Fetter-Lane Moravians would later do, just the ordinances' ability to make an unbelieving but repentant person holy. Repentance had a very clearly defined beginning in Puritanism, setting the stage for more sharply-defined stages of transformation. There often was a liminal stage that occurred in as little as a moment or over a period measured in months or years. This could occur on deathbeds, but due to the high motivation to discover that one truly was elect, and to the belief that faith was the sole means of salvation it usually happened earlier. Room then was left for a clear post-liminal phase involving assurance more sharply distinguished from faith than in traditional Anglicanism. This assurance often occurred on one's deathbed, but just as often occurred before. Such a structure allowed for dramatic transformations, but the stages were not always distinct. While the Anglicans looked for evidence of a holy life as evidence to base assurance on, Puritans often looked for marks of a believer, including a holy life, as evidence of faith, and with the evidence of faith came assurance. Thus, while it was less likely that a Puritan would confuse faith with, or subsume faith in, assurance than it would be for a traditional Anglican, it still was fairly common.

That Wesley, living in the wake of these traditions, would struggle extensively and for years with assurance is no surprise. However, his resolution of the issue of assurance and other issues of faith development provided for even more clearly



distinguished stages as well as another analogous transformation, entire sanctification. Like the Puritans, faith came before a holy life, although the means of grace during repentance were viewed more positively by the Methodists than the Puritans. However, for Methodists, holiness merely began with the first transformation. The second transformation provided the kind of holiness that traditional Anglicans saw as necessary for assurance. There was also less confusion between faith and assurance in Methodism. Faith was not merely a conscious human choice for Methodists, but far more so than for the Puritans or traditional Anglicans, while assurance was God giving the witness of his Spirit to the person already consciously believing. Both faith and assurance were believed by Methodists to be gifts from God. The time between the two might be negligible or it might be quite lengthy, but whenever they occurred they were often easy to distinguish. Thus the popular movement of Methodism culminated a century-long transition to a more dramatically transformational Christianity.

### 2.2 Reading, Writing and Methodism

Literacy was generally assumed of Methodists at large on the pages of the *Arminian Magazine (AM)*, although clearly Methodists were often successful in the eighteenth century among illiterate people. Yet there are very few subjects of the spiritual narratives who are described as illiterate. The writing and reading activities of these featured Methodist ministers and laypeople were frequently referred to in the narratives and were often quite central to the account. Reading, including the reading of Puritan standards and Wesley's writings, was an important means of grace, often leading rather directly to conviction of sin, receiving pardon or becoming entirely

sanctified. Reading was sufficiently important that when seven-year old Thomas Spear was dying, he had three things to tell his sister, the first of which was, “Mind and learn your book.”<sup>57</sup>

Puritan influence on early Methodists was evident not only in the importance of testimony and literacy but also in what early Methodists read and what impact it had. *Pilgrim’s Progress*, the best-known and iconic Puritan work, was a sufficient influence on Silas Told that the reading of it resulted in him coming under conviction. Mary Langtree was deeply affected while attending weekly lectures on *Pilgrim’s Progress* by a Methodist preacher. Reading about the happy death of Christian in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Thomas Olivers “wept bitterly,” fearing he would not die so happily. He wept for six or seven hours. This classic Puritan work was viewed as sufficiently full of divine power that Elizabeth Shacklock opened it at random in hopes of finding comfort, a practice more commonly done with the Bible itself.<sup>58</sup>

It was not only John Bunyan’s allegorical Pilgrim providing an example for Methodists to follow. Bunyan’s own influential spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, enabled the fifteen-year old Marmaduke Pawson to

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Tattershall, “A Short Account of Thomas Spear,” *AM* 11:21.

<sup>58</sup> Silas Told’s conviction was in response to reading *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Silas Told, “An Account of Mr. Silas Told,” *AM* 10:626, G. Marsden, “An Account of the Experience and Happy Death of Mary Langtree, of Macclesfield, in Cheshire,” *MM* 23:505, Thomas Olivers, “An Account of the Life of Mr. Thomas Olivers: Written by Himself,” *AM* 2:88, Elizabeth Shacklock, “A Short Account of Mrs. Elizabeth Shacklock, Written by Her Husband,” *AM* 12:468. Wesley practiced Bibliomancy twice on the day of his conversion (*Works* 1:50), and numerous other times. In the same volume examples can be found on pages 43, 181, 256, 271 and 284. Examples of Bibliomancy occur in the accounts of other Methodists in the *AM*, such as S. N., “A Short Account of the Experience of Mrs. S. N.,” *AM* 12:585. Wesley himself engaged in this practice of randomly opening the Bible in order to hear a word of God for his current situation. The term *bibliomancy* indicates the apparently magical assumptions behind opening the bible at random to receive direction. For an historical overview of Bibliomancy, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971) 117-124, 146-50. Thomas prefers the term *biblical divination*.

overcome his temptations to atheism. Robert Roberts was comforted by three books when he was under conviction, two of which were *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.<sup>59</sup>

While there are no references in the *AM* to Vavasor Powell's published narratives, there are some allusions to Janeway's *Tokens for Children*. At age seven Mrs. Hunter read *Tokens for Children*, and prayed that she would be made to be like the children she had read about, and would be as sure of going to heaven.

One time, when I had been reading and praying over that little book, as I was coming out of the room, it was impressed on my mind to turn back and pray again. I thought I have prayed once, that is enough, and took hold of the door to come out; but the impression to return and pray again, was so strong that I obeyed the call, and was filled with such happiness that I thought, if I then died, I was sure of going to heaven.<sup>60</sup>

Elizabeth Dunting, dying at age thirteen, had for some years experienced serious religious impressions, but they were dulled by "childish vanities." God continued to "strive" with her, especially a year before while she read *Tokens for Children*, from which time she became seriously convicted.<sup>61</sup> Thus, a century after she wrote it, Janeway's purpose for *Tokens for Children* was being fulfilled in the lives of Methodist children, inspiring them to experience similar transformations as his seventeenth-century subjects, coming into deep conviction as preparation for experiencing the new birth.

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<sup>59</sup> Marmaduke Pawson, "A Short Account of the Dealings of God with Mr. Marmaduke Pawson, Written by Himself," *AM* 16:512 and Robert Roberts, "A Short Sketch of the Life of Mr. Robert Roberts, Written By Himself, in the Year 1779, in a Letter to the Rev. John Wesley," *MM* 23:388.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Wood, "An Account of Mrs. Hunter's Holy Life and Happy Death: She Left Mortality the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 1801," *MM* 24:294.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Rankin, "An Account of the Death of Elizabeth Dunting, Aged Thirteen," *AM* 6:76.

Despite the intense Calvinism of many Puritan authors, their works were clearly favored by Methodists. The biography of David Brainerd, missionary to the Delaware Indians, was written by his arch-Calvinist father-in-law Jonathan Edwards. The message of unconditional election, so antithetical to Wesley's teaching, is pervasive throughout the narrative. Yet at one of Wesley's ministers' conference the answer to the question, "What can be done in order to revive the work of God where it is decayed?" was first to

Let every Preacher read carefully over the "Life of David Brainerd." Let us be followers of him, as he was of Christ, in absolute self-devotion, in total deadness to the world, and in fervent love to God and man. Let us but secure this point, and the world and the evil must fall under our feet.<sup>62</sup>

In a specific application of this, S. N., upon hearing her father read from Brainerd's biography, saw the uselessness on relying on her own righteousness and was enabled to experience pardon. Richard Baxter, a somewhat less-strenuous Calvinist (he rejected limited atonement, the "L" in English Calvinists' TULIP) than Edwards or Brainerd, was influential to Wesley personally and was occasionally mentioned in the narratives of other Methodists, such as that of Mary Wales, who experienced her pardon while reading her favorite book, Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*.<sup>63</sup>

Other than Wesley and other Methodist sources, Puritan works figure the most prominently as reading material of the narrative subjects, although there are occasional

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<sup>62</sup> *Works* 8:362.

<sup>63</sup> S. N., 12:584. The *Call to the Unconverted* was originally printed in 1658 for Nevil Simmons. Wesley redacted another work of Baxters, *The Saint's Everlasting Rest in Extracts from and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity Which Have Been Published in the English Tongue*, in *Christian Library* (London: London : Printed by T. Cordeux for T. Blanshard, 1819-1827), 37:11-422.

references to mystics, and writers from other traditions. The importance of selecting the right reading is illustrated by Mrs. Scudmore's concern over reading William Law. She was concerned by her reading Law's works once she heard that a man she respected, Dr. Randolph, by then dead, had described Law as having once been "a burning and a shining light," who later became "a fallen star." These words caused Mrs. Scudamore to doubt whether she could safely read Law's books. She dreamed that Dr. Randolph told her not to "fear to read those writings, for they contain the truth; and I myself now see things very differently." This put Mrs. Scudamore's fears to rest. She read the books, and this was a means of restoring her from a backslidden state.<sup>64</sup>

In the early years of the *AM*, John Wesley was still preaching extensively, and the narratives referred far more often to the impact of oral transmission of Wesley's teaching, (often directly from Wesley himself), than to written transmission of his teaching. However, especially following his death, the influence of his writings was listed more frequently than the influence of Puritan writings in the transformation of the subjects of the narratives. Thomas Johnson, later a long-time Methodist minister, was given a copy of Wesley's *Journal*, which he enjoyed thoroughly, finding it "so remarkably entertaining," that he would much rather miss dinner than miss a chance to read it. Usually, Wesley's writings were described as far more than entertaining. Reading one of Wesley's sermons proved the turning point of Mrs. Hill's awakening to sin. J. S. wrote to Wesley that when she read a book attacking Wesley's teaching, she

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<sup>64</sup> "The Life and Death of Mrs. Rebecca Scudamore Extracted from the Account Published by Mrs. Sarah Young; Including Also Their Own Experience," *AM* 16:216-7 and "An Account of Mary Wales, of Coalpit-bank, Near Willington, Shropshire," *AM* 16:530.

lost her experience of perfect love – only to have it restored after being inspired through reading Wesley’s *Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection*. Later in the *AM* writings of other Methodists were recommended, as well as the narratives in earlier issues of the *AM*.<sup>65</sup>

Of course, the Bible figured even more prominently in the narratives than Wesley’s writings or Puritan standards. Early Methodists had very strong oral and written traditions regarding the Bible, which is evident from the numerous scriptural allusions in both sermons and the recorded words of narrative subjects. However, actually reading the Bible was still seen as vital. A rare example of a subject described as unable to read is Robert Binner, who was “greatly distressed” over his inability to read the scriptures, “knowing what a grievous loss this was to him.” Binner strongly desired to learn to read, and his wife helped him to, “for which he heartily praised the Lord. . . He frequently spoke of this with tears of sacred joy; and it would be well if all who desire to seek salvation would follow the example of such simple-hearted people.”

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<sup>65</sup> Thomas Taylor, “The Saints’ Sorrowful Seedtime and Joyful Harvest, Being the Substance of Two Discourses Delivered at the Methodist Chapel in Birstall, Yorkshire, Nov. 5, 1797, Occasion By the Death of Mr. Thomas Johnson, Preacher of the Gospel, in the 78<sup>th</sup> Year of Age, and the 45<sup>th</sup> of His Ministry,” *MM* 21:217; Abraham Hill, “Account of the Conversion and Happy Death of Mrs. Hill, of Mistleythorn, Near Manningtree, in Essex. Taken From a Memoir Written By Her Husband, Mr. Abraham Hill, Shipwright,” *MM* 22:331 and J. S., “Letter CCCLXX (From Miss J. S. to the Rev. J. Wesley), Weardale, July 24, 1772,” *AM* 8:335. The author criticizing Wesley is Hervey, who probably was James Hervey, who wrote *Eleven Letters from the Late Rev. Mr. Hervey, to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley; Containing an Answer to That Gentleman’s Remarks on Theron And Aspasio. Published from the Author’s Manuscript, Left in the Possession of His Brother W. Hervey. With a Preface Shewing the Reason of Their Now Being Printed*, (London: Charles Rivington), 1765 and *Mr. Wesley’s Principles Detected: Or, A Defense to the Preface to the Edinburgh Edition of Aspasio Vindicated; In Answer to Mr. Kershaw’s Earnest Appeal, To Which Is Prefixed the Preface Itself*, (Edinburgh, n.l.), 176. See also M. B., “Letter From M. B. to Elizabeth Andres,” *MM* 25:126.

Newly armed with literacy, Binner met with the few Methodists living in his neighborhood to read the Bible.<sup>66</sup>

Unlike Binner, but like most children described in the *AM*, James Buckley learned to read as a child. He was deeply moved when he read the Bible, even to the point of tears. One day at school, Buckley was reading out loud one of Jesus' parables, and, feeling he was like one of those sinners discussed in the parable, he tried to shut the Bible. The schoolmaster insisted that he continue, and when Buckley tried he fell down, "as though I had been dead; I thought that I should go to hell for my wickedness." Another child, Thomas Slater, would rise at 4:00 to read the Bible, or would read late into the night, while Robert Windsor, whenever he heard another book read aloud, would wish it were the Bible instead. The fear of dying in her sleep and going to hell kept the convicted Sarah Ryan reading a chapter of the Bible every night before going to sleep.<sup>67</sup>

Clearly, for early Methodists the act of reading was not just useful but was also frequently seen as accompanied with great divine power. Sometimes the Bible's influence on transformations was gradual, as with Disney Alexander. As a result of attendance of sermons and religious conversations, Alexander "grew more fond of retirement: reading, meditation, private prayer, social worship." Desiring to "redeem the time" that he had "so selfishly squandered," Alexander placed a new priority on the bible. "The Bible was my peculiar study, I perused it with delight and improvement.

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<sup>66</sup> Moses Roberts, "An Account of Roger Binner, Who Was Killed in a Coal Pit, Near Leeds, by the Fire-Damp, April 19, 1797, Written by His Son-in-Law," *MM* 22:489-90.

<sup>67</sup> James Buckley, "A Short Account of the Experience of Mr. James Buckley," *AM* 19:3; David Lander, "A Short Account of Mr. Robert Windsor," *AM* 14:72; Jonathan Hern, "An Account of the Life and Death of Thomas Slater," *AM* 8:197-8 and Sarah Ryan, "Account of Mrs. Sarah Ryan," *AM* 2:297..

The more I read, the more clearly I saw my own ignorance, my own inability to help myself, and the sinfulness of my own past conduct. I discovered likewise a way open for the remission of sins.”<sup>68</sup> As will be seen below, often the application of a specific Bible verse would occasion that actual moment of conviction, pardon or entire sanctification.

As the act of reading was so often influential in the spiritual transformation of the narrative subjects, it is not surprising that the writing of one’s testimony would also be prominent. Eighteenth-century Methodists commonly wrote testimonies or kept spiritual journals. Many of the narratives quote at length from the journals or written testimonies of their subjects. Sixteen-year-old Thomas Branch, living in Somerset County, wrote in “a little diary, which he kept,” concerning his spiritual state. What is notable in this case is that rather than living in London, Branch was part of a farm family in a county which at the time was almost entirely rural, and which remains largely rural today. It should be noted, however, that by 1642 Somerset County had a particularly high rate of literacy, 38%, as it was in the Puritan stronghold of rural southern England. Many of the narrative subjects were from rural areas, or were in occupations such as mining that provided meager income; yet, the narratives usually included some reference to the subject reading or writing. The estimated literacy rate of adult males in England jumped during the period of these narratives from 56% in 1775 to 65% in 1800.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Disney Alexander, “Reason for Methodism,” *AM* 19:418.

<sup>69</sup> The literacy rate of Somerset is based on the quite spotty documentary evidence of the Protestation Oath of Loyalty to Parliament in 1642. The only county with as high a literacy rate was Cheshire.



Alexander Kennedy was journaling before the age of sixteen, when he experienced pardon, as his entries previous to his pardon were quoted to indicate his pre-conversion state of mind. Keeping a spiritual diary was regarded as so normal, that when a diary was not kept for a long period it merited some explanation, such as the observation in the account of Mrs. Hunter that such a gap might have been due to domestic duties or her busyness in visiting the ill. Losing diaries was considered a serious loss. The author of Andrew Laffan's account expressed regret that some of Laffan's journals were lost, "as they would throw much light on his experience." Laffan's wife said that when she first found them and read them, they blessed her, and led to her conversion.<sup>70</sup>

While many narratives are written by third parties extensively quoting from spiritual diaries, many of the rest are autobiographies of Methodist preachers or are memoirs of deceased laypeople relying heavily on spiritual autobiographies the subjects had written either for themselves or in preparation for their death. Even before *AM* began to be published, Wesley had requested several of his preachers write the account of their spiritual experience and send them to him. These comprised the vast majority of the narratives in the first few years of the *AM*, and later they were collected by Thomas Jackson and published in various editions. At first there were occasionally autobiographies of living lay people published in the *AM*, but their inclusion quickly became quite rare. However, in 1781, the fourth year of the magazine, memoirs of

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Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900," *Past and Present*, No. 42 (Feb 1969), 99-100, 120.

<sup>70</sup> W. Williams, "An Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Alexander Kennedy," *MM* 23:558; Thomas Wood, 24:298 and M. Ward, "An Account of Andres Laffan," *AM* 14:300.

recently deceased laypeople became common, and as George Story took over the editorship from Wesley, such accounts comprised a larger portion of many issues than any other kind of article. While of necessity these accounts were written by third parties, they commonly made reference either to the diary of the subject, or to a written testimony of their experience. Some were written during illness, such as that of James Creighton, who wrote it for his family rather than for the larger public, thinking it would only interest his family. James Hall had appreciated the narratives in the *AM*, but out of a sense of his own unworthiness, chose not to journal until an illness seemed to threaten to deprive him of his reason.<sup>71</sup>

There is evidence of another form of journal in the accounts of the final illnesses of the subjects of memoirs. The details provided were often very specific. Dates and even specific times were given. Some accounts describe the final illness over many pages, quoting, seemingly exactly, each thing said by the dying individual. It is possible that such accounts were provided directly by eye-witnesses, but the longer accounts would require amazing abilities of recall, even if taken shortly after the event from multiple witnesses. As the habit of journaling and writing testimonies and accounts was so engrained among early Methodists, it is likely that some of the death accounts were in part taken from journals being kept on the illness by third parties, sometimes for weeks.

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<sup>71</sup> The first edition of Thomas Jackson's work was *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers* (London: John Mason), 1837; James Creighton, "A Short Account of the Experience of the Rev. James Creighton, B. A.," *AM* 8:241 and James Hall, "A Short Account of the Experience of Mr. James Hall," *AM* 16:7-8.

Some wrote during illness only at the insistence of others, as did Thomas Taylor. George Ball wrote his narrative in his final month because, while he was greatly benefited by much of what he read in the *MM*. He wrote that there had been “no article inserted in that work that has been so profitable to me, as the holy life and triumphant death of the saints. There I see the faithfulness of our promise-keeping God, in supporting them thro’ life, giving them victory over death, and such anticipations of future glory, that their expressions have been more like the saints in glory, than those of creatures inhabiting tenements of clay.” In order to assist the clergyman who would preach her funeral sermon (often seen as a prime opportunity to convict and convince sinners, a sort of last act of ministry performed by the deceased), Jane Stonehouse dictated her narrative. It was written down nearly verbatim. John Kershaw is one of the few authors who provided reasons for writing and submitting a narrative that did not include illness or impending death.<sup>72</sup>

Frequent references were made within the narratives to the general usefulness of such narratives. A variety of possible purposes for and benefits from were listed in some of the narratives. John Dutton wrote,

We produce the Experience of Christians, as a caveat against infidelity and self-righteousness; we bring out of obscure places those who were eminent for pity, and raise them on conspicuous standard of WITNESSES for our LORD. . . . The testimony of a believer is not a chimera, or produced from the flights of fancy: No; it had God for its

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<sup>72</sup> James Creighton, “A Short Account of the Experience of the Rev. James Creighton, B. A.,” *AM* 8:241; James Hall, “A Short Account of the Experience of Mr. James Hall,” *AM* 16:7-8; Thomas Taylor, “A Letter from Mr. T. Taylor, Liverpool, Feb. 5, 1793,” *AM* 16:274; Richard Rodda, “An Account of Mr. George Ball, of Plymouth-Dock,” *MM* 23:354-5; “Account of Miss Stonehouse. The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Manifested in the Last Sickness and Death of Miss Jane Stonehouse, Who Departed This Life July 4, 1796, in the 15<sup>th</sup> Year of Her Age, With ‘a Hope Full of Immortality.’ By Her Father” *MM* 22:538 and John Kershaw, “The Life and Experience of Mr. John Kershaw,” *MM* 25:177-8.

foundation, and his glory for its object and aim; when it is drawn from such a source, the pious are edified; the weak believer is strengthened, and the consolations of Israel abound to all the Church.<sup>73</sup>

For Dutton, such testimonies were not only useful as examples to follow, or evidence that the subject had truly been pardoned, but evidence for the truth of Christianity, for the reality of Methodism. A similar sentiment was expressed by Thomas Stanley.

It is generally confessed, that every measure which has a tendency to check the progress of infidelity, – to stir up the lukewarm professor, – to succour the tempted, – or to encourage believers to run the race that is set before them, should, by all who desire the prosperity of Zion, be adopted. Under the influence of this sentiment, I have acted, in collecting and arranging the following Memoirs of Mrs. Edgcome. Sincerely hoping, that they will assist in the promotion of one, or of all these ends; and that the good Lord will make the Methodist Magazine [*sic*] a blessing to thousands.<sup>74</sup>

Joseph Entwistle indicated the ongoing usefulness of the *AM* as a “repository” of narratives which “cannot fail of being useful to generations of Methodists yet unborn, who will from thence learn, who their predecessors were, what they experienced, and how they lived, and how they died.” What would these “Methodists yet unborn” do with such knowledge? Presumably, be Methodists: that is, have the same kinds of beliefs, lifestyle and states of mind as the first generations of Methodists. The editor hoped that Thomas Taylor’s account would be “a good influence upon the minds of young persons.” Some who wrote their own narratives thought of the usefulness to themselves. John Kershaw provided four reasons for writing his narrative, one of which was encourage himself when he was tempted. Alexander Mather believed that it was

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<sup>73</sup> “A Short Account of the Experience and Death of Mary Shamrock, of Lamberhead-Green Near Wigon, Lancashire,” *MM* 23:349-50.

<sup>74</sup> “An Account of the Life and Death of Mrs. Edgcome,” *MM* 24:483.

“of considerable advantage, frequently to review our past experience, and to do so is profit. We should keep an account of our spiritual loss or gain.”<sup>75</sup>

Spoken testimony had been prominent in Puritanism and other strains of Pietism, and it was even more central to Methodism. It is not surprising that the habit of keeping diaries, writing out one’s testimonies (even when not asked to, and the publishing of large numbers of written testimonies would be so prevalent in Methodism. Spoken testimonies were prized for their content rather than style, and while some narrators were quite skilled in their presentations, it was expected that autobiographic material be “plain,” “simple,” or “artless.” This was an expression of the concern for authenticity. The narratives were not to be accounts of what the subject did but of what God had done for the subject. Mary Shamrock “had written her experience in a plain, artless manner, for no other end, than to put her in a remembrance of the things that God had done for her.” Thomas Taylor’s autobiographical letter on which Dutton based his narrative on was “sound,” even though there was nothing “marvelous” in it. Methodism was a religion of the chapel, home and field rather than of the cathedral and university. It was a plain-spoken faith of a plain-speaking people. This transparency was an essential part of its method of replication and its appeal to a large number of common folk.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Joseph Entwhistle, “A Short Account of the Experience and Happy Death of Mr. Henry Robinson, of Padiham, in Lancashire, by Mr. Entwhistle,” *AM* 18:454; Thomas Taylor 274, John Kershaw, “The Life and Experience of Mr. John Kershaw,” *MM* 25:177-8 and Alexander Mather, “From Mr. Mather to Mrs. P.,” *MM* 22:459.

<sup>76</sup> John Dutton, “A Short Account of the Experience and Death of Mary Shamrock, of Lamberhead-Green Near Wigon, Lancashire,” *MM* 23:349-50 and Thomas Taylor, “A Letter from Mr. T. Taylor, Liverpool, Feb. 5, 1793,” *AM* 16:274.

### 2.3 Responses to Methodism

Since Methodism was a voluntary association, ritual transformation required clear boundaries between Methodists and the society at large. These boundaries were not only enforced from within – with specific beliefs, values and behavior – but also from without, in part through the opposition Methodists experienced. Any response to Methodists that set them apart from the general population, including persecution, actually helped increase the power of the transformations within Methodism. Wesley’s *Journal*, as well as some of the narratives of his preachers, contained various accounts of riots of angry mobs. Freeborn Garretson, whose large account was spread over ten issues of the *AM*, devoted significant space to his persecutions.<sup>77</sup>

While Methodists who did not preach did not attract violent mobs, Methodist laity were nonetheless subjected to real persecution. Some were tenant farmers who were evicted for refusing to abandon Methodism. James Styan offended his Church of England minister by allowing Methodist preaching in his home, and this minister persuaded Styan’s landlord to demand it to stop. The landlord did so, making it clear that if Styan was going to stay, he must could no longer host Methodist preaching. Styan refused, and was evicted. The Purdy family was also ordered by their landlord to leave their farm. They appealed to the head steward, but they were only told, “You must give up the Methodists!” Mr. Purdy traveled to London to appeal directly to the landlord, being told, “It is a small thing; – but you must either cease going amongst

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<sup>77</sup> Freeborn Garretson, “The Experience and Travels of Mr. Freeborn Garretson, Minister of the Gospel, in North America, Extracted from the Narrative Written by Himself and Printed at Philadelphia in 1791,” *AM* 17:3. For a study on the phenomenon of mob response to early Methodism, see John Walsh, “Methodism and the Mob in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Popular Beliefs and Village*, eds. G. J. Cuming and D. Barker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 213-27.

these Methodists, or quit the farm.” As they had many relatives farming for the same landlord, they assumed their landlord would not carry through on this threat, and so planted as usual. Nonetheless, they were evicted without compensation for their seed or labor that year.<sup>78</sup>

Early Methodists often had to contend with displeased neighbors and family members. Even people who were merely coming under conviction by hearing Methodist preaching could be persecuted, and yet they would vehemently defend the movement that was only just beginning to transform them, as did Methodist neophyte Thomas Crosson. Robert Miller faced not only financial loss but contended with alienation from his family as well. Later to become a Methodist preacher, this alienation became an opportunity of giving his testimony. His family had threatened to put him out of the house for his association with the Methodists, claiming that they had driven him mad and ruined him. At Christmas his sisters and brothers-in-law and some of Miller’s former friends visited, and “earnestly intreated” him to join them in a card party. Miller refused, telling them that by God’s grace he was determined “never again to handle the devil’s books.” Miller began to read, until one of his sisters suggested that “there must be something in religion, that we do not know of, which has made you, who was once so fond of cards, now to hate them, and if so, I hope you will tell us.” They then “threw down their cards,” and Miller told them of his search for happiness before joining the Methodists, how God “graciously blotted out” his sins, the reasons he

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<sup>78</sup> J. Stamp, “The Experience of Mr. James Styan, of Newton-Upon-Ouse, in the County of York,” *MM* 21:620 and John Nelson, “An Account of the Experience and Happy Death of Ann Purdy, Near Alfreton, in Derbyshire,” *MM* 23:268.

joined the Methodists, and the comfort he was now enjoying. His family was quite affected by Miller's account, "and such an evening of weeping and distress I had never seen before. We concluded the interview, not as we used to do, with wicked songs, toasts, &c. but in a fervent prayer to the Father of Mercies, to save us from everlasting misery." Since that time they were all as convinced that he was right as they had been convinced that he was wrong.<sup>79</sup> Note that what so powerfully struck Miller's family was that he read instead of engaging in his old pastime, which Miller described using reading as a metaphor, "handling the devil's books."

With such communal hostility, it is understandable that many were reluctant to even attend Methodist preaching. For some time George Cawley made excuses for not going to hear Methodist preaching because he believed that the Methodists were the false prophets spoken of in the Bible while Mrs. P. Newman avoided the Methodists because she had heard that they drove people mad. Added to some people's reluctance to go to Methodist preaching was the common belief that a person who attended Methodist preaching, even one time, could become "bewitched." When Joseph Jones returned from hearing Methodist preaching with a positive opinion, his employer warned him, "I have heard many people say, if any one hears them but once, they will be sure to be bewitched by them!" John Pawson's father, frustrated at his son's refusal to leave the Methodists, threatened to disinherit him. When this did not dissuade his son, he said, "Well, I see thou art quite stupid: I may as well say nothing: the

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<sup>79</sup> John Kerr, "The Life and Death of Thomas Crosson," *AM* 462-5 and Robert Miller, "Memoirs of the Principal Occurrences Which Have Passed in the Seven and Thirty Years Experience of Robert Miller, Minister of the Gospel," *MM* 24:53-4.



Methodists are the most bewitching people that ever lived; for when once a person hears them, it is impossible to persuade them to return back again.” When William M’Cornock returned to his Roman Catholic father’s house after associating with the Methodists, his father sent for “an old Friar” to come cure him of his bewitchment.<sup>80</sup>

Looking at the same phenomenon but using different terminology with different implications, Peter Orman, whose listening to Methodist preachers had left him so convicted of sin he could not sleep at night, was often going to his knees or even prostrating himself. His neighbors began to suspect that “his faculties were deranged.” A “gentlewoman” heard of his affliction and invited him to her house. She told him that she thought his hearing Methodists had put him out of his senses. He told her that he was never properly in his senses until then. She argued that he had attended the church faithfully and had a good character. Oram replied that he did not know himself at that time. She asked what he meant, and he answered that he did not know the evil of his heart or the sinfulness of his life: “I did not see myself to be what I really am, a poor, lost, helpless sinner; and that I must be saved.”<sup>81</sup> Becoming convinced of an alternative way of looking at both reality and oneself, which seemed highly irrational to others, was so attractive to Orman who, like many others, would become radically committed to this alternative perspective even before actually being transformed. Thus

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<sup>80</sup> T. Bartholomew, “An Account of the Experience of Mr. George Cawley,” *MM* 24:248; P. Newman, “Letter CCCLXXV (From Mrs. P. Newman, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Chehenham, August 23, 1772,” *AM* 8:435; Joseph Jones, “An Account of Mr. Joseph Jones: From the Time of His Birth, to His Finding Peace with God,” *AM* 12:288; John Pawson, “A Short Account of John Pawson: in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley,” *AM* 2:27-8 and William M’Cornock, “An Account of Mr. William M’Cornock, in a letter to the Rev. John Wesley,” *AM* 8:136. The context indicates that Pawson is likely using the term *stupid* in the now rarer sense of the term, “in a stupor.”

<sup>81</sup> William Ashland, “An Account of Mr. Peter Oram,” *AM* 18:309-10.

some powerful attraction was necessary to encourage so many to such a commitment to the process before reaping the benefits of it.

The belief that Methodists bewitched people on first hearing is understandable considering some the accounts Methodists gave of their first encounters. When Martha Thompson heard a Methodist preacher for the first time, not yet understanding his doctrine, she was deeply affected by his deportment. He had a “solemn reverence of God in his very looks, as I have never seen in any person before.” As a boy James Buckley encountered a visiting Methodist parson at his home and felt that the man's face was “expressive of something different from other men; and it seemed as if a voice from heaven had said, ‘This man has got what you want to constitute you happy.’ I began to weep like Magdalen at the feet of Jesus.” Returning home from a Methodist meeting, James Hall’s parents asked what he thought of Methodists and of Methodist preaching. His convictions were so overwhelming that he could not speak, so “a flood of tears and silence spoke” for him. Similarly, Francis West’s initial contact with Methodism at a meeting where the preacher related his own experience touched him so deeply that he turned to the wall to hide his tears.<sup>82</sup>

Perhaps the most detailed account of initial “bewitchment” was that of Richard Moses’ reaction when he first saw John Wesley.

When Mr. Wesley came out of the kitchen-door, I rose up to look at him. I felt something I had never felt before. I thought, “I have read or heard of saints: Surely this is one” He went up into the pulpit, but I could not keep my eyes off of him. He prayed, and I thought, “Well, this

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<sup>82</sup> “An Account of Martha Thompson, Near York,” *AM* 6:470; James Buckley, “A Short Account of the Experience of Mr. James Buckley,” *AM* 19:3-4; James Hall, “A Short Account of the Experience of Mr. James Hall,” *AM* 16:12 and Francis West, “A Short Account of the Life and Experience of Mr. Francis West,” *MM* 23:1-2.

is such a prayer as I never heard in my life.” Then he gave out the verse of a hymn. Immediately I felt much love in my heart, and such joy, that I could not refrain from tears. I was ashamed any one should see this, and leaned my face against the boards. But then I want to see him: So I could not help looking up again. Now I was happy: I was as in heaven: The hymn, the singing, all was heavenly round about me. And I know, that till this hour, I had never known what happiness meant.

I listened to the sermon, and knew it was all right. I found all my prejudice vanish away, and I had such a love, both to the preachers and to all the people, as I cannot express.<sup>83</sup>

Such responses, such sensations could initiate the dramatic series of transformations the Methodists promoted. Indeed, spiritual transformations were the purpose of Methodism. While such a favorable response to Methodism is, in a sense, the opposite of persecution. It too – perhaps even more dramatically – insulated Methodism from other people and other social networks, thereby creating the ritual space necessary to create the kind of person Wesley envisioned.

Less dramatic than being overwhelmed with a sense of other-worldly awe, yet still effective in creating a Methodist, was witnessing others being overwhelmed or transformed. W. Lanktree did not have much of a response when he heard a Methodist sermon, as he was not familiar with Scripture or “scriptural doctrines.” However, when he saw the sermon’s effects on other listeners, and heard one of them tell his experience of finding peace with God, “he began to hear for himself; and truly the seed fell in good ground.” He was “deeply convinced; and brought forth the fruit of true repentance.” Even mocking imitations of Methodist preaching could bring about the same transformations as real Methodist preaching. John Thorp was with a group of friends

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<sup>83</sup> Richard Moss, “The Life and Experience of Mr. Richard Moss, One of the First Methodist Preachers,” *MM* 21:7.

mimicking Methodist preachers. They made a wager as to who could do the best job of preaching a mock Methodist sermon. John Thorp was the last to compete, and declared, "I shall beat you all!" He took the Bible and opened to Luke 23:3, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Speaking these words, "his mind was affected in a very extraordinary manner." He felt the "sharpest pains," of conscience. He immediately could clearly see his subject matter and presented it in an organized sermon, much like a minister with some experience would. He preached with some liberty and often declared that he never had more assistance from the Spirit to preach than at that time. The audience first experienced "a visible depression, and afterwards a sullen gloom, upon every countenance." This response of the crowd simply increased Thorp's conviction. No one interrupted him, but paid very close attention to him, and many of his own statements made the hair on the back of his own neck to stand up. As he left the table he was standing on, no one said anything about the wager, but instead everyone was quiet. From that time he left off his association with those friends. He found some Methodists and soon joined John Wesley's society.<sup>84</sup> Thorp's case is particularly instructive, as it is a case of an opponent of the community getting caught in the very same false liminality he had helped create in order to mock it the actual liminality. Apparently the structures of ritual transformation were sufficiently powerful that the use of them outside of the ritual community as an act of protest against that very community still, in this case, initiated the same transformations.

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<sup>84</sup> Matthew Lanktree, "A Short Account of William Lanktree," *AM* 15:182 and "Anecdotes of the Rev. John Thorpe, of Malsborough, Rotherham, Yorkshire." *AM* 17: 311-3.

A strain of exclusivity in some of the narratives, which was hard to avoid given the distinctive intensity of Methodism and the serious opposition it received in many communities. Richard Elliott dreamed that he was attending an established Church service when an angel surreptitiously led him to the cellar, showing him the worm-eaten pillars. The angel made sure he saw and told him to escape. Elliott took this to mean it was “inexpedient” to attend a church that did not preach the gospel. He did not criticize anyone else for remaining where the Gospel was not preached. This attitude, published in Wesley’s magazine only five years after his death, was quite in opposition to Wesley’s insistence that Anglicans continue to receive communion from their priest even if he was not converted and did not feel favorably toward Methodists. While Elliott did not go as far as implying that “real” Christianity was to be found only in Methodism, occasionally others did. Samuel Bradburn, in a funeral sermon, referred to Methodism as what “real Christianity among us, is called by the people of the world.” Others described Methodism in such glowing terms as to at least imply the inferiority of other churches. George Ball wrote his testimony the month before he died, providing a particularly glowing report of the Methodists.

O ye Methodists! I believe ye are the happiest people in the world; ye precious souls, with whom I have taken sweet counsel, and with whom I have gone to the house of God, and partook together of the blessed supper of the Lord! O how have I felt, and seen, and handled and tasted the word of life! But these were only foretastes of the entertainments of heaven, issuing from the fountain of life, in the paradise of God.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Richard Elliott, “A Short Account of Mr. Richard Elliott, Preacher of the Gospel, to the Editor,” *AM* 19:574-5; “On Separation from the Church,” and “Farther Thoughts on Separation from the Church,” *Works* 13:316-9, 337-9; Samuel Bradburn, “A Funeral Sermon, in Memory of Mr. William Marsden,

Exclusivity could only occur in moderation for Methodism to remain effective. Strict exclusivity would be at odds with Wesley's original vision and would defy the tension between radical and mainstream that gave Methodism a wide appeal. Yet Wesley encouraged a sufficiently clear and distinctive identity for the purpose of transformation. The distinctiveness rested not with creedal detail, nor even a code of behavior, but primarily with a kind of internal experience that was encouraged and evidenced by one's behavior. Thus, in these narratives, what most repels opponents and most "bewitched" those drawn to Methodism was its intensely emotional impact.

#### 2.4 The Supernatural as a Narrative Tool

While Puritan narratives occasionally included dreams, supernaturalism was not nearly as common as it would be in early Methodist narratives. The early narratives in the *AM* feature so prominently what the subject believed to be or thought might be supernatural, that it requires examination if the transformation process is to be understood. This study does not propose to examine whether in fact such events actually occurred or whether they were supernatural; rather it examines how they were understood and responded to by the narrative subjects and their fellow Methodists. In other words, while I *am* trying to explain how early Methodists were shaped through the transformational processes, I am *not* trying to explain, or explain away, the early Methodist claims of the supernatural. To do so would risk dualism, functionalism and reductionism. To prevent overly awkward wording, qualifiers such as *imagined* or *believed she saw* or *thought he heard a voice* will not be used. This is not intended to

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deceased, Preached in Oldham Street Chapel, Manchester, on Sunday-Evening, the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, 1801," *MM* 25:242 and Ball 410.

indicate any support of the claimed supernatural quality of such experiences, but to make use of the language of the authors to examine issues unrelated to whether the experiences were supernatural or even whether they actually happened at all.

#### *2.4.1 Kinds of Supernatural Experiences*

For the purposes of this study, the term *supernatural* refers not only to something physically impossible happening but also to putative communication from supernatural beings, such as God, Jesus, angels, Satan, demons and dead people. Most accounts of the supernatural in the *AM* fall into a number of specific categories. The vast majority took the form of dreams, of hearing supernatural beings or of seeing supernatural beings. There are a few examples where elements within nature are used, such as bushes shaking, loud noises in the woods and even a chirping bird. As a boy, John Morris was walking past a hedge, when it suddenly shook from one end to the other, making a very loud noise. He assumed it was supernatural, and still remained of that opinion. Morris fell to his knees and begged God for mercy, writing “The Lord heard my cry, and visited my soul with his goodness and love.” He felt the effects of this “manifestation” for about two years, and “the spot of ground, where it happened” was always regarded as sacred by him. A few years later, being in prayer by a garden, he saw a beautiful white bird flying. Morris wished that he too could fly to heaven, and when he said so aloud, the bird he was watching was suddenly enclosed in clouds. This made such an impression that he knelt down and prayed to God: “I afterwards pondered the thing in my mind, not caring to mention it to anyone.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> John Morris, “The Life of John Morris, of Manchester, Written by Himself,” *AM* 18: 18-9.

While it can easily be understood that a young boy would see such events as supernatural, it may not be as apparent why a man decades later would still interpret those events as supernatural, to the point that the location remained sacred to him. What unfortunately is not provided is sufficient explanation as to what prepared him to interpret the shaking and noise this way. However, that it was sudden, startling and not obviously explained was likely key to its transformational power. Immediately following the bushes incident Morris sought a spiritual companion. It appears that Morris took the incident as a transformational experience. However, crossing a threshold into a new status requires instruction and fellowship with one's new peers. Morris only found this temporarily in his brother, so soon Morris' faith languished. When he had another supernatural communication, as positive as it was, he did nothing to encourage or understand it for some time.

Thomas Taylor described a Methodist revival in Yorkshire in 1778-1779 where conversions often happened without preachers, including through "dreams and visions, thunder and lightning; yea, the very chirping of a bird was made successful to the awakening of sinners." Regarding the last, Taylor provided the story of John Webster, a young man, and "as the generality of young people are, very wild, foolish, and giddy, not to say, very prophane [*sic*]." One day, while walking through the garden, a bird landed on his hand and gave three chirps before flying away. To the youth, the bird's chirps sounded like, "Jack, Jack, Jack," which was his nickname. Webb believed this to be "a supernatural messenger, or the harbinger of death; and, truly, he saw himself utterly unprepared to die." This led him to the Methodists and, through them, to his



conversion. William M’Cornoock’s conviction came to a climax when, finding card-playing in the house he was staying at, and “being weary of such company,” he went to a nearby orchard to pray. He heard the sound of trees shaking, followed by the sound of a log thrown into a pool. He could find no pool. He took these as signs that “the Lord was on my side.”<sup>87</sup>

Such signs from nature could also usher in the experience of conversion, as in the case of Thomas Olivers. Coming home after being admitted to the society, Olivers came to the bottom of a hill at the town’s entrance, and “a ray of light, resembling the shining of a star, descended through a small opening in the heavens, and instantaneously shone upon me. In that instant my burden fell off, and I was so elevated, that I felt as if I could literally fly away to heaven.” This particularly surprised him, as he remained “so prejudiced in favor of rational religion as not to regard visions or revelations.” However, the light was so evident, “and the sweetness and other effects attending it were so great, that though it happened about twenty-seven years ago, the several circumstances thereof are as fresh on my remembrance, as if they had happened but yesterday.”<sup>88</sup> Again, an event in nature rightly timed and unexplained initiated a new phase of spirituality, and was still interpreted as supernatural many years later even though it would seem quite easy to interpret it otherwise.

While not very common, there are a few descriptions of miraculous healing. N. Aspden, a physician, visited a very ill woman. Three times he left her to pray outside

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<sup>87</sup> Thomas Taylor, “To the Editor,” *AM* 19:411-2 and William M’Cornoock, “An Account of Mr. William M’Cornoock, in a letter to the Rev. John Wesley,” *AM* 8:135-6.

<sup>88</sup> Olivers, 2:86.

under a tree that God would give her relief and “have mercy on her soul.” The third time he prayed, God “graciously manifested himself unto him.” When he went in to his patient, he found her much better, and she soon recovered. More dramatically, Jane Wildbore lost the use of her limbs for four years. Alone one night in her house, “it was impressed on her mind” to pray for healing. She did not know how to get down on her knees, much less get up when she was done. She managed to kneel and prayed for some time, and then rose. She continued praying and “acting on faith” for two days, crying out in pain. Then the pain was gone and she was able to move her toes, then her feet, and finally her legs. She then walked about the room praising God for restoring the full use of her legs. Even more dramatic, so much so that the author felt the need to verify the account with the signatures of several people, was the healing and conversion of Mrs. Hogg. Unable to move her hands or her feet for three months due to rheumatism, Mrs. Hogg wrote about a night that began with her pleading for some display of God’s pardoning favor. “All of a sudden my room was filled as with the light from a hundred candles; and I heard a voice distinctly say, *‘Thy sins are forgiven thee! Arise and walk.’*” Her emotional distress was instantly gone and she was filled with peace and joy, but at the same time all her physical pain and weakness were gone. She was so amazed at first she could hardly accept it. She tried to get out of bed, which she did easily. “I then clapped both my hands on my head, threw them about, and so exerted myself, that at last I found that the Lord had indeed healed both body and soul.” That morning she dressed herself, went down stairs, and walked a few blocks without

any aid as a test.<sup>89</sup> This account contains what in these narratives is a unique combination of an audible voice, a vision (the light), healing and pardon all at the same moment.

Most commonly the supernatural elements in a narrative are kinds of divine communications. Frequently the form of divine communication involved scripture verses being “strongly impressed” on the subject’s mind (or “coming with power”), as well as dreams, visions or voices. Usually a verse “coming with power” ushered in conviction, pardon, or entire sanctification, or was a turning point in achieving one of those transformations. John Pawson explicitly described his communications as being from God. He experienced pardon when the Spirit applied the words, “Thou art mine.” At first Pawson was unaware that this phrase was from the Bible, his brother told him that it was in the book of Isaiah. The next morning Pawson opened his Bible at random and saw Isaiah 43:1, which ends with God saying to Israel, “Thou art mine.” William M’Conock prayed with confidence after being inspired by a Biblical passage, when an unrelated passage, “I am thy righteousness,” (Isaiah 41:10) came to him” with power.” Such applications could truly be transformational. The happiest time in Sarah Spirit’s life, despite having lost three of four children and her family having no work, was during her final illness. She was considering her previous “foolish conduct,” when the words, “Where I am shalt thou be also: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” (John 12:26, Heb. 13:5) came “with power” to her soul. “My tongue can never express the

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<sup>89</sup> Thomas Wood, “An Account of the Life and Death of Mr. N. Aspden, Surgeon, of Blackburn,” *MM* 22:178; Joseph Wells, “A Remarkable Account of Jane Wildbore, of Nighton, Near Leicester,” *AM* 8:200-1 and J. S. Pipe, “A Remarkable Conversion, Nottingham, Dec. 9, 1799,” *MM* 23:170-1.

thousandth part of the love, joy and peace which I then felt, and still continue to feel. . . I am very sensible that the time of my departure is at hand; but the sooner the better!” It is not always clear in the narratives whether the impressing of a verse on a person’s mind was seen as actually supernatural. With each form of communication a significant percentage of the accounts indicate some ambiguity as to whether it was actually supernatural communication or not. When Sarah Rankin went to hear Maxfield preach, “the Lord applied the word with power to her soul.” These were the words of her husband, the author of the narrative. Sarah herself came home and told Mr. Bradshaw that she never had heard such a sermon or such a minister in her life. Bradshaw, smiling, told her that she was saying this because she had felt it applied to her heart, as she had heard many good sermons before this.<sup>90</sup> Here not only does Sarah Rankin receive Methodist instruction with a deep emotional response, but she was being instructed as to just how to interpret those emotions.

Words could be “applied” more dramatically, in the form of an audible voice. While thinking about going drinking and dancing that evening, William Ferguson heard a voice saying, “What if thou shouldest drop down dead in the midst of the dance! Wouldst thou go to heaven?” He responded in the negative, feeling that he “had past sentence upon” himself. He was filled with horror and saw himself hanging over hell “by the brittle thread of life.” Usually such communications were far more positive. George Brown prayed one night with all his strength, “when an inward voice (sweeter

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<sup>90</sup> John Pawson, “A Short Account of John Pawson: in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley,” *AM* 2:33; William M’Cormock, “An Account of Mr. William M’Cormock, in a letter to the Rev. John Wesley,” *AM* 8:79-80, and Thomas Rankin, “An Account of the Life and Death of Mrs. Rankin, Written by Her Husband,” *MM* 22:71.

than the harmony of angels) whispered, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven. Go in peace and sin no more.' Now indeed heaven was opened in my new-born soul." Such "words" could occur suddenly to change a person's life, rather than as the culmination of a long process. Under Wesley's preaching, Margaret Wood experienced pardon, with victory over her besetting sin. She wished to join the society, but her husband did not allow it. As she obeyed him, her besetting sin returned for seven years, at which time her husband died. When the oldest of her four children died, she heard a voice, "If thou wilt return, return," and remembered her sins. Usually the level of certainty that such voices were from God was quite high. Mrs. Scudamore wrote that God's "small still voice, at the very same instant, said, it is great glory to follow God; and to receive from him is long life. This was no delusion: it was too powerfully manifested to my heart, to admit a singled doubt."<sup>91</sup>

Another very common form of supernatural communication was dreams. Dreams nearly always were of Jesus, Hell or Judgment Day. Even when they were not, they served transformational purposes. One man dreamed of a light coming up the side of a hill, so bright he could hardly look at it, and it seemed to enlighten his entire soul. The next day he had the light "seemingly before" his eyes. "I thought I saw different from what I did before." Reading the homily a few days later, he understood that his salvation was through faith in Jesus' blood. Reading, "By Grace ye are saved, through Faith," [Ephesians 2:9] he could read no farther, but he cried out, "By Grace I am saved

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<sup>91</sup> William Ferguson, "Some Account of Mr. William Ferguson," *AM* 4:294, 5.; George Brown, "Some Account of Mr. George Brown," *AM* 7:521; Margaret Wood, "Letter CCCLV: (From Mrs. Margaret Wood, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Bristol, Jan. 7, 1772," *AM* 8:57 and "The Life and Death of Mrs. Rebecca Scudamore Extracted from the Account Published by Mrs. Sarah Young; Including Also Their Own Experience," *AM* 16:358.

through Faith!” He repeated this several times, “Filled with rapturous joy, and the love of God, to so great a degree, that I scarce knew where I was.” He saw the Scriptures in a different manner from before. He “experimentally knew, that GOD the Father had forgiven me, for the sake of his son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit witnessed this saving Truth to my soul.”<sup>92</sup>

Often dreams were powerful encouragements to repent, as was the case with James Creighton, who awoke one night out of a “remarkable” dream. He then felt an impulse, which he had felt the two nights previously as well, causing his whole body to shake, “even every nerve and fibre in my body.” It left him weak for hours. Another man of “dissolute life” attended a funeral, went to a tavern, and then went home, where he dreamed of a multi-headed serpent trying to seize him. Wherever the man turned he was confronted with a serpents head. The next morning, another person seeing the man thoughtful, invited him to go with him to church and hear a sermon “on the Old Serpent.” This person did not know why he happened to invite the man, or why he described the sermon so. It so happened that the sermon was on the serpent in the Garden of Eden. The man experienced pardon in the service. Sixteen-year old Sarah Cartlidge, suffering a fatal illness, renewed her repentance and re-experienced her peace through a disturbing dream. She said, “the Lord is come. I feel his love.” The next day she died. Benjamin Bradshaw instead received comfort through his dream, in which he was directed to Psalm 49:15, “But God will redeem my soul from the power of the

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<sup>92</sup> H. D., “From a Gentleman in Bristol, to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, Bristol, August 5, 1743,” *AM* 20:201.

grave, for he shall receive me.” These and “other words” comforted him during his final illness.<sup>93</sup>

Approximately half of all divine communications reported in the narratives were visions. Naturally, Jesus figured quite prominently in these visions. To Rachel Bruff, who fell into a kind of sleep while praying, he was “very comely,” plainly dressed and grave. He had a very white towel around his waist. She realized the man was Jesus, and he came to her, untied the towel, and gave it to her saying, “Do as I have done,” and was gone. This was before encountering the Methodists. Sarah Ryan’s description of Jesus was very sparse, indicating only that she saw (not with her “bodily eyes”) him stand before her saying, “This day is salvation come to this house.” Both of these examples have a qualifier of the vision. Bruff’s “kind of sleep” nearly puts her vision more in the category of a dream, while Ryan indicated that she did not physically see Jesus. Others described their visions as in their imagination, although this did not necessarily mean they regarded it as imaginary. Some did not indicate whether they saw with their “bodily eyes” or with their imagination. P. Newman was in prayer, and found herself “emptied, stripped naked, and helpless before a holy God!” She could not move or speak, not even able to utter “a sigh or a groan.” Finally “Jesus appeared with such a glorious luster as caused all evil to vanish before me. My soul was then filled with pure love to him and all mankind.” She cried out, “Jesus is all in all!” It seemed these visions would kill her. In her weakness she could not lift a hand. Whether or not

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<sup>93</sup> James Creighton, “A Short Account of the Experience of the Rev. James Creighton, B. A.,” *AM* 8:301; “A Remarkable Conversion,” *AM* 19:446-7; James Wood, “A Short Account of the Happy Death of Sarah Cartlidge of Shafton, near Barnsley, Yorkshire.” *AM* 17: 298-300 and T. Broadbent, “Conversion and Christian Death of Benjamin Bradshaw, of Sutton, in the Isle of Ely,” *MM* 22:226-7.

Newman's visions were mentally or physically experienced, they were intense and transforming.<sup>94</sup>

Most visions of Jesus were of him suffering, particularly of him on the cross. Sarah Spirit "had such a sight of her Savior bleeding on the cross for her, as constrained her to cry out, 'I know, I feel thou hast loved me, and given thyself for me!'" Using another stock phrase to indicate a vision not physically seen, Bruff wrote that she saw, "by faith," Jesus praying for her until "he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood." [Luke 22:4] This put her soul in agony and melted her heart. She "mourned and wept at his feet most bitterly." One Sunday while her family was at church and she was too ill to go, Mary Matthews sought the Lord, without a response. Tired, she tried to calm herself and fell asleep. On waking she saw "with the eye of her mind, a representation" of Jesus on the cross. She saw the nails in his flesh, and a pure white container into which his blood was flowing. She was asked for whom this blood was flowing. "In the same moment faith sprung up in her soul; her burden of sin dropt off; – and she cried out with joy, 'For me, Lord! – for me!'"<sup>95</sup>

Not all narrative subjects and authors were entirely comfortable with the idea of supernatural communications, some were uncertain in specific cases that what the mind pictured, however transformational, was actually a vision from God. The "vision" might instead be an entirely human mental exercise in and of itself, but then used by God to help transform the author or subject. Samuel Hodgson had been hindered in his

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<sup>94</sup> Rachel Bruff, "The Experience of Rachel Bruff, of Talbot-County, Maryland," *AM* 10:135, 7; Sarah Ryan, "Account of Mrs. Sarah Ryan," *AM* 2:305-9 and P. Newman, "Letter CCCLXXV (From Mrs. P. Newman, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Chehenham, August 23, 1772," *AM* 10:437.

<sup>95</sup> "An Account of Sarah Spirit," *AM* 12:298; Bruff, 244 and M. Fletcher, "To the Editor of the Methodist Magazine, Madely, Oct. 18, 1799," *MM* 23:219.



spiritual development by looking for “the pardon of my sins in some kind of miraculous manner.” Still, he persisted in his search for pardon, until, on his way to prayer meeting, thinking of Christ’s sufferings, “I saw him, as it were, suffering, leading, fainting, and dying on the cross, for the souls of *all men*.” Hodgson reasoned that if Christ died for all, that he must have died for him. He received the witness to his pardon during the service. This account strongly implied that Hodgson’s visionary experience, while transforming, was not miraculous, that is, not seen as physically there, but merely as a mental image. Sarah Smith described Christ revealing himself as an “almighty Saviour,” and she saw that his blood was shed for her. To the “eye of [her] mind” it appeared that “Christ was immediately present,” and that he spoke to her heart the words, “Thou art mine, and I am thine.” Her burden was instantly gone.<sup>96</sup> For Smith the issue of whether the revelation was a supernaturally-empowered vision or a sanctified imagination did not matter. What mattered was that Christ *was* revealed to her heart, with saving results.

A lengthy sermon discussed faith at great length, with definite connections to these descriptions of visions. Believing is “illustrated by the action of *attentively viewing an object*.” Because “the understanding is the mental eye,” this “eye” must be fixed on Jesus, and the soul brought to a situation that encouraged a clear view of Jesus, by turning away from the “dark paths of sin” “We must take notice of his person, nature, and attributes. See him in his deep humility and poverty; – mark well his tender

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<sup>96</sup> Samuel Hodgson, “A Short Account of Mr. Samuel Hodgson, Taken from His Own Journals,” *AM* 19:359 and Sarah Smith, “The Experience of Sarah Smith, of Pot-Shrigley, Near Macclesfield, in Cheshire, Extracted From Her Own Papers. To Which is Added, an Account of Her Death, by Mr. Geo. Lowe,” *MM* 22:17.

compassion in a thousand offices to needy wretched creatures; – observe his agony in the garden, till his whole body is bathed in bloody sweat! What astonishing anguish penetrates his Soul! Betrayed, denied [*sic*], insulted! treated with scorn and unrelenting cruelty! – condemned and crucified.” It would seem that to some extent early Methodists were quite literally trained to have visions of Jesus’ sufferings in order to experience the faith necessary for transformation.<sup>97</sup>

Nearly as common as visions of heavenly beings were visions of Hell. A fifteen-year old Methodist convert from a Catholic home obeyed her mother when told to go under the care of a priest. When the girl knelt at the altar for mass, she lost her confidence, joy and peace. She wrote, “I imagined I saw hell moved from beneath to meet me.” The idea of hell suddenly being beneath as if ready to receive the subject was an oft-repeated image in the narratives. Richard Townroe’s experience was quite different. Seriously ill, Townroe fell into “a kind of trance for several hours” on the fourth day of a serious illness.

I imagined, I was in a place of inexpressible horror and misery; dark, dreadful clouds hung over my head; on a dismal throne was a person of superior grandeur and magnitude; he surveyed, with hateful eyes, multitudes of unhappy spirits who passed rapidly before him, and in whose looks and actions were depicted unutterable anguish and woe! And at the same time I was conscious of my own guilt and wretchedness.

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<sup>97</sup> “A Sermon on The Scriptural Method of Believing in Order to Obtain Present and Eternal Salvation,” *MM* 22:12.

J. S. Pipe of slipping and falling into deep pit, as “satan in a horrible shape,” rose up on wings to meet him. He cried out to God for deliverance, and then awoke.<sup>98</sup> Most descriptions of hell were not nearly so descriptive, focusing on the damned rather than on Satan or demons.

There is also a lengthy account of a man with little exposure to religion whose intensity in experiencing hell is unmatched in the *AM*. One night John Taylor was becoming quite drunk, and tavern owner refused him any more ale. On leaving he fell and was “stiff as a dead man, his eyes set wide open, and his teeth quite closed.” He was put to bed, where he began to grind his teeth. Taylor’s face became distorted and he went into violent convulsions, requiring four men to hold him down, although he would briefly become quiet. This went from 9 pm Tuesday to 7 pm Thursday. Taylor awoke, but was unable to speak, and made signs that he wanted to write. He wrote “Take me home to die” and became unconscious again. He was taken home, but could not relax sufficiently to sleep for two weeks. When, about a month from the first incident, Taylor was asked about it, he said that he remembered everything until he fell. Taylor described falling into a dreadful pit. Hitting the bottom of the pit, Taylor was dragged away by “many devils.” He struggled with them in great pain as they were trying to get him into the fire, which was “a vast mountain.” He resisted the devils’ efforts to drag him to the fire, from which Taylor could hear horrible screams. The pit was absolutely black, yet Taylor could see only the devils and the fire itself. Finally,

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<sup>98</sup> A. B., “The Experience of Mrs. A. B.,” *AM* 416; Richard Townroe, “The Experience of Mr. Richard Townroe, Written by Himself,” *AM* 16:382 and J. S. Pipe, “The Experience of Mr. Pipe, to the Editor of the Methodist Magazine,” *AM* 20:369-70.

the devils' fled at the appearance of an angel. Taylor followed the angel, who had told him that his wickedness had brought him there, but the angel left and the devils came again. The devils were in the forms of bears, lions and other wild beasts. The angel came again and the devils and Taylor's pain fled, until the angel once again left. It felt like the two days of torment were five or six years. The angel appeared yet again, and this time Taylor was allowed to follow him to heaven's gates. "I saw transparent persons, very beautiful and glorious, and heard them sing in a manner I cannot describe." Taylor wanted to enter in, but the angel said he must return to tell his brethren what he had seen. The anonymous author reported that since then Taylor had attended all the ordinances of God, but still seemed unaware of "the power of religion."<sup>99</sup> This is a rather rare instance of an account of dramatic supernatural communication that did not result in conviction, pardon or entire sanctification.

Most visions of hell were actually experienced shortly before visions of Jesus. Similarly to the young Methodist convert from Catholicism mentioned above, it seemed to Samuel Jackson that hell was "opened to receive" him, and that he was about to fall into it. He cried to God, "Lord, save, or I perish!" Then Jesus was "presented to the eye" of his mind, "all bleeding on the cross" for Jackson's sins. "In an instant all my sorrow was gone, divine peace took place in my conscience, and . . . I rejoiced in the God of my salvation; and many precious promises were applied to my soul." A number of stock elements are grouped here close together in one of the many narratives written by John Pawson; hell opening up to receive the sinner, Jesus on the cross, indication

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<sup>99</sup> "A Strange Account," *AM* 7:160-2.

that it was a mental vision and the application of Bible verses (by God) to his soul. For Zechariah Yewdall, overwhelmed with his sins and guilt, it seemed to “his apprehension, hell was moved from beneath to meet him.” He was in agony for two hours, during which time others in the house were afraid the noise would disturb the neighbors. During this distress, “the Lord was pleased to visit him in love. He had such a discovery of Christ's going up to Calvary to suffer in his stead, that, in a moment, a stubborn heart was broken and subdued.” Similarly, J. B. felt that hell was ready to swallow her up for her sins. After praying for three hours she “saw by faith” Jesus on the cross, blood pouring from his side. Rather than having a vision of Jesus and hell, Miss T, saw Jesus and Satan fighting for her, and heard Jesus say, “I will have her.” At that moment she experienced confidence that she was pardoned, and declared, “I am taken from hell to heaven!” She later said that she was not sure whether during her vision she was in or out of her body.<sup>100</sup> Here is the opposite of ambiguity over whether a vision was supernatural or the subject’s imagination acting on faith. Instead, Miss T was uncertain whether or not her spirit had actually left her body, leaving her consciousness to witness supernatural events from some supernatural location.

No less a Methodist authority than John Fletcher, at one time John Wesley’s hand-picked successor, had earlier expressed a helpful clarification. Fletcher described what was the nature of God’s manifestation to a believer. Fletcher did not believe it was the “representation of our Lord’s person and sufferings as the natural man can form

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<sup>100</sup> J. Pawson, “An Account of the Conversion and Happy Death of Mr. Samuel Jackson, of Leeds, Communicated by Mr. Pawson,” *MM* 23:499; Zechariah Yewdall, “The Experience of Mr. Zechariah Yewdall,” *AM* 18: 113; J. B., “The Experience of J. B. of St. Helliers in the Isle of Jersey,” *AM* 11:71-2 and John Morgan, “Letter CCXCIII (From Mr. J. Morgan, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley.), Cork, Dec. 23, 1764.” *AM* 6:218.

to himself, by the force of warm imagination.” People seeing a picture or hearing a description of Jesus suffering were “deeply affected and melted into tears. They raise in themselves, a lively idea” of it, and they felt pity, “but alas! They remain strangers to the revelation of the Son of God by the Holy Ghost.” It was not simply “good desires, meltings of heart, victories over particular corruptions, a confidence that the Lord can and will save us, power to stay ourselves on some promises, gleams of joy, rays of comfort, enlivening hopes, touches of love; no, not even foretastes of christian [*sic*] liberty, and of the good word of God.” These are the Father’s “delightful drawings,” not the “powerful revelation of the Son.” These appear and reappear to encourage us to come to Christ, and “are not a divine union with him, by the revelation of himself.” It was easier to say what the revelation was not than to tell what it actually was. “Tongues of men and angels want proper words to express the sweetness and glory, with which the Son of God visits the souls that cannot rest without him. This blessing is not to be described, but enjoyed.” It can only be explained by God himself, by giving the revelation.<sup>101</sup> To Fletcher, a dramatic supernatural communication needed to be carefully distinguished from that actual act of God that effects the transformation itself. The proper role of visions, dreams and similar experiences was to bring the subject to the place where they would receive from God and exercise the repentance and faith required for transformation. Thus, no matter how dramatic the supernatural communication, it might not immediately, or ever, be followed by the transformation of new birth or perfection in love.

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<sup>101</sup> John Fletcher, “The Second Letter on the Spiritual Manifestation of the Son of God,” *AM* 16:88-9.

#### 2.4.2 *Visions of Judgment, Death and Methodism*

A number of narratives contain descriptions of dreams or visions of Judgment Day that proved to be turning points in their experience of conviction of sin. Robert Row frequently had dreams in which he was urged to repent. In one all his sins were brought before him at the Day of Judgment while he remained in “miserable suspense” concerning his fate. Miles Martindale opened his autobiographical account with a vivid and extremely long description of a dream of his being in the judgment, awaking just as he escaped being cast into hell. While usually Judgment Day was experienced in a dream, J. V. experienced it as a waking vision, followed by a vision of God. “Suddenly I was wrapt in the visions of the Almighty. I saw the holy God with vengeance in his countenance, and thunder in his hand . . . He seemed determined to deal the vindictive blow. At the same time I saw the Priest of God, standing in his seamless garment, interceding for me.” Richard Elliot’s dream of Judgment Day began as a dream of walking in a beautiful meadow on a pleasant day, followed by a radical change of scenery ushering in the final judgment, which Elliot recounted in great detail. He saw many cast into the Lake of Fire, and was about to be cast in himself when he awoke.<sup>102</sup>

Judgment Day dreams could initiate or culminate the process of repentance. Charles Spears had been deeply convinced of sin, and then fell from it. Spears then dreamed of “the great and terrible Judge looking down upon him with eyes of indignation.” He then attempted, in vain, to find a place to hide, “for wherever he ran

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<sup>102</sup> Robert Roe, “The Experience of Mr. Robert Roe,” *AM* 6:522; Miles Martindale, “A Short Account of Mr. Miles Martindale, Preacher of the Gospel,” *AM* 20:3-5; J. V., “An Account” 6:461 and Richard Elliott, “A Short Account of Mr. Richard Elliott, Preacher of the Gospel, to the Editor,” *AM* 19:573.

the same sight appeared full in his view, until he awoke in the torments of hell.” His waking thought reflected a similar perspective on God and on himself. Soon after this dream, Spears’ wife died, which he considered God’s just judgment on him for sinning against God “with so high a hand.”<sup>103</sup>

Surprisingly, some dreams of Judgment Day ended happily. When Robert Robinson was ten, he had a dream of the Day of Judgment, “and that all were to be judged according to their works.” The Judge pronounced the decisive sentence, and many, in the greatest distress, moved off to the left. God smiled at Robinson, however, and motioned him over to his right, to stand with the redeemed. Robinson woke up happy over his status in the dream, “but having no one to instruct him, he had not clear views of the plan of salvation,” and it would be some time before he experienced pardon. G. C. was happy receiving a vision of his own positive judgment at God’s right hand, despite his loved one not being so fortunate.

I had a vision of the last Judgment, wherein I stood on the right hand, and one I tenderly loved on the left. Yet I had the same complacency in her condemnation, as the Judge himself had. This vision continued about three hours, in which I found such instruction as only God can give. All the time I was awake, and knew I was in the body; yet could hardly believe it was my own body. I also understood, this state could not be fully enjoyed, till I was freed from the burden of the flesh. But I had a taste of it, to encourage me in pressing forward to that holiness, which fits me as it were to drop into God.<sup>104</sup>

Not only do the narratives contain visions of hell and Judgment Day, but they also include other encounters with the demonic. While George Ball was praying, in the

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<sup>103</sup> “A Short Account of the Death of Mr. Charles Spear,” *AM* 12:17.

<sup>104</sup> Robert Smith, “An Account of Mr. Robert Robinson, of Coningsby, Near Horncastle, Lincolnshire,” *MM* 24:66-7 and G. C., “An Extract From the Journal of Mr. G. C.,” *AM* 6:408.



dark, for the clergy of the Church of England, he “felt a rushing wind pass by” him, and it seemed as if something fell on the bed near him, making it shake as hard as it would if Ball himself had fallen on it. This caused him to “tremble with fear.” Three weeks later he was praying for the same thing, and the same incident occurred. Ball concluded from this “that satan much disliked the exercise of prayer, and that praying for the salvation of souls, very much displeased him.”<sup>105</sup>

Other exposures to the demonic could be far more frightening for the subject. Years after falling from his confidence in God’s pardon, Methodist preacher John Haime tried once again to pray, and Satan struck out. While Haime was walking alone, “faintly crying for mercy, suddenly such a hot blast of brimstone flashed in my face, as almost took away my breath. And presently after, as I walked along, an irresistible power struck up my heels, and threw me violently upon my face.” Satanic encounters could give way to divine ones. J. V. dreamt that he saw the devil in bed, whereupon he stripped the devil naked. The devil was enraged and chased him, and as J. V. ran he encountered Christ, who told him, “If he touches thee, he will have thee.” J. V. replied, “Lord how is it possible that I should escape touching him?” Christ indicated that J. V. was to get behind him and grab the hem of his robe, and thus he escaped the devil. “I knew not the purport of my dream till I was about to strip the devil of his subjects.” In

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<sup>105</sup> Richard Rodda, “An Account of Mr. George Ball, of Plymouth-Dock,” *MM* 23:359. It should be noted “satan” is not capitalized in the *AM*, although it is seen as a proper name. This is probably meant as an act of disrespect. On the other hand, frequently the word *God* or *Jesus*, or occasionally other words are in all small capitals. This comes from English translations of the Old Testament translating YHWH, the Divine Name, as LORD, to indicate to the reader that it signifies the Divine Name. No doubt this is the same purpose for the use of all small capitals in the *AM*. When a quoted passage from the *AM* includes a word in all small capitals, I have retained it, to indicate that the author was using the word as God’s name.

a letter to John Wesley, J. V. would describe his time of temptations during his search for entire sanctification. “O how did the hellish hounds gnaw me! Horrid visions on my bed; and a kind of despair all the day long.” It is not surprising that, having now experienced entire sanctification, he could write, “I see that if Christ leaves me but one moment, I shall be a devil.”<sup>106</sup>

The most disturbing struggle with the demonic may be William Mallet’s account of his niece S. from a letter she had written to him giving her testimony. When she was nine she came under conviction, and could not sleep, often crying all night and often throughout the day as well, so some feared she “was going melancholy.” She still could not sleep, “any more than they can sleep who are in hell,” as she expected to be in hell by morning. She felt terrible distress. Once greatly disturbed, it was “impressed on” her mind that she would have peace when she murdered her youngest sister, a baby of nine months whom she was very fond of. She felt this for some time, and one day when the family was gone “it was suggested, ‘Now is the time.’ My torture was more than I can express.” She took a knife, and on the third try to kill her sister God “gave me to see through the snare.” She cried but kept it a secret.<sup>107</sup>

Of course, concerns over Judgment Day and hell were closely connected to the fear of death, and several narrative subjects had premonitions of their own deaths. James Alexander was shot in a gun accident when a faulty gun went off when it was set on a table. During the 1798 Irish rebellion Alexander had told Mrs. C of “seeing” a

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<sup>106</sup> John Haime, “A Short Account of Mr. John Haime,” *AM* 3:267; J. V. “An Account,” 6:459-60 and J. V., “Letter CCCXVI” *AM* 7:51-2.

<sup>107</sup> William Mallitt, “An Account of S. Mallitt,” *AM* 11:130-3 and Miles Martindale, “A Short Account of Mr. Miles Martindale, Preacher of the Gospel,” *AM* 20:3-5.

gun, and that he was “almost sure” than he would die by then. When the rebellion ended, Mrs. C. joked that he was a false prophet, but Alexander told her that he still thought he would die by a gun. Further poignancy could be evoked by what the victim did between the premonition and his or her death. A few nights before his death, Thomas Branch dreamed that he was working in the coal pit when a large stone fell on him. In his dream he felt he was dying, and he was so agitated that his wife woke him. The night before his death he attended the funeral of a woman who had helped him become awakened. In front of her body, he gave out a hymn and called everyone there to “secure one thing needful,” salvation. At the end of work the next day a large stone fell on him, crushing and killing him. Premonitions of one’s death could also occur many years before the person actually died. Mary Croswell dreamed that her father and two of her brothers (all dead before she knew them) came to her, arm in arm in white robes. Her father approached and wiped away her tears, telling her she must return and live better, and at age twenty-five she would rejoin them forever. At fifteen she was awakened, and three months later believed. Some time later she became convinced of inbred sin. She received deliverance and lived for ten year more, dying at twenty-five.<sup>108</sup>

In some accounts people received premonitions of a loved one’s death. One night Andrew Thompson’s wife dreamed that her neighbor gave her a pair of black gloves. She told her husband her dream, but he told her not to worry. That morning he

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<sup>108</sup> Farrell, “An Account of the Death of James Alexander,” *MM* 23:298-9; T. Taylor, “A Short Account of Thomas Branch, Who Was Killed in a Coal-Pit, October 17, 1799,” *MM* 23:128 and Christopher Hopper, “A Short Account of Mary Crosdall,” *AM* 8:626-7.

fell from a cliff and was killed, and later that day her neighbor did actually bring her a pair of black gloves. The standard interpretation of such events is evident from the author's comment, who noted that when she was being courted by her husband she had a dream of him falling off a different place on the same cliff. The author exclaimed, "How will the Sceptic account for this?" Eight-year old Jeremiah Lacy heard the "most delightful music" while at school, although no one else could, and assumed, correctly, that his sick infant brother had just died. Going home, Lacy discovered that his brother had died at the very time he had heard the music. Another account was unusual because two people had the same premonition of one of their deaths, that of the Shepherds. Keziah's Shepherd's father died, and two weeks later she and her husband had a dream on the same night. Both dreamed that he called them to follow him, but in Keziah's dream her father specifically called her by name, asking her to follow him "to eternity." A few days later she developed a headache, which turned out to be the first symptom of a fatal case of smallpox.<sup>109</sup>

While some early Methodists merely had premonitions of their own or a loved one's death, occasionally Methodists wrote of direct encounters with the spirit of someone recently deceased. When Miles Martindale was eight, a friend of his who used to live with him contracted smallpox, which he had apparently caught from Martindale. One day Martindale while was sitting in a bedroom, nearly recovered from his own illness, he saw his friend come in and stand up against the wall opposite Martindale,

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<sup>109</sup> Thomas Wood, "A Short Account of Andrew Thompson, Who Was Killed Friday, January 24, 1800 at Bowsby Alum-Works, in the North-Riding of Yorkshire, by falling from a Rock Perpendicularly About 150 Yards," *MM* 23:303-4; Jeremiah Lacy, "Memoirs of the Life of Jeremiah Lacy," *MM* 25:443-4 and William Shepherd, "The Experience and Happy Death of Mrs. Keziah Shepherd, Written by Her Husband," *MM* 23:123.

staring at him. Martindale remembered everything he was wearing (it had been thirty years earlier), and how his face was swollen and discolored from the smallpox. They stared at each other for ten minutes without saying anything. The whole time Martindale wondered if his friend had already died and if this was his friend's spirit. He almost asked him. His mother appeared at the door and stood in the doorway. Martindale's friend pressed his way past her, with some difficulty. Martindale was amazed that his mother could neither see nor feel him. When he told his mother what had happened, she exclaimed that his friend was dead, but word only came of his death the next day, and that he had died at about the time that Martindale had seen him. "What shall we say of these things?" Martindale, thirty years later, evaluated his experience.

Was I asleep? No! Was it a phantom of the brain? That cannot be, seeing I was no more intimidated than I am this moment. Was it some corporeal being? this is altogether impossible; for then my mother must have both seen, heard, and felt him. I am persuaded it was his spirit; the infidel may think as he pleases.<sup>110</sup>

Like other supernatural encounters touching on death, judgment or the afterlife, seeing and hearing friends recently deceased spurred the experience toward repentance. John Morris had a good friend with whom he liked to go to dances. A few days after, seeing him at a dance, Morris dreamed that the young man came into his room with a "ghastly countenance," warning Morris that he needed to repent and mend his ways, or in a short time he would die, "and share the same fate of misery and distress into which I am now involved." Morris dreamed that he rose from his bed, saying "In the name of

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<sup>110</sup> Martindale 8.

the Lord who are you?” The man confirmed who he was. Morse asked him when he died, and was told it was earlier that night, his friends giving details of his illness and the manner in which he had died. His friend told him that his soul had come out of his body, and “that two evil companions were ready to receive him, the one on the right hand, and the one on the left. He would gladly have returned again to his body, but it would not receive him.” He was brought to God as judge, who told him to “depart from me, ye cursed!” The next morning, Morris went to the young man's house to ask about him, and found that everything in his dream had happened as had been described to him in his dream.<sup>111</sup>

Methodists sometimes described occasions of supernatural communications for that drew them to Methodism or confirmed for them the legitimacy of Methodism. Rather than being transported to heaven or hell, some Methodists had dreams or visions of being in a Methodist setting. A Methodist led Sarah Ryan to hear Wesley preach, during which she saw, “by the eye of my mind,” Jesus, standing as he had after his resurrection before his disciple Thomas, asking for his wounds to be felt to demand he believe. “My soul was melted down before him, and I longed to be joined with this people. Others encountered Methodists in dreams or visions before they ever physically met them. Mrs. Planche, at thirteen, had a vivid dream of escaping hell through the help of a “grave person,” who brought her to safety. This resulted in her awakening. Many years later Planche met a Methodist preacher by the name of Hunter, whom she recognized as the man in her dream. George Cawley’s wife dreamed that she and her

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<sup>111</sup> Morris, 18:21.

husband were at the church and saw the world end, “and all the ungodly going down to destruction. In the crowd she saw her husband in the greatest distress, wringing his hands, and repeatedly crying aloud to her, ‘We have gone wrong!’” She saw someone preaching salvation through Christ. The next morning she told her husband the dream, and they were both “much alarmed.” Not long after they went to a Methodist church, and she immediately recognized the preacher as the preacher from her dream. George Cawley, being told this, was deeply affected, and from that time was convinced of his need of Christ rather than his own works to get into heaven. John Randon, a British soldier on a ship on its way to the American Revolution asked God for spiritual guidance, as he was under conviction and knew that there was a Methodist corporal on board, but knew nothing else about him. Randon fell asleep and dreamed that the corporal’s name was Samuel Pierce. The next morning Randon asked if there was a Samuel Pierce in the regiment, finally finding the corporal. Pierce led Randon into the experience of the new birth, and Randon claimed Pierce as his spiritual father from then on.<sup>112</sup>

A particularly vivid confirmation of the truth of Methodism was described by Methodist preacher John Morris. Having been raised Roman Catholic, Morris was very anxious to know if the teachings of the Methodists were true, and “agreeable to the Oracles of God.” Morris begged God to send him an angel to tell him the truth, and then “imagined in a dream, that a holy angel, clothed in shining raiment, surrounded

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<sup>112</sup> Ryan, 2:299-301; Mrs. Planche, “An Account of Mrs. Planche,” *AM* 14:417-8; T. Bartholomew, “An Account of the Experience of Mr. George Cawley,” *MM* 24:249 and John Randon, “A Letter from a Soldier in America, to His Wife in England: Written Immediately After the Battle of Bunker’s Hill, Communicated by Mr. Miles Martindale,” *AM* 16:331.

with a blaze of light, descended into my room: his hair seemed like sparkling gold, and his countenance was inexpressibly beautiful and glorious.” The angel, calling Morris by name, told him that many of the people to whom God had recently led him to were God’s people, and “the Doctrines which they teach are the Doctrines of the Gospel.” To provide proof for Morris that what he said was true, the angel handed Morris a book “which contains the Mind and Will of God.” The angel placed the book on Morris’ chest, telling him to search it, “for it will shew thee the right way to Salvation.” The angel told Morris that he had appeared in a dream, and “that when you awake, you may be satisfied that the Methodists are God’s people; whom I charge you to join, and never to leave, while they continue to preach the Truth.” In a “token” of the reality of his message, the angel pressed his fingertip to Morris’ “naked breast” three times, which was extremely painful. Morris immediately awoke and found that the bible that went with the room was lying on his chest. It had been across the room when Morris and his roommate had gone to bed. His roommate woke up at the same time, and was amazed that the bible was on Morris. Morris’ chest also had three marks where he had been touched in his dream. These hurt for two or three days, but the marks remained for months. When he explained and showed the marks to the person who had brought him to the Methodists, he was so amazed “that he almost fainted.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Morris, 18: 72-3.



## CHAPTER 3

### STAGES OF TRANSFORMATION

#### 3.1 The Pre-Transformation: Awakened and Convicted

While Wesley believed strongly in the total depravity of the human soul, he balanced this teaching with a belief in God's universal "prevenient grace." Wesley's juxtaposition of human depravity with grace left Methodists with an expectation of God striving with people, particularly children, often many years before being awakened to sin. Thomas Spear began experiencing "divine impressions" before he could speak. When he was old enough to speak, Spear would often ask his father to pray with him. At four Spear could talk much about the "invisible things of God." He would reprove even adults for such things as swearing, telling them, "Now take my advice and repent, or the devil will have you." Childhood spiritual progress was usually of temporary effect. God strove "mightily" with Ann Belton as a child. She was often deeply affected by preaching. As she grew, "Pride and Vanity began to shew themselves more and more in her," while her non-Christian father indulged "all her youthful, vain

desires.” She still felt a witness from God, frequently convincing her that how she was living was wrong.<sup>114</sup>

Prevenient grace could give way to awakening, even with young children. An anonymous author wrote of his young daughter Nancy: “She attended all our meetings constantly.” After services one of her parents would go through the content of the sermons with her and help her to apply it to her own life. At about age five she was asking her mother about the fall, salvation, judgment, death, heaven and hell. At a New-Year’s service, her father, the preacher, read out the ritual for the covenant service, frequently stopping while the whole congregation of over one thousand were “absorbed in tears.” After the meeting Nancy came to her father weeping. When asked why she wept, Nancy placed her hand on her heart, saying, “It is what I feel *there*, father, it is there.” Not only conviction of sin, but even the transformation of the new birth could happen at a very young age. S. N. wrote of having found peace with God when only three: “In what manner, I cannot tell; but I remember I was quite happy, and had no painful fear of God.” Yet by five she saw herself to be “a hell-deserving sinner.” She was so sad that she wished that she had never been born.<sup>115</sup>

The path to transformation was not always quickly taken by children. As she physically grew as a child, Sarah Ryan’s “ill tempers gathered strength.” She became “artful, subtle, cunning,” lying and little concerned with “justice, mercy or truth,” yet she had some fear. Thomas Olivers’ “carnal mind soon discovered itself,” leading him

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<sup>114</sup> Thomas Tattershall, “A Short Account of Thomas Spear,” *AM* 11:18-19 and Thomas Rankin, “An Account of the Death of Ann Belton,” *AM* 6:77-8.

<sup>115</sup> “Account of a Child in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Wesley,” *AM* 14:304-5 and S. N., 12:525.

into many “childish follies,” as well as “heinous sins; particularly lying, and taking the name of God in vain.” He was impressed by someone who could string together twenty or thirty different expressions of “cursing, swearing, and horrid blasphemies” into “one long and horrid oath.” By age fifteen Olivers was on par with his “infernal instructor.” He was generally regarded as the worst boy the area had seen for twenty to thirty years. Engaging in similar behavior, George Brown was struck with great fear, having asked God to damn his soul. He never again made such a request. Lightning and thunder during a poorly-spent Sabbath also frightened him, making his body “sick with fear.”<sup>116</sup>

Often children were as much or more distressed over their sinfulness as adult Methodists, much as the children in Janeway’s *Tokens*. Thomas Hill wrote that when Elizabeth Hill was a girl, she developed a habit of using God’s name “in vain.” She was so sure of the sinfulness of this behavior that she “earnestly requested” her fellow children “to pinch, or beat her severely whenever she was guilty of it. By thus taking heed to her ways, she was enabled to break herself of this sin, and to walk in a strictly upright and moral manner.”<sup>117</sup>

While sins such as lying, swearing and working and traveling on Sunday may seem inconsequential, clearly they were very serious to these children. The heritage of Puritanism surely played a role, but such strictness was taught by Christianity, with varying details, from its inception. With the emergence of Christendom, this strictness was part of the fabric of society throughout Europe, at least as an ideal and standard. By the eighteenth century in England, however, there were many religious choices

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<sup>116</sup> Ryan, 2:297; Olivers, 2:78 and George Brown, “Some Account of Mr. George Brown,” *AM* 7:519.

<sup>117</sup> Thomas Hill, “A Short Account of the late Mrs. Hill of Shrewsbury.” *MM* 22:76.

possible. The power of the religious transformations and communal life of the Methodists provided a compelling motivation for acceptance of and involvement in what was, even in the eighteenth century, such a behaviorally and emotionally demanding way of life.

Thus Methodists saw the state of conviction, despite the intense emotional pain it often involved over months or even years, as a necessary and highly beneficial experience. However, even people who had not experienced conviction could value it highly and seek it earnestly. John Pawson knew he was without God, but was “dull and unaffected.” He continually prayed that God would remove his “heart of stone” and give him a “heart of flesh.” While he lacked this sorrow for sin, he was apparently thoroughly grieved about not having it: “I cried day and night unto him, that he would give me a broken and contrite heart, and it was not long ere he inclined his ear.” More often conviction would be sought for by someone who already had conviction and had sought for salvation, but now was dismayed to find the conviction was gone. Robert Roe had begun to lose his convictions, but when he attempted to enjoy his former pleasures, he found he had lost all taste for them. This helped motivate him to seek for conviction again. Accepting the teachings of Methodism meant tremendous pressure to experience the requisite transformations, including the necessary emotional states, such as the sorrow and pain of conviction.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> John Pawson, “A Short Account of John Pawson: in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley,” *AM* 2:30-31 and Roe, “The 6:522-4. Conviction was sufficiently painful for one subject to describe her awakening as receiving “the spirit of bondage to fear.” “An Account of Mrs. Suckley of Wakefield,” *MM* 23:260.

A desire for conviction could exist even in those who did not know what it was. Thomas Wood reported that when Thomas Johnson was asked by a Methodist whether he was under conviction, the question “went to [his] heart” more than the words of any sermon. He felt the urge to be alone, and when he was he began to wonder what conviction was. Thinking that it must be something good, something from God, Johnson prayed as he “never had done before,” asking God to give him conviction. Clearly, while he depicted himself as quite confused, he must have had some real sense of what it meant. “The Lord regarded my simplicity, and he answered my prayer. I saw, and I felt myself a hell-deserving sinner. The hair of my head seemed to stand upright, thro’ fear; and I felt as if satan [*sic*] himself were standing behind my back.” Johnson received varying answers when he asked several Methodists how long they were under conviction before finding peace. Johnson did not want it to take so long, but he thought he was not sufficiently earnest to see the blessing any sooner.

But GOD’S thoughts were not as my thoughts; he remembered that I was but dust; for in a few days, as I was passing from our next door neighbour’s house, the burthen which I felt fell off in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; and whether I was in the body, or out of the body, I could scarcely tell.<sup>119</sup>

The immediate occasion of initial conviction was often at a Methodist service, as the subject witnessed other attendees being transformed. William M’Cormock heard a Methodist sermon, and had never seen such weeping in response to a sermon. He thought he could never weep so, even for losing a family member, but he was deeply

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<sup>119</sup> Thomas Taylor, “The Saints’ Sorrowful Seedtime and Joyful Harvest, Being the Substance of Two Discourses Delivered at the Methodist Chapel in Birstall, Yorkshire, Nov. 5, 1797, Occasion By the Death of Mr. Thomas Johnson, Preacher of the Gospel, in the 78<sup>th</sup> Year of Age, and the 45<sup>th</sup> of His Ministry,” *MM* 21:217.

touched by the sermon. He sat down on the ground “deeply humbled” at his awareness of his sinfulness and the riches offered by Christ. He then “wept in great bitterness of spirit.” He even grieved because he could not grieve enough for his sin. He began to “sweat with a sense of the wrath of God abiding on” him, and cried for mercy. His grief increased, and he could hardly get up. He was afraid to go to bed at night, lest he should awaken in hell.<sup>120</sup>

Many experienced their conviction in a rather spontaneous manner, as did Mrs. Oddie, who expected to feel God’s condemnation at the service she was about to attend. Yet on the way “divine light broke in upon her mind, quick as the spark from smitten steel.” This “spark” immediately assured her that she deserved hell, but also that she was forgiven. However, some, like Pawson and Roe above, had to actively search for the experience. The use of means to experience conviction clarifies the rather narrow distinction between awakening and conviction. The only reason for a person to seek conviction, the burden of guilt, would be because they were awakened to the need of it. In terms of early Methodist psychology, awakening was centered in the mind, the intellect, while conviction was experienced in the heart. While even persuasion of the mind technically required God’s grace in the Methodist worldview, any change of the heart most decidedly required a gracious act of God. Like all gracious acts of God, Methodists believed that conviction of sin normally occurred following the exercise of appropriate means. Miss H. wrote to a minister, asking how “to get a mortified spirit.” The minister first recommended recollection, thinking about oneself and “being

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<sup>120</sup> M’Cormock, 8:78-9.

abstracted from creatures toward God.” He further described recollection as requiring silence, solitude, and “keeping quietly to one’s business, or a shutting the door to one’s senses; in an inward deep attention to Jesus love, and in a continual care of entertaining holy thoughts.”<sup>121</sup>

A difficulty for those desiring pardon was the tension between awakening and conviction, which, in reality, was the subject’s emotions matching his or her beliefs. Often, as beliefs are generally much easier to consistently maintain than intense emotions, it was not only a problem to *become* convicted, but also to *stay* convicted. Robert Roe’s cousin Hester Ann (whose narrative would be one of the most widely distributed and influential of early Methodism) wrote him that she had spent a sleepless night for fear of awaking in hell. At four she finally rose to pray, “but my heart seemed as hard as stone, and my distress on this account was increased.” Many times she arose asking God what to do, only to kneel down again. That someone could feel extreme distress while having a “heart of stone” seems an obvious logical inconsistency, nonetheless it fit early Methodism’s spiritual psychology.<sup>122</sup>

Very commonly, conviction was experienced when the subject was somehow faced with their own mortality. Many examples of such awakenings involve young women. Sixteen-year-old Sophia Davies became terrified for her soul in response to an earthquake, at which time she began to attend Methodist meetings, finding peace that year during her final illness. Eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Wright was almost blinded by

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<sup>121</sup> James Oddie, “Some Account of Mrs. Oddie,” *AM* 6:248 and J. F., “Letter DLXXXI: From the Rev. Mr. F. to Miss H.,” *AM* 15:48-9.

<sup>122</sup> Roe, 6:580.

illness, but promised to serve the Lord if he cured her. When she recovered, “She threw her vain books aside, read the Scriptures, used a form of prayer, and went constantly to church and sacrament.” Martha Padbury became concerned for her soul when she became “alarmed by a violent disorder,” nose bleeds. Thinking she would die from it and that she was not prepared for death, she grew very distressed. She became somewhat better, however, when she joined her sister in attending a class meeting a few times. Concern that she would be laughed at led her to stop attending, planning “to serve God in a more private way.” A return of the nose bleeds led her “to seek the Lord in good earnest.”<sup>123</sup>

While death, accidents or serious illness were often portrayed merely as the occasion for questioning one’s spiritual state, some were also portrayed as actually having come from God with the purpose leading the subject to conviction and then to salvation. C. B., despite hearing “the pure word of God,” did not come under conviction because she was not guilty of the common vices, thinking she did not have anything to repent of, until “the Lord layed [*sic*] his hand upon her, by throwing her into a deep consumption.”<sup>124</sup>

One or two brushes with death or occasions of tragedy were not always enough. Sarah Spirit, on receiving divine encouragement in her seeking of God, had three of her four children die, and lost her job, with her husband not having much work. She lost

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<sup>123</sup> S. B., “Account of the Conversion and Death of Miss Sophia Davies,” *MM* 22:383, Thomas Rogerson, “An Account of the Conversion and Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Wright, of Redgrave in Suffolk,” *MM* 22:286; J.F., “Some Account of the Death of Miss E. Milne, Near Halifax, in Yorkshire, Aged 15,” *MM* 23:59 and J. Dean, “The Experience and Happy Death of Miss Martha Padbury, of Whittlebury, Northamptonshire,” *MM* 24:477.

<sup>124</sup> “An Account of Miss C. B.: A Young Lady About Eighteen Years of Age,” *AM* 12:358.



her friends, and finally her last child fell ill. She then experienced “the most happy time I ever had in all my life.” Spirit was considering her “foolish conduct.” The words, “Where I am shalt thou be also: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” (John 12:26, Heb. 13:5) came “with power” to her soul. “My tongue can never express the thousandth part of the love, joy and peace which I then felt, and still continue to feel. . . I am very sensible that the time of my departure is at hand; but the sooner the better!” As noted by narrator Thomas Taylor, the general principle was that the more severe the conviction, in terms of duration, intensity and quantity of tragedy, the more dramatically joyous the moment of conversion.<sup>125</sup>

An ineffective start of conviction could be revitalized by a brush with death. James Wood reported that Mary Cooper awakened in response to Methodist preaching and regularly attended Methodist services and prayer-meetings, during one of which she professed to have a witness to her pardon. She attended class only a few times, “but made little or no proficiency in religion; and hence she soon became a mere trifler, and, of consequence, neglected those means which were calculated to cure her of levity of spirit and unprofitable conversation.” Cooper then was badly burned in an explosion. Wood wrote that “Death appeared as the king of terrors. She expected soon to launch into eternity; yet knew that she was unprepared for the solemn change.” Since she seemed “to feel genuine contrition of spirit” and “dread” of God’s majesty. Likewise, Mrs. Rachel Yates was awakened in response to the spiritually triumphant death of her nineteen-year-old son. This conviction led to her conversion, “but thro’ worldly care

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<sup>125</sup> Thomas Taylor, “A Short Account of Thomas Branch, Who Was Killed in a Coal-Pit, October 17, 1799,” *MM* 23:125-6 and “An Account of Sarah Spirit,” *AM* 12:299.

and unfaithfulness, her evidence of pardon was much clouded.” This began to change in response to an “epidemic distemper,” and the spiritually-triumphant death of her husband, leading her to attend class.<sup>126</sup>

Conviction also could be experienced in response to a premonition of death. Fifteen-year-old Jane Stonehouse, although in good health, was frightened to feel God to “impress her mind” that she needed to be prepared to die, with a fear that she was not ready. Her father, writing her biography, concluded that “We cannot doubt, but that our good Lord, intending to visit her with a sickness, which should be unto death, was then preparing her mind for those sufferings.”<sup>127</sup> Similarly, John Pawson received conviction in a service where he felt God’s power coming on him and many others “mightily.”

All of a sudden my heart was like melting wax, my soul was distressed above measure. I cried aloud with an exceeding bitter cry; the trouble and anguish of Spirit that I laboured under far exceeding all description. The arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in my flesh, and the poison of them drank up my spirits; yet in the height of my distress I could bless the Lord, that he had granted me that which I had so long sought for.

He now sought God with his “whole heart,” and heard preaching whenever he could, often missing most of the sermon because his distress was so intense.

I had such a clear sight and deep sense of my exceeding sinfulness, that I was humbled in the dust. I daily walked mournfully before the Lord. The things of this world were made quite bitter to me: I could take no delight in any of them, my mind being so occupied with grief for my past sins, and with desire to be delivered from them.

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<sup>126</sup> James Wood, “Letter from Mr. Wood, to the Editor, Judgment Mixed with Mercy, Exemplified in the Death of Mary Cooper,” *MM* 22:453-4 and J. S. Pipe, “A Short Account of Mrs. Rachel Yates,” *MM* 22:428-9.

<sup>127</sup> “Account of Miss Stonehouse. The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Manifested in the Last Sickness and Death of Miss Jane Stonehouse, Who Departed This Life July 4, 1796, in the 15<sup>th</sup> Year of Her Age, With ‘a Hope Full of Immortality.’ By Her Father” *MM* 22:538.

His distress was obvious to any who saw him.<sup>128</sup>

Once a subject was aware of his or her sinfulness, moving on to the first transformational moment of the new birth could be a very long and very difficult process. Methodists saw humanity as so entirely depraved that no action of a person could be considered good until conversion. The Moravian conviction process of *bußkampf* required discovering one's depravity by attempting to be good, but failing. Similarly, Wesley taught the necessity of efforts of obedience, "fruits meet for repentance," to prepare one for the transformations that would be made inward and outward obedience possible. Thomas Wood in his biography of N. Aspden wrote,

What can give a man victory over himself, or turn the whole bias of his soul from sin, to holiness and God? What is reason against passion! What is nature without the help of grace? . . . Alas! Our moral powers are debilitated by transgression, and we cannot stand against sin, unless assisted by some power from on high. No one "can bring a clean thing out of an unclean," but God himself.<sup>129</sup>

Thomas Olivers experienced the weakness of human efforts to be good, describing his conscience as staring him "dreadfully in the face." He further wrote,

I thought, I live a most wretched life! If I do not repent and forsake my sins, I shall certainly be damned: I wish I could repent and forsake them: If I could but HATE them, as well as I LOVE them, I should THEN be able to lay them aside, but till then I despair of doing it.<sup>130</sup>

Thomas Slater presented an unusual case of someone seeming to succeed in his resolve to do good, at least in one specific area, in order to experience true conviction and conversion. Puritan narratives often described resolutions to cease evil and do

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<sup>128</sup> John Pawson, "A Short Account of John Pawson: in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley," *AM* 2:31.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas Wood, "An Account of the Life and Death of Mr. N. Aspden, Surgeon, of Blackburn," *MM* 22:177.

<sup>130</sup> Olivers, 2:80.

good, which always failed when attempted before conversion. This, as in *Bußkampf*, established the helpless sinfulness of the seeker. This dynamic is often expressed in early Methodist narratives as well, but Wesley's understanding of repentance allowed for some success in specific behavioral resolutions during conviction as part of that person's reception of justifying faith. According to his biographer, Joshua Hern, Slater came to realize that he could no longer engage in his business, hair dressing, on Sunday. His class leader told him that to be accepted in the society he could no longer work on Sundays. This was quite costly for Slater, ultimately causing his business to temporarily fail. A few days after making the sacrifice, "the Lord spoke peace to his soul and gave him the witness of the Spirit that he was born of God."<sup>131</sup>

Conviction of sin could be painful, but the very intensity of the sorrow generally served the purposes of the transformational process. Indeed, a climax of despair often proved to be the *limen*, or threshold, to the transformation of new birth. J. V.'s experience of intense conviction illustrates how far the desperation and despair could go. He went to his room with various suicidal ideas. J. V. prayed "till nature was exhausted," then removed his coat and "wrestled upon the floor in great agony." He continued in this posture all night, "groaning to be delivered and in the greatest torment." Similarly, when William M'Cornock came home, his neighbors hardly knew him, "as I was wasted almost to a skeleton, through grief of soul." John Haime found no pleasure in anything, eating, drinking, working or sleeping. Neither he nor those who knew him knew what was the matter with him. He could get no rest day or night,

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<sup>131</sup> Hern, 8:197-8.

being afraid to go to bed, or to even shut his eyes, lest the devil should take him during the night, and he “should awake in hell.” He had dreams of demons in his room ready to take him, or of appearing at the final judgment, or being left with the wicked on earth as it was consumed with fire. Although on the verge of suicide, Haime felt that his anguish, as great as it was, was not as bad as that of those in hell. Likewise, Sarah Ryan expressed a common sentiment for the awakened and despairing sinner: “What horrors, what fears, what dread! I should have been glad to be any thing but a human creature. The Spirit drove me one way, my passions another.”<sup>132</sup>

Those in despair were often tempted to give up either by committing suicide, or by accepting that they were beyond hope and would go to hell. This is the key to the severe tension they were under. Sarah Smith summarized this tension by crying out, “As I am, I cannot live!” While they continued to be unsuccessful in their search for spiritual rebirth, the values of these future Methodists forbade suicide and expressly stated that God was willing to save any person. John Pawson was “on the very brink of despair,” yet, as he described it, the Lord would not allow his “spirit to fail before him,” and revived his “drooping heart” with a verse, “O tarry though the Lord’s leisure: be strong, and he shall comfort thine heart.” This allowed him to “hope and quietly wait” for God’s salvation.<sup>133</sup>

One author sounded a cautionary note on the problem of persuading people that they are “thoroughly awakened” simply because they have been “penetrated with an

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<sup>132</sup> J. V., “An Account,” 6:461; M’Cormock, 8:136; Haime, 3:209 and Ryan, 2:298.

<sup>133</sup> Smith, 22:17 and John Pawson, “A Short Account of John Pawson: in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley,” *AM* 2:31-2.

awful sense of divine justice, and [are] surrounded on every side with guilty terrors,” unless the “eye” of their minds saw how ready and willing Jesus was to save them. “To obtain this desirable discovery, it is expedient, to exercise faith on the Lord, at the first commencement of divine convictions.”<sup>134</sup> By suggesting that intense fear of God’s judgment was not, by itself, genuine conviction, this author was trying to drastically shorten the path to the initial transformation of pardon, by virtually equating conviction with the new birth, by nearly collapsing the preliminal phase into the liminal phase. In actuality, this would tend to severely weaken the power of the entire transformation. However, it seemed to many to logically follow from the belief that God was always ready to save, and that delay in believing merely added to one’s sins.

Even if a seeker were not at the point of despair, the emotional intensity could still be quite high, sometimes in the context of a rather short period of time between being awakened and experiencing conversion. Powerful and even overwhelming emotions in experiencing conviction or conversion were as standard in Methodist narratives as they had been in Puritan ones. At sixteen, Sarah Cartlidge became very ill, and her parents urged her to repent, and have faith in Christ. For a while, their efforts seemed useless, but a few weeks later Sarah came to her father, who was struck by how ill she looked. He “feelingly spoke to her concerning the state of her soul. . . She then, for the first time appeared to *feel*; tears of contrition flowed from her eyes.” Two days later, “after some time spent in wrestling with God in her behalf,” she asked her father if he thought she would get to heaven. Her father answered that she would if she

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<sup>134</sup> “A Sermon on The Scriptural Method of Believing in Order to Obtain Present and Eternal Salvation,” *MM* 22:60.

believed. Her biographer James Woods wrote that “From the pain of body and sore distress of mind she labored under, she lay as if dying, but her speech was soon restored, and she broke out in a rapture of joy and praise, 'the Lord hath passed by, and forgiving me all my sins.’” For near half an hour she continued praising God with all her strength.”<sup>135</sup>

While searching for God, Alexander Mather would sometimes be on his knees the entire night in prayer. Despite the intensity of his search, he still did not find peace, which he attributed to his barking on Sunday. In response to reproofs for this, he gave it up and attended the services at the Foundery, and was “soon made acquainted with, and enabled to embrace the way of salvation through faith in Christ.” Mary Dickin’s distress was so powerful it became known to her neighbors, who suggested that she “had lost her senses by seeing a frightful apparition.” She found peace one day after “wrestling with the Lord in earnest prayer, till her strength was almost exhausted, she then resigned herself wholly to his mercy. At that moment, she found power to believe that Jesus died to save her; – all her anguish and horror vanished away.” A clear pattern was established of extreme desperation in the search for pardon, reaching a point of exhaustion until the transformation of the new birth occurred, when all the painful emotions simply disappeared, only to be replaced with very strong positive emotions.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> James Wood, “A Short Account of the Happy Death of Sarah Cartlidge of Shafton, near Barnsley, Yorkshire.” *AM* 17: 298-300.

<sup>136</sup> Joseph Benson, “The Substance of s Sermon, Preached on the Occasion of the Death of Mr. Alexander Mather; on Sunday the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, 1800, at the Chapel in Queen-Street, and at the New-Chapel, City-Road,” *MM* 23:549-550 and Joseph Pescod, “The Conversion and Happy Death of Mary Dickin,” *MM* 23:63.

There were various methods for indicating intensity of the experience. In the account of Thomas Kinley, he is described as having “roared aloud through the disquietude of his spirit, and continued groveling on the cold earth with tears, prayers, and cries, to the Lord Jesus, for several hours together.” Note the emphasis on noise, posture and discomfort. Eventually, numb from the cold and “wounded in spirit,” he got up and went home, but he “could find no ease.” He ran to the garden, “where he kneeled down in the greatest agony.” He was sunk under “misery and darkness, when in an instant Jesus spoke peace, and love to his soul; and immediately a bright light shone around him, so he could not discern the smallest objects.”<sup>137</sup> Seekers engaged in physically uncomfortable and exhausting exercises, such as kneeling or being prostrate all night, in this case outside in cold weather. Physical sounds and sights were shut off, in Kinley’s case through loud prayer, while the revelation experienced upon conversion would often involve seeing or hearing the supernatural. The brief replacement of seeing and hearing the physical with seeing and hearing the sights and sounds of heaven was the essence of liminality.

Going without sleep was a common part of the searching for pardon. Often seekers were too distressed to sleep, and too determined to keep searching. This might just be the night before or of the transformation of conversion, or may happen many nights before conversion occurred. When Robert Miller reached a point that he expected his eternal damnation to be sealed at any moment, he went without food and sleep for a night and the following day, “wrestling with the Lord for mercy. I prayed

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<sup>137</sup> Samuel Mitchel, “A Short Account of Mr. Thomas Kinley,” *AM* 14:465-6.



till I could not utter a word, and thought my heart was so hard that it was incapable of feeling, and in this state I remained till I had not the least hope of mercy.” Here is another common trait of these religious efforts, even the noise of one’s own prayer being taken away. Note also the contradiction of feeling and not feeling when Miller was asked by his landlady if he had murdered anyone, as she had never seen anyone so distressed. Miller replied that through his sins he had murdered his own soul, and worse, had murdered God’s son. Describing his intense distress, Miller wrote that “The damned souls in hell cannot feel much more torment than I did at that time. I expected the wrath of God would fall upon me and crush me in a moment.” Such a contradiction also indicates liminality, although in this case the transformation had not yet occurred. As S. N. developed increasing conviction, she would spending several hours in prayer and self-examination, even writing down the sins she had committed to confess them to God, sometimes with a broken heart, sometimes with a hard one. Thomas Legge’s conviction and accompanying temptations were so severe over seven weeks that “his very tongue cleaved to his mouth, for thirst.” Legge described it as “coals of fire poured into his breast till he was almost weary of life, and that strangling was preferable to life.”<sup>138</sup>

The distress over sin was not uniform in Methodist experience. John Boyle, at the age of fourteen, came to be under intense conviction. “My anguish of mind was so great that I wept aloud, and yet I grieved because I could not weep enough for my sins.”

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<sup>138</sup> Robert Miller, “Memoirs of the Principal Occurrences Which Have Passed in the Seven and Thirty Years Experience of Robert Miller, Minister of the Gospel,” *MM* 24:53; S. N., 12:526 and J. Morgan, “An Account of the Death of Thomas Legge,” *AM* 13:135.

While this level of response seems to have been quite common, Boyle noted that his distress was not so much fear of hell, but because of his sins against God.<sup>139</sup>

The standard experience of conviction in the narratives was great fear and sorrow, but particularly beginning about the time of Wesley's death there began to be some accounts of conviction that stressed the relative lack of these negative emotions. Hannah Wood was "gently drawn by love; but was not clearly convinced of sin till her fifteenth year, when at a prayer-meeting. From that time she saw herself to be a sinner, but did not feel the burden of her sins to be so heavy as many do." While being "drawn by love" is not overtly described as a good thing, the author still saw the need for seekers to "feel the burden" of their sins. Only after a family death two years later did her convictions deepen. She found peace about a year later.<sup>140</sup>

John Pawson wrote of Henry Tarboton, who never had deep conviction of sin, "or any painful or distressing views of the displeasure of God," but he was deeply moved with God's love for backsliders and his desire to save them. Pawson had often seen Tarboton "sit under the word with tears of love flowing from his cheeks," or "so overpowered with the love of God, that he was unable either to walk or to stand." Yet Tarboton could not believe his own sins were forgiven, "I suppose because he had never had any deep convictions."<sup>141</sup> Thus, on the few occasions awakenings are described as experiencing God's love rather than God's judgment, it was presented as very problematic.

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<sup>139</sup> John Boyle, "The Experience of Mr. John Boyle," *AM* 19:55-6.

<sup>140</sup> "An Account of the Experience and Death of Mrs. Hannah Wood, of Manchester." *MM* 24:64.

<sup>141</sup> John Pawson, "An Account of the Death of Mr. Henry Tarboton," *AM* 11:578.

Mary Land also did not experience significant distress during her conviction.

He, whose operations on the human mind are diversified, and who knows best how to deal with his creatures, was pleased to draw her by the cords of love, and to favour her with such hopes of salvation, as encouraged her to wait upon him, until he had mercy on her. However, she had a deep sense of the depravity of her nature, of the malignity of sin, and its infinite demerits.

As author Joseph Entwhistle continued to describe Land's experience, he resorted to standard descriptions that left the narrative inconsistent and contradictory. Entwhistle wrote of this "stage of her experience" as a period of frequent distress over the danger of her soul being lost. In her darkest moments, she wished she had been a beast, or any kind of creature that did not have "an immortal spirit."<sup>142</sup> Possibly Entwhistle's description of Mary Land being drawn "by the cords of love" was meant only to apply to the beginning stages of her conviction.

A less dramatic tension is evident in the narrative of Mary Pilling. During Pilling's conviction she "did not experience those distressing fears and terrors, common to persons in that state, but was gradually drawn by the cords of love." After searching the Lord for a year, she knelt down one day. Seeking mercy, she prayed "O Lord, I will praise thee! Though thou was angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me," (Isaiah 12:1), and she now "found GOD's displeasure removed." The tension of feeling both God's anger and his love during conviction was better explained by Hinge in his account of Thomas May. While he often felt "the terrors of the Lord,"

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<sup>142</sup> Joseph Entwhistle, "A Short Account of the LORD'S Gracious Dealings with Mary Land; a Woman of Eminent Piety, a Pattern of Christian Resignation and Patience Under Long Continued [*sic*] Afflictions, and a Witness of the Power of Jesus to Enable His Followers to Triumph Over Their Last Enemy. She Died at Wakefield, Feb. 25, 1797," *MM* 21:520-1.

May always found such terrors “mingled with mercy,” a light shining in his darkest moments that “cheered his drooping spirit, and animated the fainting powers of his mind, to seek the Prince of Life.” Divine love softened the “painful sensations, and gently led him on to the knowledge and enjoyment of Salvation.” After all, reasoned May’s narrator, it would have been “strange and unaccountable,” if he experienced only “the horror of mind” felt by many sinners, probably ordered by God “as a kind of temporary chastisement for more heinous offences; altho’ there may be many exceptions even to this rule.”<sup>143</sup>

Perhaps the most emotionally intense experience of conviction in these narratives was that of Ann Wright. Wright underwent severe temptations, including a desire to throw the Bible into the fire. She threw it, but it did not reach the fire, and she was terrified by the attempt. One night at the height of her affliction she began to tremble violently, wringing her hands and weeping. She determined to justify God’s ways even if he sent her to hell. Her hands and feet became too cramped for her to stand. Her mouth became pursed and her eye-lids closed, and her hearing was gone. She was in this condition for five days, except for calling for water. One night she declared that Jesus had taken possession of her soul. She would still go days being silent, and even when she began to speak she would not be able to hear. After seventy-five days of not eating, she finally asked for something to eat, broiled fish. The author

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<sup>143</sup> C. Hopper, “Conversion and Happy Death of Mary Pilling,” *AM* 19:498 and L. Hinge, “The Experience and Happy Death of Thomas May,” *MM* 21:18.

noted that this account seemed strange, but he lists seven ministers and four doctors, as “respectable witnesses” who confirmed it for him.<sup>144</sup>

### 3.2 The First Transformation: Pardoned

#### *3.2.1 Faith: Entering the Liminal*

Various things could prevent a seeker from actually jumping the “threshold” of the new birth transformation. Ruth Tillotson attended a class meeting while under conviction, “and there wrestled . . . for a manifestation of divine mercy.” Despite her high hopes of receiving her pardon at this meeting, due to “unbelief, the temptations of satan, and her ignorance of the scriptural method of justification by faith,” she was not yet “brought into gospel liberty.”<sup>145</sup> All three of these obstacles had to do with faith. To Methodists, receiving and exercising faith was the key to the transition from conviction to actual conversion. Understanding the early Methodist concept and experience of faith is essential to understanding early Methodist spiritual transformation.

J. Thornton wrote, “I have been called to endure as seeing the INVISIBLE to walk more by faith than by sensible support.” Faith was presented having confidence in what is not (normally) sensed physically, a understandable requirement for a regime of spiritual transformations. The difficulty lay in how to obtain this confidence. What process allowed for this confidence in the “INVISIBLE?”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> A. B., “A Short Account of Ann Wright: Written by Mr. A. B. of Birmingham,” *AM* 10:523-5, 580-1.

<sup>145</sup> R. Miller, “An Account of the Conversion and Happy Death of Mrs. Ruth Tillitson, of Skircoat-Green, Near Halifax, Yorkshire, By Mr. Miller,” *MM* 22:582.

<sup>146</sup> J. Thornton, “From Miss J. Thornton to Miss,” *MM* 23:97. On the use of small capitals to indicate the divine name, see n. 98.

This very question tormented many seekers. Robert Roe's cousin Hester Ann Roe wrote him that having "almost lost all hope," she had the words, "deeply impressed on my mind, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*. I cried out in an agony, 'What is believing? What is real scriptural faith? Lord teach me! I *know* nothing. I can *do* nothing. If thou savest me not, I perish.'" Then the passage "Cast all thy care upon him" was impressed on her. Hester accepted that God would receive her. God was able, but, wondered Hester, was he willing? "It came into my heart, *Only believe*. I felt some hope and cried, "I will," but her sins still "stared me in the face," and she thought it impossible. Again, "only believe" came into her heart. She then thought it could not be meant for that moment, that he needed to repent more, or be more "in earnest." Yet again, "Only believe." Hester then asked God's help to believe. "Let me *know* that I am indeed born of thee." She pled with God, using scripture passages, and "was enabled to venture my soul upon the Redeemer, with an assured confidence in his promises. Then I was happy indeed. . . Now if I had had a thousand souls, I could have trusted him with them all. I found a real change in my heart. I was a new creature."<sup>147</sup>

To simply accept Methodist teaching on salvation, rather than struggle for this emotive, transformational faith, would be falling far wide of the mark. One author clarified the meaning of the phrase *simple faith*. It *should* mean faith "without any mixture of unbelief." It was used dangerously when it meant simply an intellectual assent to a truth, "a mere giving credit to the Word of God, without any act or effort of

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<sup>147</sup> Roe, 6:580-1.

the soul.” The author further warned that many wrongly thought that they had been converted simply because “they gave some sort of credit to the promises of the Gospel, and approved of them.” This corresponded to the distinction between being awakened and being convicted. In practice, such a distinction between assent and faith could be described more colorfully with a metaphor. Thomas Bond wrote Wesley that the description he usually gave of a believing heart was a heart which “melts and breaks at the name, and with the love of Jesus.”<sup>148</sup>

The *AM* printed a sermon by Disney Alexander on the “Reasons for Methodism,” that explained this need so poignantly felt by Roe, that is, how was faith to be obtained. “We must remember that faith is the gift of God. . . . The most likely method, is by prayer, and supplication; by divesting ourselves of worldly wisdom, and having in our minds, a firm persuasion that we shall obtain our requests.” We must be rid of worldly wisdom, become like little children, and be firmly persuaded that God is willing to grant our request.<sup>149</sup> Far less proactive than some of their spiritual heirs in the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, the efforts of early Methodists to be transformed were to prepare themselves to receive faith, rather than to exercise faith, to prepare them to receive pardon and the new birth.

An anonymous author of another sermon on faith clarified the difference between the faith leading to pardon and the witness of the spirit by making a distinction between believing in order to be saved, and believing that one is saved. The first is a

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<sup>148</sup> “A Sermon on The Scriptural Method of Believing in Order to Obtain Present and Eternal Salvation,” *MM* 22:65.

<sup>149</sup> Disney Alexander, “Reasons for Methodism,” *AM* 19:164-5 and Thomas Bond, “Letter DXLII (From Mr. Thomas Bond, to the Rev. J. Wesley,” *AM* 13:499.

direct experience; and the second is in response to an experience. Believing in order to be saved is the duty of every person, but believing that we have been saved “is certainly God’s peculiar gift, instantaneously communicated thro’ the agency of the Holy Spirit.” No one should entertain such a belief until such a gift is given. Thus, in the sermon published in 1799, three years after Alexander’s, the faith that brings transformation was at first presented largely as an act of the will rather than the gift of God to the obedient and receptive seeker, while the mere reception of faith was the requirement for the subsequent event of assurance.<sup>150</sup>

In a later portion of this sermon, the faith exercised “in order to obtain salvation” was described as lifting up one’s heart to Christ “in earnest desire,” receiving Christ “with fervent affections,” talking with Christ every day and even hourly “in supplication and praise,” looking solely to him and “diligently hearkening to his voice.” The author warned, however, that this act of believing was not something a person could do “when he pleases, without much answer.” To think so means to have never tried “the experiment.” Those who exerted all their “strength and wisdom” found that it required constant self-denial and watchfulness. “It is a daily cross, that not only extends to outward things, but also to the imagination, tempers, passions, memory, reason, and will; the denying of our own thoughts and desires, resolutely staying on the mind of Christ, and persevering in this duty till believing becomes as natural and far more delightful than sin” had been.<sup>151</sup> Methodists understood salvation to be a divine

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<sup>150</sup> “A Sermon on The Scriptural Method of Believing in Order to Obtain Present and Eternal Salvation,” *AM* 22:13-14.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.



transformation from unholy affections to holy ones, yet the preparation recipients must engage in here seems quite similar to the desired result.

### *3.2.2 New Birth: The Moment of Liminality*

The typical pattern of the transformation of the new birth was its occurrence in a dramatic, clearly definable moment. Pawson heard an acquaintance “cry for mercy with all his might, as if he would rend the very heavens. Quickly after, in the twinkling of an eye, all my trouble was gone, my guilt and condemnation were removed, and I was filled with joy unspeakable.” Pawson knew “by experience” that he was forgiven. He now loved God “from an experimental sense of his love to me,” through the Spirit applying the words, “Thou art mine.” Similarly, Thomas Olivers heard sermon on “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” In Olivers’ assessment, when the sermon began he was a “dreadful enemy to God, and to all that is good, and one of the most profligate and abandoned young men living,” but by the end he was a “new creature,” because he was “deeply convinced” of God’s goodness toward him, particularly through Jesus’ death. He had a clearer understanding of his sins. For Olivers, this transformation was truly dramatic, and he made extensive use of all capitals to describe it. A deep awareness of God’s goodness and his sin, “BROKE MY HEART, and caused showers of tears to trickle down my cheeks.” He was “filled with an utter ABHORRENCE” of his evil ways, but his heart was “thus turned FROM all evil, so it was powerfully INCLINED to all that is good.” He had extremely intense desires for God, and ended all his “evil practices,” leaving his worldly companions immediately.

He gave himself “UP TO GOD AND HIS SERVICE WITH MY WHOLE HEART.”<sup>152</sup>

For Olivers, “profligate” and “evil practices” included not just swearing, lying and violating the Sabbath, but not repaying debts and lust. Other than accounts of criminals facing hanging being converted by Methodists, this was the extent of “profligacy” of future Methodists in the *AM* narratives.

Just as the greater the intensity of conviction, the greater the intensity at the new birth, so the more sudden the onslaught of a climax of conviction, the more dramatically instant the conversion. Phebe Blood, in conviction, fell asleep one night to be “suddenly awakened” as if someone had said, “Why will you sleep in such immanent danger?” She prayed much of the night and all the next day, and rose 2:00 am the next morning, “being strongly drawn by an inward impression.” She cried for mercy and her “heart instantly began to melt,” and her tears to flow. She saw herself as “viler than the dust under my feet.” A few minutes later, “with strong cries and tears,” she prayed, “Lord, I am vile, give me to know thee.” Instantly it seemed as if her eyes were open, and she saw Jesus dying for her. “I felt his love spring up in my soul, and my eyes overflowed with tears of joy. I knew my sins were forgiven: unbelief was done away.”<sup>153</sup>

Experiences such as that of Blood were quite common, but the account of James Ridley was rather different, especially from earlier accounts. Ridley was awakened and pardoned at basically the same time, and the account gives no indication of any doubts

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<sup>152</sup> John Pawson, “A Short Account of John Pawson: in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley,” *AM* 2:33 and Olivers, 2:82-3.

<sup>153</sup> Phebe Blood, “The Experience of Mrs. Phebe Blood,” *AM* 13:643.

or temptations after conversion or after entire sanctification. The inclusion of this narrative in the *MM* is significant. Wesley, especially in his earlier writings, such as his journal in the 1740's and 50's, was the great experimenter with and researcher of salvation, and he often included accounts of individuals whose experience did not exactly fit the standard pattern, although Wesley did make a point of saying that he had never encountered anyone experiencing "in one and the same moment, remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a new, a clean heart," that is, pardon, assurance and entire sanctification. From the beginning (1778), the narratives Wesley included in the *AM* were more likely to have very distinct experiences of conviction, pardon and entire sanctification. It was common, however, for the experience of the witness of the Spirit to be recorded as having occurred at the moment of pardon. Yet, there was still toleration of variation of the standard pattern, and this tendency increased in the decade following Wesley's death.<sup>154</sup> What is particularly different in Ridley's account from most others was the absence of doubt following his spiritual transformation.

As this moment was seen as dependent, in large measure, on God's sometimes mysterious timing, it occurred in various settings. Of course, receiving pardon often occurred as narrative subjects were attending Methodist services, particularly in response to hearing testimonies of the experience of others, or actually witnessing the moment of their transformation. Samuel Hodgson was invited to a society meeting,

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<sup>154</sup> R. Smith, "Some Particulars Concerning the Experience and Death of Mr. James Ridley, Preacher of the Gospel, Who Died at Dublin, August 18, 1796, Aged About 56 Years," *MM* 21:617 and *Works* 11:443.

where his “mind was much enlightened by hearing the experiences of others; and my resolutions were greatly strengthened.” During the singing of the first verse of the opening hymn, when he sang the words, “and feel thy sprinkled blood,” he “felt such an assurance of God's favor and mercy, as human language cannot express. I felt indeed the sprinkled blood applied; and the Holy Spirit bore witness with my spirit, that I was now made a child of God.” Class and band meetings were for the express purpose of testimony and examination of participants’ past and current spiritual experiences. Jeremiah Brettell described his brother John’s new birth as occurring in a class-meeting, where “the Lord spoke peace to his soul, and gave him a comfortable evidence of his favour, which enabled him long to walk in the light of God’s countenance.” Sarah Roberts, however, experienced her pardon while doing the wash for her family, “for even while her hands were engaged in the world, her heart was given to the Lord.”<sup>155</sup> As already seen, quite commonly the impact of Methodist meetings or conversations would culminate in more private settings.

These moments were so significant because the subjects found them so transformational. Transformation occurred at more than one level, but in Methodist teaching the most essential level of transformation was the affections. This was the purpose of the whole process of salvation was to develop holy affection to replace the carnal affections. Conversion was, in the words of one author, the “taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh.” The “heart” was important enough that the

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<sup>155</sup> Samuel Hodgson, “A Short Account of Mr. Samuel Hodgson, Taken from His Own Journals,” *AM* 19:359; Jeremiah Brettell, “A Short Account of the Life and Death of Mr. John Brettell, by His Brother, Mr. Jeremiah Brettell,” *AM* 19:550 and Sarah Roberts, “Experience and Happy Death of Sarah Roberts, of Brambly, Near Sheffield,” *AM* 20:590

last words uttered by Wesley's brother Charles was, "Lord – my heart – my God!" One parishioner would commend her pastor for no longer preaching to the understanding, but now speaking "to the heart." A hard heart is one not easily moved by affections, "insensible and hard to be impressed, while a "heart of flesh" is "sensibly touched and moved." True religion does involve more than affections, but so much of true religion consists of them, so that "there is no true religion with them." To have no religious affections, was to be "in a state of spiritual death, and is wholly destitute of the saving influences of the Spirit of God."<sup>156</sup>

Clearly the degree of transformation of the affections was expected to be extensive. The terms used to describe the old versus the new affections indicated polar opposites. "Every affection of the heart which kindles in us a Desire of seeing, hearing, or possessing any thing, that does not tend to the Glory of God, is disorderly," leading to spiritual idolatry. "An inordinate attachments to houses, clothes, books, pictures, furniture, gardens, and such like, proves deadly pernicious to many professors, who were once in a hopefull way to the kingdom." Such things may be seen as "trifles," but if they have too much of a "hold of our hearts," they could be seen by the "ardor and intemperence" felt in their pursuit. Sensuality was another impediment, such as sleeping more than health required. "A small degree of excess in lawful things, has a natural tendency to sensualize the mind, to unfit it for that intercourse with" God.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> "The Importance of Possessing and Exercising Religious Affections," *AM* 17:100-1; Sarah Wesley, "An Account of the Death of the Late Rev. Charles Wesley, in a Letter to the Rev. John Wesley: by Miss S. Wesley," *AM* 11:408 and M. W., Letter CCCCXVI (From Mrs. M. W. to the Rev. J. Wesley), Cork, June 16, 1779," *AM* 11:498.

<sup>157</sup> "Hindrances in the Way of Salvation," *AM* 17:368-9.

### 3.2.3 *The Witness: Confirmation of the New Status*

Wesley, as well as most of his followers, had a strong pragmatic streak in the realm of religious experience, so the experience of a transformation was not seen as very useful without the subject being sure the transformation had actually occurred. A clear indication, although not always as synonymous or simultaneous with the witness of God's Spirit, was the sudden absence of the fears, doubts or guilt that so characterized conviction up to the moment of pardon. This transfer of emotions began the exchange of unholy tempers or affections for holy ones. The naturally negative emotions stemming from unholy tempers were instantly and dramatically exchanged for emotions more consistent with holy ones. Phebe Blood exulted, "I had not a single doubt; I felt my soul was united to Christ." Robert Roe, thinking about his cousin Hester's letter while at tea, particularly focused on the words, "only believe." He felt a "strange change" in his mind, and the "spring of love to God." He was amazed to have his burden and fears that he had struggled with for months suddenly gone. His evidence was not expressed just in terms of this emotional change, but also in terms of the Methodist understanding of affections. He knew the change was real because he loved God and felt "the fruits of his Spirit."<sup>158</sup>

This change of heart was described by Pawson as passing "out of darkness into marvellous [*sic*] light – out of miserable bondage into glorious liberty – and out of the most bitter distress into unspeakable happiness!" Absolutely all doubt of acceptance was gone, and he was "fully assured." Pawson was also sure of being "born of God,"

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<sup>158</sup> Blood, 6:581.

and “renewed in the spirit of my mind,” and he could “heartily praise” God for using such a “severe method” to bring him “home to himself.” Pawson’s praise was because this severe method had made Pawson’s new birth so clear that he could “neither doubt nor fear,” and God’s work was more obvious, and the liberty more prized, backsliding more frightening.<sup>159</sup>

Just as the emotional intensity of conviction could be overwhelming, so too could be the emotional intensity of transformation, as it was for E. Richardson. When asked to testify to her experience in her class or band, she was limited to tears. William Grimshaw described his experiences as such “very large manifestations of God’s love,” that “at some seasons, his faith was so strong and hope so abundant, that higher degrees of spiritual delight would have overpowered his mental frame. These are the things, which sweeten and which prompt to duty.”<sup>160</sup>

No matter how intense the experience of pardon, with its release from pain of conviction, it did not exclude temptations or doubts. Sometimes these doubts seemed quite natural, as the subjects’ tendency to doubt was apparent throughout the process. Ruth Hall decided not to rest until she knew she was justified. She “wrestled with [God] much in prayer at all opportunities” for two weeks, when one night “these words were impressed on my mind, ‘Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: thy sins are forgiven thee.’” [Luke 5:20] She could not believe right away, even “though the words were repeated many times,” as she doubted that they were from God. She finally decided to

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<sup>159</sup> John Pawson, “A Short Account of John Pawson: in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley,” *AM* 2:33-4.

<sup>160</sup> Alexander Mather, “An Account of the Life and Death of E. Richardson,” *AM* 13:296-7 and “Some Account of the Life and Ministry of the Rev. Mr. William Grimshaw, Vicar of Haworth, in Yorkshire,” *AM* 8:57.

try to believe, and as soon as she did, she “felt the power to believe.” Her sense of guilt disappeared, and she “could now rejoice in the Lord.” She soon was tempted with the possibility that she had deceived her self, but she “saw this was from the enemy, and was enabled to refit it.”<sup>161</sup>

James Buckley’s experience of pardon was described as quick and decisive, yet his doubts appeared quickly afterwards, perhaps due to his young age of sixteen. Having been under conviction for some years, Buckley suddenly felt his “darkness instantly turn into light, my grief into joy, and despair into blessed hope for immortality.” However, this “sense of the divine presence” did not last many hours before Buckley was tempted to believe that this was only “an emotion of the animal spirits arising from some physical cause, or that he [Satan] had transformed himself into an angel of light; and that I had no scripture applied to my mind.” Afraid of deception, Buckley gave up his confidence in his pardon. However, God once again appeared to his “fainting soul.” The witness of the Spirit was renewed, and God applied promises, particularly Isaiah 54:5, so powerfully “that all doubts and believing fears were removed.”<sup>162</sup> Buckley’s experience demonstrates the great problem of Methodist transformation. How was the subject to know that the internal and emotional experience was actually supernatural, that is, truly from God; not humanly generated? To Methodists, this would be the difference from a genuine experience and self deception.

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<sup>161</sup> Ruth Hall, “Letter DLVI (From Mrs. Ruth Hall, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Jan. 18, 1783,” *AM* 14:106.

<sup>162</sup> James Buckley, “A Short Account of the Experience of Mr. James Buckley,” *AM* 19: 4-5. In the King James Version Isaiah 54:5 reads, “For thy Maker [is] thine husband; the LORD of hosts [is] his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.”



Such doubts were at least as common among adults as they were among children or teenagers. John Hoskins first heard the Methodists joyfully, and three weeks later “received a clear sense of forgiveness; but soon fell into reasoning and doubting.” His many temptations were a difficult burden, and it was ten years before he had “the abiding Witness.” James W.’s doubts following pardon were far more insidious. He experienced the new birth, but within a few days, while in bed, he was tempted to kill everything coming his way. “Satan seemed for a season, as if he possessed him altogether. He trembled as in the greatest agony, making the bed shake beneath him, which awoke his wife.” He then told her of his temptation, saying, “I must rise, or do something, or the devil will have me, soul and body.” She tried to quiet him, and to keep him in bed. He eventually became so weak, she could not hear him. This lasted for an hour, when God delivered him.<sup>163</sup>

It was the power to remove just such post-conversion doubts and temptations that made the witness of the Spirit such an important teaching and experience for Methodists. Jane Cumberland, once being convinced of Methodism’s doctrine, did not regard herself as a true Christian until she had the witness of the Spirit, although, as noted above, this was in opposition to the teaching of Wesley himself. The usefulness of Wesley’s distinction between justification and the witness of the Spirit can be seen in the insecurity Cumberland’s experience. She “was often visited with divine consolation,” but “any stirrings of sin” would always lead her to conclude that she was

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<sup>163</sup> James Anderson, “An Account of the Conversion of John W\*\*\*\*, of -, in the County of Essex,” *MM* 24:389 and John Hoskins, “An Account of Mr. John Hoskins: in a Letter to the Rev. John Wesley,” *AM* 8:25.

not in God's favor. Cumberland's ideas may well have originated from the Anglican connection between assurance and entire sanctification, that is, that one could not be assured of justification until entire sanctification was experienced. In line with this traditional line of thinking, stemming back to such Carolinian Divines as Jeremy Taylor, Cumberland's doubts were finally all removed, but only in her final illness.<sup>164</sup>

Some, while accepting the technical distinction between the experiences of pardon and the witness of the Spirit, refused to regard as normal any delay in receiving the witness of the Spirit following the new birth. In the sermon mentioned above on "The Scriptural Method of Believing in Order to Obtain Present and Eternal Salvation," the author contended that when God pardoned, he "at the same hour, perhaps at the same moment," provided the witness of the Spirit to our adoption. Some "do not always attend to this circumstance," others who once had the witness allow themselves to be "reasoned out of it" due to temptation "thro' unwatchfulness and neglecting the exercise of faith," and others only have the witness "at intervals." The converts should seek God to give them "the *abiding Witness*." This was accomplished by turning "the whole stream of their desires and affections to the Lord, looking steadily to him and carefully listening to his voice, in full expectation of receiving that divine gift, . . . [to] enable them joyfully to pursue their journey to the heavenly Canaan."<sup>165</sup> Thus, due to weakness at the time of pardon or shortly thereafter, another act of faith was often found to be necessary.

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<sup>164</sup> "A Short Account of Mrs. Jane Cumberland, of Lisbourn, in the North of Ireland," *AM* 11:16-7.

<sup>165</sup> 61-2.

E. A. expressed determination to use the “shield of faith” to quench all of the devil’s “fiery darts,” (Eph. 6:16), as the devil was constantly tempting her and bringing “ten thousand” accusations to weaken her faith, “and was it not that my dear Lord shewed me undoubted proofs of his love, my feeble heart would join with the tempter,” as she knew she was nothing without him. However, she testified that the Lord was in her heart, continually strengthening her.<sup>166</sup>

As receiving the witness of the Spirit often required another exercise (or several exercises) of faith, so in the meantime the seeker could experience emotions quite reminiscent of conviction. It was difficult, especially given the continued strength of the Carolinian concept of assurance, for Methodists to understand how one could have genuinely experienced pardon and yet not have the witness, unless it was due to some fault or failing in themselves. The “enemy” reproached Sarah Smith for her presumption with Christ, that “it was too great a blessing for such a poor unworthy creature to expect.” She began to experience “fear with trembling.” “I was in an agony of joy and fear.” I durst not say, – that I believed, – altho’ my burden was removed, and I felt great peace.” Again, an emotional contradiction is apparent. How could someone experience “fear and trembling” while at same time feel “great peace?” How could anyone be “in an agony of joy and fear?” It was just such intense emotional contradictions, however, that drove seekers toward an emotionally-satisfying resolution, one that would naturally be regarded as a proof that the transformation was genuine. As for Sarah Smith, she arose the next morning feeling “hope and courage,” and she “had

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<sup>166</sup> E. A., “Letter CCCCLIX (From Mrs. E. A. to the Rev. J. Wesley), July 12, 1777,” *AM* 11:324.

great power to wrestle with the Lord.” Still she lacked a witness to her forgiveness strong enough to suit her. She would feel faith as she knelt, but less so when she arose. “I therefore intreated [*sic*] the Lord, that if I did indeed believe with my heart unto righteousness, he would be pleased to make it evident unto me and remove all my doubts and fears.” Her prayer was then answered.<sup>167</sup>

The lengths narrative subjects sometimes went to in order to be sure their sense of pardon was genuine could be quite extraordinary. Sometimes nothing short of a vision seemed to suffice, and for Sarah Ryan this was still not enough! Ryan had felt a change through her whole soul following her collapse across the altar rails after receiving communion from Wesley. She went home and asked God if her sins were forgiven, and received the verse, “There is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus.” [Rom. 5:1] This did not satisfy Ryan, wanting a clear witness of that her sins were forgiven. She expected to receive it at communion the following Sunday, but was disappointed three weeks in a row. She then attended class with her sister, who was very distressed. Ryan felt the burden of her sister’s soul laid upon her own soul. While urging her sister to believe “the power of God overwhelmed my soul, so that I fell back in my chair, and my eye-sight was taken from me: but in the same moment the Lord Jesus appeared to my inward sight.” She cried out three times “O the beauty of the lovely Jesus. Behold him in his vesture dipt in blood!” The leader asked her if she now believed and she said yes, but had some doubt still, wanting a stronger witness. “The next morning these words were applied with power, ‘Thy sins are cast as a stone into

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<sup>167</sup> Smith, 22:17.

the deep waters.’ I answered, ‘Now I *do* believe. Now I know my sins are forgiven me.’”<sup>168</sup>

A dynamic reception of the witness to pardon provided some security and protection from future doubts and fears, even if it took more than one experience of this witness. Mary Leach solidified her witness at class meeting, where God supplied a “greater manifestation of his love, than she had experienced before; accompanied with so clear a witness of her adoption, that she never lost her confidence in God from that time.” She now “continually increased in spiritual life and strength.”<sup>169</sup>

#### *3.2.4 Watchfulness: Establishment in the New Status*

As a confirmed Arminian, often willing to adjust his theology based on observation of people’s experience, Wesley concluded that “there is no such height or strength of holiness as it is impossible to fall from.” As an Arminian Anglican, Wesley had been inclined to assume that at least those who were entirely sanctified could be assured of going to heaven to the extent of knowing they would never fall. This understanding of assurance was often called full assurance. He rejected this belief when he encountered numerous claimants to entire sanctification “had both the fruit of the Spirit, and the witness; but they have now lost both.” Of the many narratives of the experiences of his preachers that Wesley published in his magazine, that of John Haime stands out, as he was a preacher who fell and lost any sense of pardon or being a child of God, yet continued to effectively preach. In the midst of his personal misery over his

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<sup>168</sup> Ryan, 2:301-2. Note that Ryan must have her earthly sight removed to experience her heavenly sight.

<sup>169</sup> Benjamin Rhodes, “A Short Account of the Life and Death of Mary Leach, of Bury, in Lancashire,” *AM* 9:131.

guilt some of his listeners responded and experienced pardon. Haimes recorded that after twenty years,

The distress of my mind soon became intolerable: it was a burden too heavy for me to bear. It seemed to me, that unless I got some relief, I must die in despair. One day I retired into the hall, fell on my face, and cried for mercy; but got no answer. I got up, and walked up and down the room, wringing my hands, and crying like to break my heart; begging of God for Christ's sake, if there was any mercy for me, to help me. And blessed be his name, all of a sudden, I found such a change, through my soul and body as is past description. I was afraid I should alarm the whole house with the expressions of my joy. I had a full witness from the Spirit of God, that I should not find that bondage any more, nor have I ever found it to this day.

While Haime seemed to accept here the older Anglican understanding of full assurance, he was not unusual in expecting the witness of the Spirit to provide the steady confidence and security early Methodists craved; a foundation for further spiritual development. When this assurance lessened, the subjects spiritual state, or status, was at risk. Elizabeth Shacklock became concerned when her enjoyment of forgiveness lessened. She believed she would go to heaven, “but I want my evidence bright: I want to rejoice again; O that I could rejoice!” She hoped she could get to heaven, “but wanted to feel that love which I once felt.”<sup>170</sup>

Losing one's “first love,” a reference to the warning to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:4-5, became a common concern in the third decade of the *MM*. Alexander Mather wrote an article asserting that converts never needed to leave their first love. Some suggested, however, that the first love needed to be lost, so that we may know ourselves, be kept humble, learn to live by faith, feel our need for Christ and have

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<sup>170</sup> Haime, 3:255-73, 303-16 and Shacklock, 12:518-9.

compassion on weaker believers. As important as these are for every child of God to learn, they all can be learned without losing one's first love. When believers lose their first love, it "is not merely an abatement of that exceeding great joy . . . once felt, but it is a real change of . . . spirit and temper." Mather's advice to those who had lost their first love is not surprising. "Be as serious, as watchful, as universally conscientious as ever you were. Too many take up what they once cast away with abhorrence. . . If you mean to recover your first-love, put away every hindrance, and embrace every help which God in his great mercy affords you." The year before the *AM* had published a letter written by Mather addressing the danger of losing one's first love. Mather's solution was to encourage new converts to become entirely sanctified, as there is no better time for attaining pure love than when "full of pardoning love." Those who have never lost their first love, never needed to recover from backsliding, "never sunk into that abyss of evil reasoning," are those who most swiftly progress in holiness. Similarly, H. D. wrote of how the "remains of sin" frequently brought him back into bondage, eventually resulting in his backsliding, despite living many years in the enjoyment of God's forgiveness.<sup>171</sup>

J. S. Pipe, the author of Elizabeth Myer's narrative, observed that many converts "leave their first love, and rob themselves of that tenderness of conscience, simplicity and joy, which they then experienced, and with which little progress can be made in the divine life." This was not the case, however, with Elizabeth Myers. She dreaded the

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<sup>171</sup> Alexander Mather, "Practical and Experimental Observations on the Loss and Recovery of Our First-Love," *MM* 21:627; 629, "From Mr. Mather, to Mr. G. Marsden, Manchester, Jan. 29, 1796," *AM* 20:515 and H. D., "From a Gentleman in Bristol, to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, Bristol, August 5, 1743," *AM* 20:201.

thought of being one of those who lost their first love, and “was thereby stirred up to a greater diligence.” She went to prayer several times daily. “The refreshings of grace she received in these approaches to GOD, tended greatly to promote her care and watchfulness; and were a guard in her conversation with others.”<sup>172</sup> As Methodism entered into the nineteenth century, the assurance that had been so vital to Wesley personally and had been the hallmark of early Methodism became recast as having a tendency to falter over time. This indicated a weakening of the transformation process. Haime’s account, however, indicates that Methodists always had some concern over falling, which is not surprising given their Arminianism.

The wavering of one’s first love could be so severe as to renew temptations experienced before conversion. Considering how small an event could lead to a fall, the frequent loss of first love, or even one’s sense of forgiveness is hardly surprising. Following her pardon, Sarah Wright, wrote that perhaps she thought all her temptations would end, so she was not “sufficiently on my guard against the sin which most easily besets me.” The sin? She received a “pretty letter” from a friend, and wanted to write her back with a letter just as good. She admitted that it might seem foolish that this “quenched the Spirit, yet whatever takes the mind from God, let it be ever so sinless in itself, produce coldness, and make room for the adversary to enter.” Again, as the purpose of the Methodist regime of transformation was the development of holy tempers and affections, seemingly small things could derail the process, indeed, anything short of perfect behavior, thoughts and feelings could be deemed sufficient.

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<sup>172</sup> J. S. Pipe, “A Short Account of Elizabeth Myers, Who Was a Member of the Society in Bowling-Lane, Near Bradford, Yorkshire,” *MM* 21:518-9.



Wright's temptation so traumatized her, she began to doubt whether Christianity was true, and whether she had imagined her experience. In true Methodist fashion, her dilemma was, if her experience could not bring about holiness, what good was it? How could it be real? In the long term, a holy life seemed an essential proof of the reality, the supernatural nature of one's transformation. Astonishingly, Wright's extreme crisis was caused by a mere temptation which she had not even acted upon. Thus she did not entirely lose her "confidence." Wright continued to pray "earnestly." Her peace was restored that Sunday, "It was not so rapturous a joy as before; but it appeared more solid."<sup>173</sup>

The dangers of losing one's first love were further detailed in an anonymous 1795 sermon which described every convert as not only having "a comfortable sense of the divine peace in favor," but that even in the

bent of his soul is to be holy and all outward conversation, and inwardly free from every impure affection, and unreasonable appetite and temper. This is the experience of every child of God. Alas, how many depart from their first love; and lose not only their desires for full conformity to the mind of Christ, but likewise, a witness of their justification and adoption.<sup>174</sup>

It is doubtful that this author's declaration that the new birth and entire sanctification happen simultaneously, or that the loss of this entire sanctification experienced at conversion constitutes the loss of the believer's first love, would have been allowed by Wesley in the *AM*. In order to achieve the restoration of this expansive understanding of first love, the subject was to exercise every opportunity for

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<sup>173</sup> Joseph Taylor, "A Short Account of the Experience and Death of Mrs. Wright, of Stoutport, Worcestershire," *MM* 22:275-6.

<sup>174</sup> "The Scripture Method of Obtaining Purity of Heart and Constant Union with God," *AM* 17:307-8.

solemn prayer and meditation, keeping the door of the senses shut against all vanity, and our reason and understanding closed to all images and impressions from passing objects, the affections must be disengaged from earthly attachments, and anxious care for the things in this life. Having thus collected together the powers of the soul, they must be turned towards the sovereign and only GOOD, and center there. We must consign ourselves to God, and the entire resignation to his holy will, keeping our mental eye on him, and receiving every blessing as coming from his immediate hand. And even when we have not such a sight of the glory of God, as transforms our souls into the image of Christ, we must not rest satisfied with this deprivation; and reassemble all our inward strength, in order to seek after God, even though it should be a hundred times in a day. That is the work of Faith, which we must learn, and although it is painful and difficult at first, yet through the divine assistance, it will become habitual, and then we shall find easier to stay our souls on God, than it was before to be dissipated and scattered among a multitude of objects.”

The author noted that the soul is as if it is in prison, having its friends residing in heaven. Therefore, “the body must be kept under, and its appetites brought into due subordination by mortification, through watching in prayer.” We need to avoid any needless conversation or employments. To truly make progress in the Christian life, we must not have any “familiarity” with those not fearing God. To achieve a “perfect union with God,” We must remove all “carnal cares, and sensual delights.”<sup>175</sup> Few authors in the *AM* provided such detail of the human end for the requisite watchfulness for avoiding or reversing the loss of the believer’s first love.

To prevent such problems Methodism had stressed the importance of the continued use of means to develop holy affections combined with a vigilant watchfulness against temptations. Ann Gilbert said that she had always found that the more diligently she used the means of grace, the more happiness she experienced in her

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 308-9.

soul. In a letter, M. B. provided Elizabeth Andrews a list of questions for self examination, such as “Did I awake in a spiritual frame of mind, and have I been watchful to keep my mind from wandering thoughts?” “Have I lived near God this day in prayer?” “Have I spent all my time profitably?” Have I been careful in using the means of grace; – watching against the wanderings of my imagination?” Have I laboured to keep a quiet spirit this day? remembering that in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin?” and “Have I closer communion with God than I had last night?”<sup>176</sup>

How careful and complex watchfulness could be is evident from the narrative of Zechariah Yewdal, who would meet with other persons in the society for prayer, singing, conversation, and to attend love feasts and preaching in nearby societies. While these were “refreshing seasons,” times, it reflected “too great an attachment to each other,” and

introduced unprofitable and trifling conversation and unwatchfulness; especially when we returned home together, or tarry longer in each other's company, than was necessary: by this means, searching the Scriptures, private duties, and meditation, were neglected; which barrenness and deadness were allowed into our souls, and prevented a progress in real, vital Religion.

In this way Yewdall discovered the dangers of “inordinate affection.”<sup>177</sup>

One author traced the source of backsliding to unbelief, resulting from “a cessation from the exercise of faith.” Even someone who has been completely delivered from “evil tempers” might not fight the “good fight of faith,” cleave to Christ,

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<sup>176</sup> Ann Gilbert, “The Experience of Mrs. and Gilbert, of Gwinear, in Cornwall,” *AM* 18:45 and M. B., “Letter From M. B. to Elizabeth Andres,” *MM* 25:124-5.

<sup>177</sup> Yewdall, 18: 161.

pray and praise, or open the “ear of the soul” to the admonitions and reproofs of the Spirit. Such unwatchfulness would lead to “a slackness in running the race,” a carelessness in performing religious duties. This invited the believer to be surrounded by the enemy, who would tempt with the suggestions most likely to be listened to. If at a difficult moment the temptation was yielded to, and allowed “to take hold of the heart,” it will result in “the seeds of temptations [that] will become the roots of corruptions.” If these seeds were not quickly seen and removed, they would produce fruit and further backsliding. This, in the estimation of the author, was quite common.<sup>178</sup>

John Haime provided a very detailed examination of what happened to someone who was “off” his “watch,” after which he gave into what to him was a serious temptation. “It came as quick as lightning: I knew not, if I was in my senses, but I fell, and the Spirit of God departed from me. It was a great mercy, that I did not fall into hell!” Haime described himself as first becoming negligent in prayer, scripture reading and “watching.” He then began to indulge himself more, “laying out upon my own appetite, what I before gave to my poor brethren.” Next he indulged “the lust of the eyes, to look at and covet pleasing things,” until he had left his former love. Finally, several friends sent him out on “the Sabbath,” (Sunday) to buy some things, which he did, even though, like the Puritans, buying anything on Sunday was seen as a violation of one of the ten commandments.

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<sup>178</sup> “A Sermon on The Scriptural Method of Believing in Order to Obtain Present and Eternal Salvation,” *MM* 22:63.

I had an inward check, but I over-ruled it, and quickly after, became a prey to the enemy. Instantly my condemnation was so great, that I was on the point of destroying myself. . . The agony of my mind weighed down my body and threw me into a bloody flux. I was carried to a hospital, just dropping into hell.<sup>179</sup>

Haime's agony increased. He had thrown away "unshaken faith, the peace, joy and love." Anger, pride, "self-will, and every other devilish temper now returned." He was in a worse condition than before coming to Christ. "I was one day drawn out into the woods lamenting my forlorn state; and on a sudden I began to weep bitterly. From weeping, I fell to howling like a wild beast, so that the woods resounded." Haime became nearly blind for months, and was often so warm he thought he was burning to death, and looked to be sure his clothes were not on fire. At other times he was so cold in the heat of the summer that he could not put on enough clothes to be warm, and his "very bones quaked." Haime was afraid to die, assuming he now was damned without hope, yet he continued preaching. Only when preaching did Haime have a small measure of relief from his distress. Still struggling with his backsliding, as a soldier and Methodist preacher in Holland, Haime's efforts nonetheless resulted in many conversions. "But what was this to me? I was miserable still, having no comfortable sense of the presence and favor of God."<sup>180</sup>

Lay people were just as prone to falling, and without the relief of preaching that Haime had. Miss E. A. wrote Wesley that she had "enjoyed deep communion with God" for three years, but "through unwatchfulness," God had withdrawn "the light of his countenance. On this my joy was turned into pain, and my day into night. The

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<sup>179</sup> Haime, 264-6.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 266-8.

remembrance of which often makes me truly wretched.” She began once again to feel strong desire for God, and hoped that God would “return, and take up all the room in my heart.” [Psalm 42:1] Her soul had been “deeply humbled” during Wesley’s preaching that Sunday, and “at the same time it thirsted for God as the hart thirsteth for the water-brook,” [Psalm 42:1] but unbelief kept her from receiving God’s blessing. She longed to be a Christian “and hope that I shall soon be so,” and requested Wesley’s prayers to that end. Someone who had lost their witness through unwatchfulness, who had backslidden, had the pain of conviction magnified through having known, all too briefly, the joy of the new birth.<sup>181</sup>

However, in the Methodist scheme, the loss of assurance only needed be a brief, albeit painful, interruption of one’s peace. Joseph Scarf, having recently experienced pardon, was hurt by his horse on his way to work at the lime-kiln, “and being less watchful than usual, he dropt some rash expressions, which brought him into great condemnation.” He went into the bushes, and “wept bitterly,” being in distress all night. The next morning Scarf went to the fields, “and there wrested with the Angel of the Covenant; and, as a Prince, he had power with God, and prevailed. He returned home justified, being filled with peace and joy in believing.”<sup>182</sup>

### 3.3 The Second Transformation: Perfected

#### *3.3.1 Discovery of the Limits of the New Status*

For Methodists the experience of pardon and the accompanying witness of the Spirit was not an end in itself, but the beginning of a long, involved process of

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<sup>181</sup> E. A., “Letter CCCCLXXX (From Miss E. A. to the Rev. J. Wesley,” *AM* 12:51.

<sup>182</sup> John Valton, “Some Account of Mr. Joseph Scarf, of Morley, near Leeds,” *AM* 16:369.

transformation. Much of this transformation was to occur in another crisis, that of entire sanctification. Some narratives in the *AM* lack any description of such an experience. How often narratives did not include an account of receiving entire sanctification because the subject had not actually experienced it is difficult to determine. Sometimes powerful spiritual events after conversion would be described, but the standard terminology and stock phrases for describing entire sanctification were not employed. Whether or not these descriptions fit into Wesley's understanding of entire sanctification, they do reflect the Methodist drive for perpetual spiritual advancement. In a letter to her class, Mrs. K. wrote that all of them would recognize that they "want a larger measure of divine Grace, a deeper baptism of the Holy Spirit. . . My dear sisters, be not content with only crumbs of grace, when there is bread enough in the Master's house."<sup>183</sup>

Thomas Taylor, discussing the death of convert James Rothwell, described him as having been brought by God from a "wilderness state," to give him "a comfortable prospect of heavenly Canaan." The approaching of "Canaan" was not explicitly called "entire sanctification" or any other similar term. Thomas Slater became "unusually earnest for a nearer union with God." He prayed at times until his physical strength was gone. "His faith was strong and permanent, and his soul constantly panted after all the salvation of God." The author did not make it clear whether Taylor's "Canaan" experience was actually entire sanctification. Neither did William Ashland's narrative of Peter Oram. "It evidently appeared that he was dead to the world, and his life was

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<sup>183</sup> Mrs. K., "From Mrs. K to her Class, Sept. 23, 1801," *MM* 25:83.

hid with Christ in God, so that he could testify with the apostle, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, Christ lives within me: and the life which now I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Ashland even described an “inward purity,” experienced through “the cleansing blood of Christ,” which included “solid, permanent happiness.” Taylor and Rothwell, writing some years after Wesley’s death, may reflect the tendency to stress purity, devotion and unity with God, even in a crisis format, while distancing themselves from the particular formulation of a second work of grace as defined by Wesley. This may well explain why, in an eight-page account of Samuel Marsden’s life, James Wood made a point to praise Marsden’s devotion to God, covering his awakening and conversion in the first quarter of the account, but described Marsden’s experience of entire sanctification in only one sentence.<sup>184</sup>

For Disney Alexander, his ongoing transformation began the night after his conversion. He could get little sleep, as prayers of thanks kept him awake long after he went to bed. This happened for several nights, including one sleepless night when he kept “singing praises and lifting up my heart to God, till I arose in the morning.” Later he experienced an even more dramatic spiritual crisis, wondering if this “rapturous state of mind” continued for too long, whether it would have been too much for his strength. He felt that this was why God then allowed him to become more calm, and he “enjoyed a solid piece, which the less ecstatic, but infinitely superior to all the pleasure this world

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<sup>184</sup> Thomas Taylor, “A Short Account of James Rothwell, of Bolton in Lancashire,” *AM* 20:95-6; Hern, 8:199; William Ashland, “An Account of Mr. Peter Oram,” *AM* 18:309-10 and James Wood, “Some Account of the Conversion and Happy Death of Mr. Samuel Marsden,” *MM* 23:18. Ashland was quoting Galatians 2:20.



could afford, and which I would not exchange for the wealth of the Indies. This peace, I still retain.” Alexander still felt the need to be prayerful and watchful, although it is unclear whether temptations challenged his holy tempers, or appealed to remaining evil tempers. Whether evil tempers were seen as still present would determine whether he was entirely sanctified by the standards of his fellow Methodists.

I feel that the power of sin be subdued, yet the liability to commit it still remains, and that when temptations assail and crosses intervene, my tempers are apt to be ruffled, emotions of an unpleasant kind arise in my breast, which tend humble me to the dust, and cause me to fly earnestly to the throne of grace, that God renew my strength and establish my goings.<sup>185</sup>

The experience of entire sanctification was not so narrowly defined in early Methodism that it did not allow for variation in its definition, description and experience. Individual Methodists were not always clear on whether they had experienced entire sanctification, or if a fellow Methodist had experienced entire sanctification. One narrative subject observed that God's work of healing someone's backslidings was sometimes mistaken for entire sanctification. Another wrote a friend that the perfect love of God, “exceeds description: It being of that nature, which can only properly be *felt*.” However, Methodists often described perfection in love using Wesley’s terminology, namely entire sanctification, Christian perfection, perfect love and holiness of tempers, dispositions and affections. Samuel Marsden, from the example of his parents, saw that “religion does not consist in externals, but in right tempers and dispositions of the soul towards God and all mankind, producing a conduct correspondent to the scriptures.” As will be seen, the terms *tempers*, *dispositions* and

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<sup>185</sup> Disney Alexander, “Reason for Methodism,” *AM* 19:420-3.

*affections* were frequently employed by the narrative subjects or their narrators to describe what was remaining in the heart after the new birth, and what the subject was delivered from in entire sanctification.<sup>186</sup>

The transformation of tempers and affections was not the only terminology describing entire sanctification in the *AM*. Mary Unwin believed that heart purity was necessary to go to heaven, and also to “a growing up into Christ in all things, and bearing much fruit to the glory of God.” Fletcher, ever the master of the careful distinction, suggested that the progress of sanctification was stopped by making the goal deliverance from sin rather than being “*rooted* in CHRIST, and *filled with the fullness of* GOD.” However, Fletcher is also well-known to Methodist historians for being one of the few early Methodist authors to describe entire sanctification as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which was likely related to his emphasis on Christian perfection as being filled with God’s fullness rather than being rid of sin. In another letter Fletcher published in the *AM* he wrote, “You have not learned to hold fast what you have, and to be thankful for it till the Lord comes with more: till he baptizes you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Morris, 18:123; “A Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend, on Christian Holiness, *AM* 18:433-4 and James Wood, “Some Account of the Conversion and Happy Death of Mr. Samuel Marsden,” *MM* 23:15.

<sup>187</sup> James Wood, “An Account of Miss Mary Unwin, of Sheffield: Who Left the Sorrows of Mortality, May 3, 1801,” *MM* 25:18; John Fletcher, “From Mr. Fletcher, to Mr. T. Rankin, Madeley, June 23, 1781,” *AM* 352-3 and John Fletcher, “Letter DLIII (From the Rev. Mr. Fletcher, to C. B.),” *AM* 14:49. The year Fletcher’s letter was published in 1791, the year of Wesley’s death. While the timing may have been due to Wesley’s initially negative response to Fletcher’s equation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with entire sanctification, 1791 was a year of general emphasis on Fletcher’s writings in the *AM*. Laurence Wood has proposed that while Wesley first rejected Fletcher’s Spirit baptism terminology, he came in time to accept it. See “John Fletcher and the Rediscovery of Pentecost in Methodism,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 53:1 (Spring 1998): 7-34; “Pentecostal Sanctification in Wesley and Early Methodism,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 21:2 (Fall 1999): 251-88 and *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism: Rediscovering John Fletcher as Wesley’s Vindicator and*

Fletcher was not the only one to refer to entire sanctification as the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the pages of the *AM*. Salmon refers to entire sanctification as “that inward fiery baptism of the Holy Ghost.” Another author described waiting for entire sanctification as “waiting for the fuller baptism of HIS SPIRIT.” Experiencing this, she then sought for more, the regulation of her “natural affections and passions” by God’s Word and Spirit, to “move in an even balance; all harmonized; not one exercised at the expense of another; but each in due subordination flow from a right principle, and lead to a right end.” To her, “salvation from sin,” apparently her term for entire sanctification, was only a “negative holiness.” Obedience to the “Spirit’s teaching,” resulting in “that positive holiness, which the apostle describes, where he speaks of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness.” This author made the same distinction that Fletcher did, but suggested two distinct experiences to solve the two distinct problems. This apparently three-step understanding of salvation is similar to that found among some in the radical holiness movement at the close of the nineteenth century, an approach that would give rise to Pentecostalism.<sup>188</sup>

In a rare admission for a Methodist preacher writing in the *AM*, John Kershaw wrote of beginning to experience doubts about entire sanctification. He was not sure

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*Designated Successor* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002). Wood’s position has been challenged by Randy Maddox in “Continuing the Conversation,” *Methodist History* 30, no. 4 (Jul 1992): 235-241, and by Donald Dayton, whose position that the equation between entire sanctification and the baptism of the Spirit did not occur until long after Fletcher can first be seen in “Asa Mahan and the Development of American Holiness Theology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 9:1 (Spring 1974), 60-9.

<sup>188</sup> J. W. Salmon, “Letter DXXX (From Mr. J. Salmon, to the Rev. J. Wesley), *AM* 13:273; “A Letter from Mrs. \*\*\*\*\* to Mr. G. S., *AM* 20:145-6. On the radical holiness movement, see Donald Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1987) and Wallace Thornton, “The Revivalist Movement and the Development of a Holiness/Pentecostal Philosophy of Missions,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 38:1 (Spring, 2003), 160-186.

what Christian perfection actually was. The terms seemed “indefinite” to him. He was unsure how love, or other traits, such as humility and patience, being perfect, as described by Fletcher, actually worked in practice. Kershaw also had frequently encountered people claiming the experience who were certainly imperfect “in humility, in forbearance, in chastening, in patience, in truth, &c.” Serious believers who were zealous for the doctrine would convince those who were seeking the experience that they had it already “on very uncertain grounds,” that is, because they felt nothing in their heart that was contrary to love. For Wesley this was a primary criterion in helping people to determine whether or not they had been entirely sanctified, but Kershaw felt that seekers employing only this criterion would be confused when facing their first temptation.

Kershaw was also concerned by other apparent inconsistencies. Some of those claiming entire sanctification were more deeply convicted “for indwelling sin, than for former outward transgressions.” Others said that they had never previously been convicted for indwelling sin. Some indicated “stronger warfare than before,” while others said that they then had no warfare. Some described it as “a state of raptures and ecstasies; others banished all raptures from it.” In coming to York, he met some professing the experience whose

solid, rational, and rich experience of the things of God; their uniform, pious, and exemplary conversation; their clear, unequivocal, and satisfactory testimony concerning the Spirit’s operations upon their hearts; bore down all my prejudices, and removed all my doubts. I saw that none of them militated in any degree, against that great mystery of the kingdom of God. Rash and mistaken professors may conclude themselves perfected in love, when they ought rather to repent, and do their first works; injudicious persons may handle the word of

righteousness in an unskillful manner; and the testimony of the saints may vary, justly so, according to diversified circumstances; but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever; the testimony of God, that shall stand.<sup>189</sup>

The inclusion of Kershaw's narrative served an important purpose, by attempting to absolve Methodism from responsibility for those who, while claiming to experience the distinctive transformation of Methodism, entire sanctification, were clearly violating Methodist standards of conduct. Such negative examples were convenient for non-Methodists who were looking for reasons to reject Methodism, and were a stumbling block for Methodist seekers considering continuing along the Methodist trajectory of transformation. It was also reassuring that even a Methodist preacher could have such doubts, and even more so that they were so effectively eliminated.

However entire sanctification was specifically defined by an individual, it was predicated on the assumption that something unholy remained following the new birth. These unholy tempers, dispositions and affections, this internal evil, had to be acknowledged *and* felt for the transformation process to continue. Every step of the process required certain intellectual acknowledgements and affectional confirmations. Without these, the transformation of the individual was deficient. In a postscript to Thomas Rankin's account of his wife Sarah, John Pawson commented that he knew Sarah well. He noted that "her judgment was not quite clear respecting" entire

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<sup>189</sup> John Kershaw, "The Life and Experience of Mr. John Kershaw," *MM* 25:224-5.

sanctification. This caused her great distress, as “her natural temper too frequently had dominion over her.”<sup>190</sup>

Some believed that entire sanctification should be urged upon the newly believing. Mather wrote G. Marsden that it was his “bounden duty” to urge new believers to full sanctification before their first love and zeal cooled. New believers were to seek sanctification, and “expect it now.” However, the actual amount of time between the new birth and a sense of one’s remaining sinfulness varied widely. E. Richardson had sought entire sanctification unsuccessfully for years, using “much watchfulness, devotion, self-crucifixion, and diligence. Miss P. B. wrote of being justified at about twelve, then at seventeen she began to seek “perfect holiness.” Usually when a timeframe was given, the distance between experience the new birth and discovering inbred sin was rather short. Three months after Sarah Smith experienced a clear witness to her justification, she pursued a “further blessing,” although Smith did not yet know what to call it, while John Dillon became aware of the “remaining evils” in his heart three months after his pardon. The recentness of Dillon’s pardon would give him pause. His faith for deliverance from inbred sin was hampered by the thought of someone so recently justified seeking this blessing.<sup>191</sup>

The time between pardon and discovering inbred sin could be even shorter. Six weeks after her pardon, J. S found “pride and anger, and many other evil tempers,”

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<sup>190</sup> Thomas Rankin, “An Account of the Life and Death of Mrs. Rankin, Written by Her Husband,” *MM* 22:75.

<sup>191</sup> Mather, “From Mr. Mather, to Mr. G. Marsden, Manchester, Jan. 29, 1796,” *AM* 515; Alexander Mather, “An Account of the Life, Death of E. Richardson,” *AM* 13:297; P. B., “Letter CCCXXXIX (From Miss P. B., to the Rev. J. Wesley) March 24, 1771,” *AM* 7:445; John Dillon, “Letter CCXCV (From Mr. J. Dillon, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley.), Dublin, June 13, 1763,” *AM* 6:220 and Smith, 22:18.

despite receiving from God “many tokens of his love. A month later she heard a sermon convincing her she needed heart purity, receiving it only two months after that. Thomas Kinley rejoiced for two weeks in his justification, when at prayer God showed him the “sinful corruptions still remaining in his heart.” Reducing the wait to its absolute minimum, Mrs. Heath “had a clear discovery” of her need of entire sanctification from the time she experienced pardon.<sup>192</sup>

The believer’s sudden discovery of the remains of sin, often not long after their new birth, was quite common in narrative accounts of Christian perfection. Ann Taylor, despite tremendous joy in experiencing pardon, was provided by God with a view of her inbred sin. She would experience her deliverance from it only three weeks after being justified. Ann Gilbert described her own discovery in some detail.

It was now that I became extremely jealous of my own heart, and began to watch it, as my most inveterate enemy; many times I was distressed by the motions of anger and pride, sins to which I had been a peculiarly addicted from my infancy; and which frequently occasion me the loss of my comfort. This led me to cry mightily to the Lord, that he would destroy them; or otherwise, I knew they would destroy my soul. The sin in my nature was truly a burden to me; for I could not bear to find anything in my heart, contrary to love.<sup>193</sup>

It is out of the very watchfulness required to maintain the first Methodist transformation that Gilbert had made the discovery required to begin the second.

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<sup>192</sup> “On Repentance in Believers,” *Works* 5:220-35; “Letter CCCLXX (From Miss J. S. to the Rev. J. Wesley), Weardale, July 24, 1772,” *AM* 8:335; Samuel Mitchel, “A Short Account of Mr. Thomas Kinley,” *AM* 14:466 and Heath, “A Short Account of the Life and Death of Mrs. Heath: Who Died the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1796, Written by her Husband,” *AM* 19:602. Most seekers were distressed at the discovery Kinley was so pleased about, but quite possibly Kinley was excited to be able to so quickly begin working toward his second transformation.

<sup>193</sup> “Some Account of the Life and Death of Ann Taylor,” *AM* 17: 356 and Gilbert, 18:43.

Having made this discovery, a Methodist was expected to do something about it. The status of a believer following the discovery of the remains of sin was seen as analogous to conviction of someone seeking pardon. Just as repentance was required of an awakened sinner, so a kind of repentance was required of believers awakened to their remains of sin. Hence, Wesley's sermon "On Repentance in Believers." Following the analogy, a repenting believer needed to engage in "works meet to repentance," just as a repenting sinner was expected to do. Ruth Kelly began to "see the evils remaining in her heart," she was tempted one morning to believe it improper for her to go to the means of grace, as it would "encrease [*sic*] the disorder" of her continued sinfulness. Then she "thought she heard a voice" saying "In a very little time the last trumpet shall sound!" She immediately arose and went to her class and told them what had happened, which was a "great blessing" to them.<sup>194</sup>

The distress over sin and the determination to be delivered evident in those under conviction was matched by a similar level of distress and determination among those seeking entire sanctification following their discovery of their inbred sin. Sarah Smith found within herself many things "not according to the mind of Christ," and God had given her and "inveterate hatred to my inbred corruptions." Susannah Bridgmont, in a letter to a friend, told of realizing that to be fully happy she had to be totally delivered from the "carnal mind." Robert Roe became increasingly distressed over his inward corruption, including pride, anger, selfishness, dread of "duties," levity, slothfulness, unbelief and fear, "with every other hell-born temper, do I feel within!

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<sup>194</sup> John Kerr, "A Short Account of Mrs. Ruth Kelly," *AM* 19:603-6.



Yet God bears with me, and visits me with his love.” Here one can see the advantage a seeker of entire sanctification had over a sinner under conviction. A repentant believer remained a believer, with an ongoing sense of acceptance by God.<sup>195</sup>

The seeking believer, no matter how distressed, could also continue to experience power over outward sin. Miss T. H., writing back to Wesley in response to his queries, replied that she did have joy, love, peace, power over sin and Christ dwelling in her heart. She still felt “stirrings” of anger, pride, self-will, as well as “many other diabolical tempers,” opposed to the mind of Christ, yet by God’s grace these were suppressed enough to not “gain advantage” over her. However, they did still remain, and thus her peace could not “flow as a river.” She was “far from rejoicing evermore.” Christopher Middleton took a dimmer view, focusing on the eternal rather than immediate effects of remaining sin. He wrote in his diary of feeling the need of deliverance from inbred sin, as no unclean person could possibly live in heaven, as unhappiness is caused only by sin. Middleton found internal tempers contrary to God’s will, which caused many struggles.<sup>196</sup>

Just as approaching death, or the illness or death of a loved one, so often provided the motivation and occasion for those who were not believers to fall under conviction and seek pardon, similar circumstances could stir unperfected believers to seek entire sanctification. Ruth Kelly only experienced entire sanctification during her final illness, just a few hours before her death. The death of Coriolanus Copleston’s

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<sup>195</sup> Smith, 22:18; J. D., “A Short Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Susannah Bridgmont,” *AM* 10:463 and Roe, 7:20.

<sup>196</sup> T. H., “Letter CCXCIV (From Miss T. H. to the Rev. Mr. Wesley.), Salop, Dec. 22, 1764,” *AM* 6:218-9 and Middleton, “A Short Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Christopher Middleton (Written by His Brother),” *AM* 10:16.

wife “proved a means of stirring him up to seek” entire sanctification. Jane Finley sought “full conformity” to God’s will in response to the fatal illness of her younger sister, “who died in the full triumph of faith.” In his final illness of a very painful fever, two days before his death, William Betts sought after holiness, despite having “the clearest evidence of justification.” When he received the blessing the next day, it was just as clear and instantaneous as his justification had been. The traditional Anglican connection between entire sanctification and assurance of the believer shortly before death had a significant impact on the spiritual expectations of early Methodists. Mr. H. experienced his “full assurance of salvation” three weeks before his death.” Thomas Rankin wrote that his wife Sarah went too often without a sense of God’s love and approval, with “painful doubts and distressing fears for many years,” not even being entirely sure of her acceptance by God until her deathbed, when she finally experienced entire sanctification, when “all was peace, and quietness, and acceptance for ever.”<sup>197</sup>

Wesley desired believers to seek and receive entire sanctification long before death, in part due to his insistence that repentance and faith alone were the human prerequisites for entire sanctification. Nonetheless, experiencing entire sanctification while dying was obviously far better than not experiencing it at all. Thus, there are a number of narratives where the subject experienced entire sanctification while dying, although they constitute a minority of the accounts which reported that their subjects

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<sup>197</sup> John Kerr, “A Short Account of Mrs. Ruth Kelly,” *AM* 19:603-6; S. Copleston, “A Short Account of Coriolanus Copleston,” *AM* 14:361; Samuel Mitchell, “A Short Account of Jane Finlay,” *AM* 15:410, James Buckley, “The Experience and Happy Death of William Betts,” *MM* 23:120; “The Conversion and Happy death of a young man. The Account is Taken From a Letter Wrote By His Mother, to a Gentleman Near London, August 29, 1797,” *AM* 20:595 and Thomas Rankin, “An Account of the Life and Death of Mrs. Rankin, Written by Her Husband,” *MM* 22:75.

were entirely sanctified. However, a general fear of death was sufficient for some Methodists to seek the experience. G. C. knew his sins were forgiven, but he was still afraid of dying suddenly, and so sought deliverance from inbred sin..<sup>198</sup>

The intensity of the conviction of inbred sin could be as intense as the conviction of sinfulness experienced before one's justification, or, as in the case of Martha Rogers, even more intense. Thomas Kinley became as distressed seeking for full cleansing as he had been when seeking justification, "only he did not feel guilt or the wrath of God upon his soul." He prayed all night and into the morning and attended church. He nearly fainted "with holy thirsting and ardent desire. Martha Rogers still did not doubt being a child of God. She came home from a covenant service, and several people were at her house and prayed with her. "The power of God was present to bless many," but she did not feel delivered and "wept bitterly." Similarly, Love Lovegrove, living five years after her new birth, "never lost her evidence, from the happy time she received it, but held it fast till the still more happy day when faith was lost in sight and hope in full enjoyment." In that time, however, she did seek entire sanctification, and "her conviction on the necessity of entire sanctification was, I believe, more painful than her first conviction for sin."<sup>199</sup>

Comparisons aside, the grief over inbred sin was often intense. Sarah Ryan rushed upstairs to pray, and "began to bewail my wretched nature, feeling such loathing of myself, that it seemed I could not live, if God did not soon deliver me." Another

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<sup>198</sup> G. C., "An Extract From the Journal of Mr. G. C.," *AM* 6:245.

<sup>199</sup> Samuel Mitchel, "A Short Account of Mr. Thomas Kinley," *AM* 14:466; J. Rogers, "A Short Account of Mrs. Martha Rogers," *AM* 8:22 and William Lovegrove, "The Christian Experience and Happy Death of Love Lovegrove, of Halifax, Nova Scotia; Who Departed This Life, January 19, 1795, Aged 28: by Her Brother Mr. Hiram William Lovegrove," *AM* 19: 405.

time, she felt a cold sweat and began to tremble. J. V. wrote Wesley that following his justification, his “war between Grace and Nature became so violent,” that without further deliverance he “must grow faint” in his mind. He sought “with strong cries and tears,” occasionally receiving “draughts of the brook by the way, but they did not remove the pain, but strengthened me still to undergo it.” William Black wrote in his journal that his greatest grief was not living “in the spirit of full conformity to God.” James Hall, spending the greater part of a day praying “for the entire destruction of sin,” felt as if his “inward parts were more abundantly full of every thing contrary to holiness.” When the rest of the family had gone to bed he thought that as he had often previously stayed up all night playing cards, or “such vanities,” that it was appropriate to spend the night earnestly praying. He did so, and never rose that night from his knees. “This was a night never to be forgotten.” He was enabled to “wrestle with God, and prevail” for this blessing.<sup>200</sup>

Seekers of entire sanctification naturally turned to those nurseries of Methodist experience, Methodist meetings. When describing her current spiritual state to her class leader, Sarah Smith was instructed in entire sanctification, and urged to “seek it in the same way” she had found justification. John Kingston found that his “natural flow of spirits exposed” him to various temptations, and was greatly helped at the band-meetings. There he could “freely unbosom” his mind to others, who sympathized and

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<sup>200</sup> Ryan, 2:307; William Black, “The Journal of Mr. William Black in His Visit to Newfoundland,” *AM* 15:179; J. V., “Letter CCCXVI,” 7:50-51 and Hall, 16:233. Interestingly, J. V. provides the date, about a year previously, that “the Holy Ghost separated sin from my heart.” Evidently he fell from his experience, and was then restored.

gave helpful advice. “By their faithful admonitions and fervent prayers, [they] helped me to break thro’ the snares of the wicked one.”<sup>201</sup>

One might think that once a Methodist became aware in inbred sin and how to have it removed, that the experience of entire sanctification would happen in short order, as they had already committed themselves to God, and more specifically, to the Methodist transformation process. However, various barriers often delayed reception of the blessing. One woman, in a letter, indicated that her mind was too active, hindering her by going “before” the Spirit. She quoted Fletcher for emphasis, “Restless, resign’d, for GOD I wait; For GOD my vehement soul stands still.” Too often she seemed “restless, but not resigned.” This had opened a path for the enemy to harass her. To achieve “those higher degrees of grace,” she had to continually look to Jesus, “waiting patient for his teachings and guidance of his Spirit.”<sup>202</sup>

Misunderstanding about the nature of entire sanctification could occasion delays in the experience. Hall felt that he had set his standard for holiness too high, not properly understanding the nature of the many “infirmities” that accompany mortality, and can exist within someone who loves God with all their heart “in an evangelical sense.” This misunderstanding had given the enemy advantage. Others experienced difficult temptations. God showed Sarah Ryan “an idol that till then lay concealed in my breast,” and she saw that this was what stood between her and God. She was very eager to give it up, but “could not more do it, than I could cease to breathe.” Ryan then struggled with the sudden return of her oft-occurring temptation to deny Christ’s

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<sup>201</sup> Smith, 22:18 and Kingston, 22:209.

<sup>202</sup> “A Letter from Mrs. \*\*\*\*\* to Mr. G. S., *AM* 20:145-7.

divinity. She believed that her “idol,” undue affection for her absent husband, would separate her soul from God if it were not removed, “but I had no more power to do this, than to create a world.” Ryan endured constant and varied temptation, and inner condemnation. Hearing someone testify to being entirely sanctified, she felt “such enmity against her, as I cannot describe.”<sup>203</sup>

### 3.3.2 Faith: Entering the Second Limen

The goal for the seeker of entire sanctification was to experience that faith that would bring about purification. Thus, the most common obstacle to becoming entirely sanctified, and the one most important to remove, was a lack of faith. Robert Roe wrote in his diary that, “Unbelief, though ever so plausible, and seemingly backed by Reason and Scripture; brings darkness, trouble, and unholy tempers; and hinders our hearts and lips from praising God. Whereas Faith brings light, life, power, peace, love and holy tempers.” Despite the importance of continued use of the means of grace as one searched for entire sanctification, these works could not be seen as a direct means to the experience, only faith. A. Loxdale wrote Wesley that she thought that sanctification must be, like justification, done by God in a moment. She decided that her delay was that she “was in part a Savior with Christ, seeking the blessing by the works of the law, rather than by simple faith.”<sup>204</sup>

Even the realization that belief was all that was required could immediately initiate the experience. John Dillon wrote Wesley that “When you said, if you can now

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<sup>203</sup> Hall, 16:233 and Ryan, 2:304-7.

<sup>204</sup> Roe, 7:470-1 and A. Loxdale, “Letter DXXXV (From Miss A. Loxdale, to the Rev. J. Wesley), June 1, 1782,” *AM* 13:387.

only believe, you shall see the glory of God; the words came with such power to my soul, that I was instantly delivered from the remains of unbelief, and filled with Love.” When Mary Jones was informed by Wesley that “it is by faith alone, and that it begins from the first moment we believe,” she immediately revised her understanding. She now realized that “faith was the hand that received every blessing from God.” Her second deliverance was just as instantaneous, and just as much received, and maintained, by faith. She cried to God to increase her faith. Alexander Mather explained it similarly, in his account of E. Richardson.

She now began to understand the way of expecting and receiving all the felt need of from God, and an instantaneous deliverance from all the evil in her heart, by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. She also saw that she was not to expect this deliverance first, and then to believe it, as she had formerly done; but to believe now on the Lord Jesus, and then be saved from what she felt.<sup>205</sup>

Addressing unbelief did not mean it simply went away. As with the faith for pardon, faith for entire sanctification was not something a subject could simply choose to exercise. There remained the mysterious, divine element of faith; its nature as a gift of God. Previously Hall had used the means of grace “with much comfort and delight,” but now his heart was “very hard and dead, unbelief seemed to increase every hour.” He told his class leaders that it seemed impossible for him to believe with his “heart unto righteousness,” as he found himself “firmly bound with the chain of unbelief.” The more he struggled, the stronger the chain seemed. The class leader encouraged him

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<sup>205</sup> John Dillon, “Letter CCXCV (From Mr. J. Dillon, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley.), Dublin, June 13, 1763,” AM 6:220-1; Mary Jones, “Letter CCCLXXXVI (From Mrs. Mary Jones, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Bath, June 7, 1774,” AM 9:57-8 and Alexander Mather, “An Account of the Life and Death of E. Richardson,” AM 13:297-8.

that Jesus had the power to break apart the strongest barriers, and that he was willing to help Hall immediately and save him to the uttermost from all hindrances.<sup>206</sup>

Faith seemingly could be exercised by a seeking believer, and yet without the desired result. This may well be because of a failure to distinguish between the “faith in order to obtain” and believing that one has obtained. As John Boothby agonized in prayer, a “mother in Israel” asked him what he was seeking. He told her sanctification. She suggested that he must believe for it, but Boothby replied that if he believed tonight he would be as bad the next day. “Thou hast nothing to do with tomorrow; believe *now*.” He decided to concern himself only with the present, and to throw his “soul upon the Lord in faith.” Distress over unsuccessful attempts to believe led Sarah Ryan to believe that she did not have so much as “a grain of living faith,” yet she hoped for deliverance at the Easter service, where she was determined to pray for deliverance, to not rise until God had answered her. She was not disappointed.<sup>207</sup>

### *3.3.3 In a Moment: The Second Liminality*

As the new birth was often ushered in through God speaking to the subject, so divine communication featured prominently in the moment the subject was entirely sanctified. Mrs. Oddie felt God speak to her heart that he had shown her how unable she was of herself to do anything, and now would show what he could do for her, that his love would “constrain” her to obey him. The rest of the day she said little, but felt happy, “with floods of joyous tears,” and astonishment at how changed she felt.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Hall, 16:120.

<sup>207</sup> John Boothby, “A Short Account of the Experience of Mr. John Boothby,” *AM* 16:482 and Ryan, :304.

<sup>208</sup> Oddie, 6:303.



Often such communication occurred through the internal application of a scripture verse. Frequently that verse was taken from the account of a leper coming to Jesus and saying, “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” For Methodists, Jesus’ response of “I will. Be thou clean.” healed not only this man of his leprosy, but many Methodists of inbred sin as well. The phrase was well suited, as inbred sin was viewed as a kind of disease, and healing of it was often referred to in the Bible as being made clean.<sup>209</sup> P. B. went to her room to pray, when Jesus told her, “I will be thou clean.” She “laid hold on his word, and felt a change” she could not describe. God applied the same words to Thomas Kinley’s heart. George Clarke, “by the light of his word, and thro’ the sacred energy of his Spirit,” felt God speak powerfully to him, “saying, ‘I will, be thou clean.’ I knew his voice, experienced his power and goodness, and my soul was healed.”<sup>210</sup>

Of course, other verses were similarly used. J. Rogers urged his wife Martha to believe in Jesus, “to cast herself, just as she was, into his arms, who was standing ready to embrace her.” She asked him to go upstairs with her, and as they knelt there to pray, God gave him “power to wrestle mightily in prayer on her behalf.” She experienced her deliverance, with God applying the verse, “Thou art fair my love; thou art all fair: there is no spot in thee!” While praying, G. C. felt the power of God so strongly that her

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<sup>209</sup> Paul Livermore presented a succinct summary of this use of medical terminology to describe sin and sanctification in his unpublished paper for the Free Methodist Church of North of America’s Study Commission on Doctrine, “A Comparison of the Historical Forms of the Article of Religion on Entire Sanctification,” 2003. Livermore cites Melvin E. Dieter, *et al*, *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) and Lindström, Harald. *Wesley and Sanctification* (London: Epworth, 1946), 40ff.; Maddox, 73ff., 143ff.

<sup>210</sup> The account of Jesus healing the leper is found in three gospels. The specific phrase “I will. Be thou clean.” can be found in Mat. 8:3, Mk. 1:41, Lk. 5:13. P. B., 7:446, Samuel Mitchel, “A Short Account of Mr. Thomas Kinley,” *AM* 14:466 and George Clarke, “From George Clark to Mrs. Downes, London, July 2, 1778,” *MM* 22:96.

“whole body trembled under it.” She kept praying, “My heart, Lord! Work within! Work within!” At that moment she felt the Spirit powerfully enter her heart, “and as it were literally accomplish that promise, *I will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh*: the old heart seeming to be taken away, and God himself taking possession of my soul in the fullness of love: and all the time of the service, I enjoyed such a heaven of love as I never before experienced.” C. B.’s “soul was transported as if it was going to leave the body.” She asked God what he was going to do, and at that moment the words “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation!” “came with power” to her mind. Sarah Ryan was led into her experience not by the application of a verse of scripture, but the application of a verse of a hymn.<sup>211</sup>

Like the moment of new birth, the moment of Christian perfection was often not only emotionally intense, but experienced as a transportation into a heavenly realm. J. B. wrote how she experienced her “full deliverance” through a vision, although the editor (Wesley), asked the reader to note that the account “appears not a little whimsical. However I submit to better judgment, being unable to determine.” She prayed for several hours for the blessing, when God came to her soul “and plucked up every root of sin.” J. B. rejoiced but could not understand how the “man of sin” was destroyed. She saw heaven’s gate, with God saying she would shortly enter in. She was then with “the heavenly host,” and was instructed to call her family to give them her blessing and to pray for the Church of Christ. God later showed J. B. how her “man

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<sup>211</sup> Rogers, 8:22; C. M., “Letter CCCXCVII (From Mrs. C. M. to the J. Wesley), May 12, 1773,” *AM* 9:341-2; G. C., “An Extract From the Journal of Mr. G. C.,” *AM* 6:245 and Ryan, 2:304. Ryan would later have her experience restored through a vision of Christ: 208-9.

of sin” was destroyed. She saw sin as a “horrible monster,” which God dismembered, until it was in pieces and lifeless. When God’s “powerful presence” came upon John Boothby, he “knew neither where I was, nor what I did. When I came to myself, I was quite another man. . . I felt myself as weak as an infant, but . . . I enjoyed a blessed deliverance from unholy and unhappy tempers.” While Sarah Smith was working, she “felt an extraordinary manifestation of divine Love, which continually increased, like the swelling of a river, for some hours.” This happiness was “inexpressible,” and she knew her inbred corruptions to be gone and that she could love God with her whole heart.<sup>212</sup>

This transport to supernatural realms would occur suddenly, reflecting the instantaneous nature of the experience, and providing strong evidence to the seeker that the work had been done. Ann Gilbert sought for entire sanctification for one year. While singing the first hymn in a class meeting, she found her heart harder than she had ever felt before. She cried to God to “soften and melt it into tenderness, by his undying love.” Immediately, she sensed the “overwhelming power” of God fall on her, and she “was brought into a blaze of light, and so filled with the divine presence,” that she scarce knew whether I was in the body or out of the body.” She spent the whole night praising God, and in the morning God answered her, “art holy, – art sanctified, – that are cleansed from sin.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> J. B., 11:182-3; John Boothby, “A Short Account of the Experience of Mr. John Boothby,” *AM* 16:483 and Smith, 22:18-9.

<sup>213</sup> Gilbert, 18: 44.

John Morris experienced his entire sanctification suddenly, not through the application of a verse or through a vision, but through a stream-of-consciousness word association. Morris asked a young man who worked for him about his sister who was dying of consumption. The worker replied that his sister was dead. Morris replied, “Poor thing! Nature has lasted as long as it could.” Immediately, “It seemed as if a voice spoke to my heart and said, 'so it is with me!'“ Morris took this to mean that inbred sin had existed in him long enough, for now it was dead. He arose from his knees where he had been praying, and sat down in a chair. His wife called for the young man, and they both thought he was dead. “Indeed, as long as I retained my senses, I expected, I thought was dead, and only waited for my soul to quit the body.”<sup>214</sup>

#### *3.3.4 The Witness: Confirming the Second New Status*

Despite having learned to overcome their doubts following their justification, the entirely sanctified often suffered doubts about their second transformation almost immediately. Soon after his entire sanctification, John Pemrith gave way to “unprofitable reasoning,” which caused him to lose his confidence. He never had as full experience again until his final illness, when God’s “consolation . . . was almost too much for his afflicted body to bear.” J. V. managed to establish his experience before the end of his life, but he wavered back and forth so intensely that his health suffered. Within a few days of his entire sanctification, J.V. “began to reason,” and prayed in some distress. God’s answer was, “Lo this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sins are purged.” Despite then being happy, he began to doubt.

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<sup>214</sup> Morris, 18:122-3.

God then “remarkably answered” him with the verse, “If thou wilt not believe, thou shalt not be established.” [Isaiah 7:9] For some time he would vary back and forth between belief and doubt.<sup>215</sup>

A. Perronet complained to Wesley that at one time she would feel that she was purified, then at a later time she would not. She greatly desired God, “but I have not the power to abide in his presence.” A. B. informed Wesley that she felt much less joy and peace lately, and God spoke to her with the text, “being in heaviness through manifold temptations.” As A. B. assumed that this change of feeling was to test her faith, it was an immediate comfort, and she was made more hopeful that she would be made “perfect through suffering.” She concluded her letter by informing Wesley, “I see He is a jealous God, and will be loved alone. He demands all the powers and affections of my soul.”<sup>216</sup>

Naturally, Methodists would seek a witness of the spirit that they had been entirely sanctified. Their own feelings or experience were deemed insufficient. Mrs. Oddie did not realize that God had given her “the blessing of *perfect Love*,” but when she awoke the next morning it was shown to her “by a superadded light from the Spirit shining upon his own work.” Far from desperately seeking for proof of her experience, Martha Thompson had no thought of looking for a witness to purification when it suddenly happened through God applying a scripture passage. G. C. wrote in his

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<sup>215</sup> James Wood, “A Short Account of Mr. John Pemrith,” *AM* 13:132-3 and J. V., “Letter CCCXVI,” *AM* 7:51-2.

<sup>216</sup> J. S., “Letter CCCLXX (From Miss J. S. to the Rev. J. Wesley), Weardale, July 24, 1772,” *AM* 8:335; A. Perronet, Letter CCCV (From Miss Perronet, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley), Shoreham, Oct. 19, 1765,” *AM* 6:386-7 and A. B., “Letter CCCXLIV (From Miss A. B. to the Rev. J. Wesley), Finflock, Feb. 9, 1776,” *AM* 11:50-1.

journal that he “watched every motion” of his heart the entire day after experiencing entire sanctification, looking for any trace of the evils he had before felt, and found none. This was not sufficient, as he wanted the witness of the Spirit for this work, and he earnestly prayed for it. God applied a scripture text to his heart, providing this witness. Unlike Martha Thompson, George Clark was “determined not to rest satisfied with any thing short of a clear witness that inbred sin was entirely destroyed.” Prudence Williams said she wanted a witness of sanctification “throughout soul and body,” and was told by a friend to “lift her heart to God, and receive the gift by faith.” As she prayed with her friend, Williams’ soul was “visited” by God in a powerful way, and she praised God for giving her the witness, “Now I have found what my soul has panted after; the perfect love of God.”<sup>217</sup>

Entire sanctification was often experienced by God applying a bible verse. The witness of the Spirit to entire sanctification could be experienced in the same fashion. Zechariah Yewdall wrote that God “applied to” his mind “the great and precious promises, so that scarce a doubt remained; and by degrees I was enabled to believe that the Lord had circumcised my heart.” T. T. described daily applications of “precious promises” to her mind. She believed that she would soon experience God sealing his promises on her heart, and giving her the witness she longed for. “The promises were intended to encourage me to go on believing; that His commands were also that I might disregard my enemies, and not give over the conflict till a complete victory was

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<sup>217</sup> James Oddie, “Some Account of Mrs. Oddie,” *AM* 6:303, “An Account of Martha Thompson, Near York,” *AM* 6:526; G. C., “An Extract From the Journal of Mr. G. C.,” *AM* 6:245; George Clarke, “From George Clark to Mrs. Downes, London, July 2, 1778,” *MM* 22:96 and F. G., “An Account of the Death of Prudence Williams,” *AM* 13:523. The passage for Thompson was Ezekiel 36.25-6, and for G. C. (presumably George Clark) it was 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

gained.” She felt it would amaze her correspondent if she were “to enumerate all the Scriptures that are poured upon my mind all suitable to my state. They present themselves as quick as lightening, when I am ready to give up.”<sup>218</sup>

The purpose of the witness was to remove all doubt, and for many that was just how it worked. John Cole received “an internal evidence, that [God] had cleansed me from all unrighteousness.” In the intervening six years he had experienced no doubt of his “present or eternal Salvation, if I endure faithful to the Grace of God.” Cole never experienced “those ecstasies” that some had experienced, nor had he experienced through as “deep and distressing temptations.” For John Morris “this witness was so clear and satisfactory, as to exclude every doubt.” Yet, some would never have that level of certainty. Charles Cloyne commented in the narrative he wrote about his wife that her “direct witness of the Spirit” was never as clear as some believers. “But if sincerity, humility, love to God and man, resignation to the divine Will in all things, with every other fruit of the Spirit, are the most certain and satisfactory evidence of our sanctification, I am a witness that for near three years, she abounded in them.” Similarly, while Martha Roger’s evidence for her experience did not remain this clear for long, her acquaintances never doubted it. When the verse “The eternal GOD is thy Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting Arms” was “applied with inexpressible energy” to Zechariah Yewdall’s mind, his doubts vanished. “At the same time I

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<sup>218</sup> Yewdall, 18:215 and “Letter from Miss T. T. to Mrs. S. C., October 20, 1781,” *AM* 20:102. Despite the title of the letter, it is signed F. M.

experienced such an universal change in my mind, as I am not able to describe; it was far beyond all my expectations.”<sup>219</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the experience of entire sanctification and/or the witness to entire sanctification often produced intense joy. While this was often the case, a number of accounts instead describe calmness and stability of emotions. For one newly-perfected believer “there was nothing forced or fluctuating in his joy or peace: All was calm, rational, and divine.” James Hall did not achieve “those overflowings of ecstasy and joy” that he was expecting, yet he had “cause to believe” that God had now answered His prayer. Ann Taylor’s joy was not as great as her joy when she experienced pardon, “but her soul entered into a calm serenity, accompanied with a large increase of patience, meekness and humble love.” She enjoyed this experience to her death.”<sup>220</sup>

Of course, intense and lasting joy was the more common response at the realization of deliverance from unholy affections and tempers. Yewdal described those entirely sanctified as saved from their evil tempers and so “filled with divine love, that their cup ran over, and they rejoiced with exceeding joy.” Perfect love “made hard things easy, and laid the mountains low” for John Pemrith. John Cole “felt an instantaneous deliverance from all anger, peevishness, and every diabolical disposition. . . . I know not how to describe my feelings; but I seemed to my self an empty vessel.”

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<sup>219</sup> John Cole, “The Experience of John Cole,” *AM* 17:30; Morris, 18:123; Charles Cloyne, “An Account of Mrs. Cloyne,” *MM* 24:292, Rogers, 8:22, J. S., “Letter CCCLXX (From Miss J. S. to the Rev. J. Wesley), Weardale, July 24, 1772,” *AM* 8:335 and Yewdal, 18:214.

<sup>220</sup> “The Conversion and Happy Death of a Young Man. The Account is Taken From a Letter Wrote By His Mother, to a Gentleman Near London, August 29, 1797,” *AM* 20:595; Hall, “16:233 and “Some Account of the Life and Death of Ann Taylor,” *AM* 17: 356.



Evil tempers were replaced with righteous ones. Following his entire sanctification Theophilus Oakes quoted scripture, “I can rejoice evermore, and pray without ceasing.” Praying and watching came as naturally as breathing. The temptations no longer had a place in Oake’s heart. Ann Hall’s husband observed that after her deliverance from inward corruption he “never saw her the least moved to anger.”<sup>221</sup>

Some of the richest material for intimate descriptions of what it was like to be entirely sanctified from the subject themselves is contained in letters Methodist women wrote to Wesley. S. Pywell wrote that each deliverance from temptation was further proof that God would give her strength to obey him until her death. In response to Wesley’s inquiry, she reported feeling no pride or anger, “nothing contrary to pure love.” Everything was subordinated to God’s will. She had a witness in herself “that all my ways please him.” Writing Wesley a month later, she described herself as “always sensible” of God’s presence, despite company, hurry or business. Although happy in all she did, fretting over nothing, Pyrell reported sometimes having “lowness of spirits,” possibly because of a brother and sister leaving “the good ways of God.” She was afraid this would prevent her from living as she had done, but took it to God, and left “it all with him.”<sup>222</sup>

P. N. experienced “uninterrupted communion” with God, and “an unbounded desire to do his *whole will*, at *all times*.” Yet she also suffered, which she felt was to prepare her for greater blessings. “I always find after a storm, sweet refreshing showers

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<sup>221</sup> Yewdall, 18:213; James Wood, “A Short Account of Mr. John Pemrith,” *AM* 13:132-3; Cole, 17:30; Theophilus Oakes, “Letter CCXXIX (From Mr. Theophilus Oakes, to Mr. L. C. and Mr. T. B.) Dublin, May 20, 1763,” *AM* 4:216 and D. D., “A Short Account of Mrs. Ann Hall,” *AM* 4:244.

<sup>222</sup> S Pywell, “Letter CCCLVIII (From Mrs. S. Pywell, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Stenton, January 17, 1772,” 115 and “Letter CCCLIX (From the same to the same), Stenton, February 28, 1772,” *AM* 8:115-6.

of grace enlivening all the power of my soul.” S. R. let Wesley know that she always “sees” God, though not always to the same extent, continually offering herself to God, and continually thankful. She was unaware of doing anything simply to please herself, or of feeling any affection, or of saying anything contrary to God's love. Still, S. R. described herself as only having “one grain of true holiness.” M. W.’s heart was dead to “those desires which torment and bewilder mankind.” Her only happiness was in loving Jesus and being made “more and more like unto him. I feel my desires centre in him while my will and affections are given up to him.” Yet, in line with the requisite humility of a purified believer, she reported that when she thought of God’s “infinite perfections, I sink into nothing. I feel myself so faulty, so ignorant, so wavering, so frail, so helpless, so unfaithful; that if I was not continually prevented, upheld, strengthened and purified by free unmerited grace I should become Barren, dead and guilty. Therefore I am constrained to fly to the fountain open for sin and uncleanness.”<sup>223</sup>

A. Loxdale also reflected the humility of the purified. She found nothing in her soul not surrendered to God, and had “the clearest evidence, which neither man nor devil have been able to shake, . . . yet I am sensible I live greatly beneath my privileges; but I hunger and thirst after righteousness, and my soul unceasing pants for God.” J. V. wrote Wesley along the same line. “I feel more and more the need I have in Christ, and

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<sup>223</sup> P. N., “Letter CCCCVII (From Miss P. N. to the Rev. J. Wesley), Cheltenham, Sept. 18, 1773; S. R., “Letter CCXV (From Mrs. S. R. to the Rev. Mr. Wesley), Bristol, Nov. 29, 1757,” *AM* 4:100 and M. W., “Letter CCCCLX (From Mrs. M. W. to the Rev. J. Wesley), Corke, Jan. 17, 1778,” *AM* 11:327.

live in momentary dependence on Him. I see that if Christ leaves me but one moment, I shall be a devil.”<sup>224</sup>

One of the most detailed descriptions of the entirely sanctified state was W. Williams account of Alexander Kennedy. Especially since it was written by someone else following Kennedy’s death, it provides a useful catalog of the characteristics expected of a sanctified Methodist. Kennedy was described as not being merely dead to the world, but as seeing the world as “something only to be dreaded. He was raised above the relish of the its pleasures, and scorned all conformity to it in outward appearance. When you met him in the street, his look, his dress, and the whole deportment, gave you the idea of an inhabitant of another world, passing through this as rapidly as possible.” The intense serious of Kennedy received special attention from Williams.

The weighty concerns of his soul; the awful subjects of religion – death, judgment, eternity, so impressed his heart, that he could not allow himself to trifle. No wanton sallies of wit and humour, were permitted to escape his lips. He was constantly upon his guard against this common, but unsuspected way of offending God, and bringing barrenness and death into the soul. . . It was impossible to be light and trifling, in his presence, without self-condemnation.

Williams praised the steadiness of Kennedy’s experience. Williams described his subject as the epitome of perfected Christianity. “He enjoyed much of God, and his happiness was uninterrupted. . . His experience might be compared to the serene surface of a deep-flowing river, proceeding on, in an even and majestic course, to the

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<sup>224</sup> A. Loxdale, “Letter DXXXVI (From Miss A. Loxdale, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Jan. 28, 1782,” *AM* 13:217 and J. V., “Letter CCCXVI,” 7:52.

others. What greatly contributed to this happy frame of mind was, his ‘living habitually under a sense of the divine presence.’ God was in all his thoughts.”<sup>225</sup>

One wonders exactly how Kennedy’s look, dress, and deportment was otherworldly. Whatever the particulars, he apparently “wore” his new status so obviously that strangers passing him on the street could see that he was aligned with some sect or ideology outside of the mainstream.

### *3.3.5 Watchfulness: Establishing the Second New Status*

To complete the analogy between Methodism’s two transformations, the new status of the entirely sanctified, once confirmed, needed to be further established. Testimony was expected of new believers, particularly in class meetings and love feasts, and the importance of such testimony in establishing the believers in their experience was not emphasized. The need for the entirely sanctified testify to what God had done for them was stressed not just for the benefit of seekers, but particularly for the benefit of those testifying, as they could lose their experience by not testifying. E. Richards, who had been reticent testifying following her new birth, would radically change following her Christian perfection, being no longer reserved speaking of her experience “in Class, Band, or Select Society.” James Hall mused that many who experienced entire sanctification feared speaking of it when given a proper opportunity, out of fear of offence, or from modesty. This often continued until the Spirit was so grieved that they no longer had anything to testify to. “I observed, that then, too frequently, they fell into temptations, and entertained a spirit of prejudice against their brethren, which

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<sup>225</sup> W. Williams, “An Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Alexander Kennedy,” *MM* 23:559-60.

brought . . . deadness into their souls.” Hall therefore decided that no matter what anyone else did, he would glorify God for all he had done for him.<sup>226</sup>

Zechariah Yewdall was tempted to keep his experience to himself, concerned about people’s response to a testimony to entire sanctification from someone justified only three months earlier. Yewdall resisted these temptations. Once Mrs. Cloyne made a similar decision, she found her testifying had become the occasion of internal distress, yet she was undeterred. “But O! what conflicts of mind have I suffered since I spoke of it among the people of God. Frequently it has appeared as if all the powers of darkness were let loose upon me to tear away my confidence.” Sarah Smith retained her cleansing experience for a year before she dared tell anyone of it, so she would not appear boasting and so she could be sure she could measure up to her testimony. God had showed her that telling others was her duty, “when proper occasions occurred.” In a letter to John Pawson, George Clark remarked that the preachers who received entire sanctification and testified to it spoke of it only rarely. Clark hoped that the Lord would enlarge Pawson’s heart and open his mouth “to make known in every place, all the counsel of his Will.”<sup>227</sup>

Watchfulness would be just important for the entirely sanctified as it was for the newly pardoned. One Methodist letter declared, “Tho’ disordered passions and wrong desires may be removed, yet constitutional weakness remain, and to know these, is exceedingly needful, as a means of true humiliation, and to see what work we have to

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<sup>226</sup> Alexander Mather, “An Account of the Life and Death of E. Richardson,” *AM* 13:298 and James Hall, “A Short Account of the Experience of Mr. James Hall,” *AM* 16:233-4

<sup>227</sup> Yewdall, 18:215; Charles Cloyne, “An Account of Mrs. Cloyne,” *MM* 24:292; Smith, 22:19 and George Clark, “From Mr. George Clark, to Mr. John Pawson, London, Sept. 1771,” *MM* 22:354.

do, in order to ‘be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.’” As important as watchfulness was for both the newly pardoned and the entirely sanctified, what the believer was watching for was very different. New believers focused on their evil tempers, keeping them in check so as not to succumb to them and commit sin. Newly-perfected believers often focused on keeping a watch on the wandering of their thoughts, and even on the character of their unconscious thoughts or their dreams. S. R. expressed concern to Wesley over the many “impertinent thoughts” she experienced during prayer, yet such thoughts did not distract her. She was not always able to rid herself of those thoughts. “I think the deeper communion I have with God, the less power Satan will have.” S. R. strove to bring her “reasonings” into “captivity” to Christ. She also reported that her dreams generally had harmless content, such as escaping a danger through faith.<sup>228</sup>

E. M. wrote Wesley of various thoughts that were at times presented to his mind, both spiritual and temporal. E. M.’s watchfulness would “catch them” at their first occurrence, and he would test them by Scripture as to whether they were a help or threat to the soul. If any thoughts were seen as a threat, then E. M. found “a power to abhor and bid them depart.” A tremendous change in the content of dreams had occurred as well. They now included instructing or encouraging others, or in resisting temptation. Victory occurred even in E. M.’s dreams. His dreams were mostly of hearing preaching or talking with fellow believers. Jesus’ presence was often particularly felt during these dream meetings.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> “From Miss Thornton, to Miss \*\*\*\*,” *MM* 23:428 and S. R., “Letter CCXXVII (From Mrs. S. R. to the Rev. Mr. Wesley), Dec. 20, 1757,” *AM* 4:213.

<sup>229</sup> E. M., Letter CCLXX (From Mrs. E. M. to the Rev. Mr. Wesley.), Potto, Dec. 23, 1764, *AM* 6:45.

A. B. informed Wesley that keeping her heart from the world while she was in it “required much inward labour.” Several weeks later she wrote that more than ever she could see how the classes, bands and Love-feasts are designed “to increase our union with God and each other.” She was tempted when she was with someone “peculiarly devoted to God,” Satan would present to her mind something pleasant, disturbing her conversation which she might benefit from, distracting her, although she would not give in to dwelling on the pleasant idea. Some of the entirely sanctified faced other spiritual challenges than wandering thoughts. A. L. expressed uncertainty to Wesley on knowing for sure whether she was growing in grace. She was aware of neither progress nor “decay,” yet she believed that no one can be “standing still, that if we do not gain, we lose ground.” Temptation was still a fact of life, even after entire sanctification. Thornton wrote a friend that the “attacks of satan” were to deceive her into thinking she was not saved from sin because she had too little faith, love and joy, that she was too weak “in the Lord.” Her greatest helps were “faith, prayer and self examination,” and, when unable to talk with other Christians or to use the “outward” means of grace, the “daily provisions.”<sup>230</sup>

Following Wesley’s previously-mentioned dictum that “there is no such height or strength of holiness as it is impossible to fall from,” falling was as real a possibility for the entirely sanctified as it was for the partially sanctified. Wesley and his successors were willing to include in the *AM* accounts of the entirely sanctified falling.

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<sup>230</sup> A. B., Letter CCCXCI (From Miss A. B. to the Rev. J. Wesley), Witney, Feb. 22, 1773,” *AM* 9: 172; A. B., “Letter CCCXCV (From Miss A. B. to the Rev. J. Wesley) Witney, April 16, 1773,” *AM* 9:284-5; A. L., Letter CCCXIX (From Miss A. L. to the Rev. J. Wesley), Shrewsbury, July 10, 1786,” *AM* 9:679 and J. Thornton, “From Miss J. Thornton, to a Young Lady,” *MM* 22:256-7.

Such accounts served as cautionary tales. This was why *AM* distinguished between full sanctification, which is a witness to what has already been done in one's soul, and the full assurance of salvation, which many fully sanctified did not have, as it is a witness to what will happen in the future, that one would retain the experience of full sanctification until death. Some months after receiving "the witness of full sanctification," P. Newman thought she had become careless, and was going to tell a friend of her deficiency, but she thought that Jesus could make up any deficiency, and went to pray.<sup>231</sup>

Wesley was ambivalent to the possibility of full assurance, likely because it could easily lead to a stillness such as was taught by the Fetter-Lane Moravians. G. C. wrote of personally witnessing events surrounding a large number of Methodists in London in 1760-1761 who experienced entire sanctification. At first it was believed that those who had experienced full cleansing could not fall, but this was soon found to be false. Some felt that they were more holy than Adam and Eve before their fall, standing on a better foundation, that all they said and did fulfilled the requirement on God's law completely. They were convinced that they had power to heal, and attempted to heal the blind and raise the dead. They felt their ministers could not teach them, and two hundred "left the weaker to defend themselves." Many others who claimed the experience abandoned it because of the reputation of the others who had claimed it. Following this disruption, the work in London was being somewhat revived

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<sup>231</sup> A. M., "From Mr. M\*\*\*\*, to a Friend, Wakefield, October 27, 1788," *MM* 21:146 and P. Newman, "Letter CCCLXXV (From Mrs. P. Newman, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Chehenham, August 23, 1772," *AM* 8:437. Some of the entirely sanctified did indeed testify to full assurance of salvation, having no doubt of being "sealed to the day of redemption." C. B., "Letter CCCXCVII (From Mrs. C. M. to the J. Wesley), May 12, 1773," *AM* 9:341-2.



at the time of G. C.'s writing in 1790. The difference with these later entirely-sanctified Methodists was that God "gives them a clear, lively sense of this great salvation, which he confirms within them day by day by the power of his Spirit, and establishes them in the true knowledge of the nature of the work he has wrought in them, so that they are fully satisfied that he hath cleansed them from all unrighteousness." The difference was because, "in order more firmly to secure them . . . , he gives them a continual deep experimental sense of their own poverty. And this he sometimes by the appearance of his withdrawing, for a little season." He also shows how all their spiritual works are "defective," so they rely only on God's merits. "At the time it was delivered from inbred sin, [the soul] did not know the defects that sin had left. But the Lord by degrees makes the soul acquainted with it, and this the more firmly to unite it to himself, and save from the snare of the devil."<sup>232</sup>

Zechariah Yewdall also addressed the problem of some Methodist claimants to entire sanctification who did not measure up to Wesley's standards. Yewdall mentioned that several people professed entire sanctification, but after a while, they "fell into diverse temptations, and suffered great loss." Yewdall felt sure of the testimony of some who claimed entire sanctification, so much so that he could not discredit them "unless I were to give up my reason and understanding," yet, undoubtedly, some of them did later fall away. Some fell due to ignorance, and some ended their lives unfaithful to the grace in which they had received entire sanctification. A few thought they could no longer sin, which led them to unwatchfulness, while others

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<sup>232</sup> G. C., "Thoughts on Sanctification," *AM* 13:42-45.

supposed they had received a “a stock of grace, once for all,” and so did not see a need for “diligent applications to the fountain of life for fresh supplies.” Yewdall was kept from this himself, being allowed to see his own “ignorance, foolishness, and mental infirmities.” His perception of being “surrounded by an evil world and the tempting fiend, and that my life must be a continual warfare until it is finished,” allowed him to maintain his experience.<sup>233</sup> Yewdall’s understanding of his Christian perfection illustrated the role of self deprecation in Methodist experience.

Some theorized that congenital dispositions of one’s personality could make retention of entire sanctification difficult. Sarah Smith, having many trials and a serious “nervous disorder,” began to doubt whether she had been perfected in love, and, having “reasoned with the enemy,” she gave in to unbelief and for two years was without the witness of entire sanctification. She “walked in heaviness.” At a Love-feast the preacher addressed those whose “whole natural disposition caused them to go mourning through deep waters.” These words came so powerfully to her heart that she could hardly keep from “crying aloud.”<sup>234</sup>

Some fell for less obvious reasons. Ruth Tillotson sought and experienced Christian perfection, and enjoyed it for three years, but despite “using skillfully the shield of faith” against temptations, “the subtile [*sic*] tempter at last got an advantage over her, by insinuating into her mind evil thoughts of an absent person, without sufficient proof.” Smith immediately “sustained great loss,” yet she “continued very circumspect in her family, just in her dealings and diligent in all means of grace. She

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<sup>233</sup> Yewdall, 18: 214-5.

<sup>234</sup> Smith, 22:67.

mourned, wept, and was at times refreshed with lively hopes that the Lord would again heal her backslidings.” In her final illness she “began to cry very earnestly for full sanctification, and Jacob like, wrestled till she prevailed.”<sup>235</sup>

Clearly early Victor Turner’s theory of ritual transformation lends itself well as a tool to examine early Methodism. Just as Turner’s work helps to clarify the limits of seventeenth-century Puritan system of transformation, with its tendency to confuse the moment of faith with assurance, so Turner’s theory helps elucidate the steps of Wesleyan transformation a century later. Applying these concepts to a vast array of narratives in the *AM*, the roles of awakening, conviction, faith for pardon, assurance of pardon, conviction of inward sin, faith for entire sanctification and the assurance of entire sanctification in the transformation process have been clarified. Scholars have generally missed how for early Methodists conviction was often experienced as a crisis in and of itself, a crisis some even actively sought for. Awakening and conviction were pre-liminal, setting the stage for a dramatic emotional switch from despair and self-loathing to joy and a sense of purpose. While such moments have often been studied, less attention has been given to the process of how pardon and entire sanctification were often merely the beginning of a very permanent change in nearly every aspect of their lives. Often missed as well has been just how prominent and significant various forms of perceived supernatural communication were in the exercises of faith by early Methodists. These forms of communication spurred on the crises of transformation, the *limen*. Methodist studies have often stressed the post-liminal stage, discussing how

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<sup>235</sup> R. Miller, “An Account of the Conversion and Happy Death of Mrs. Ruth Tillitson, of Skircoat-Green, Near Halifax, Yorkshire, By Mr. Miller,” *MM* 22:584-5.

communal structures such as class meetings, love-feasts and quarterly meetings helped solidify the commitments of the newly pardoned or entirely sanctified. However, these can all be seen as parts of a whole within the framework of ritual transformation and through the use of well-established narrative strategies.

The use of the rites-of-passage construct can also enrich the study of the transatlantic context of early Methodism. This construct can supply a core structure that Methodism applied in North America and the West Indies, and clarify how Methodism specifically applied its methods and practices in each of these locations, and why. The next chapter examines Methodism's continued expansion, in the new revivals in Yorkshire, in North America and in the West Indies. The phenomenon of the (somewhat) new form of revivalism in Yorkshire led to a struggle over proper behavior during services, an issue that was also prominent in the increasing number of revivals in North America. These revivals were part of the larger movement later termed the Second Great Awakening, and were the subject of intense interest to the readers of the *AM*. Reports from several Presbyterian ministers on the distinctive new method of the Second Great Awakening, the camp meeting, provide a further point of reference. The issue of race is prominent both in North American reports and especially in West Indian reports, supplying more contexts to examine the application of the transformation process.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODIST EXPANSION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

As the *AM* entered its third decade, Methodism was experiencing tremendous growth in the transatlantic world. The Methodist Episcopal Church, the only separate Methodist denomination ever approved of by Wesley himself, weathered the chaos of the American Revolution to begin rapid growth, especially in the southern states, under the firm leadership of Francis Asbury. Missions in the Caribbean also prospered under Asbury's former fellow bishop, Thomas Coke, as more and more missionaries were sent to an increasing number of islands. The *AM* happily reported all of this, often in great detail. As it did so, that magazine helped preserve the Wesleyan system of transformation, yet also presented slight variations of that system. The application of this system in different cultures, nations and races would lead to challenges of phenomena that had been common responses to Wesley's early preaching.

John Wesley's approach to religious development strongly relied on a synergism between God's supernatural work upon a person, and that person's efforts to cooperate with that work.<sup>236</sup> The early Methodist understanding of the supernatural led them to

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<sup>236</sup> For a further discussion of Wesley's synergism, and some early forms of synergism that influenced him, see John G. Merritt "‘Dialogue’ Within a Tradition: John Wesley and Gregory of Nyssa Discuss Christian Perfection" *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 22:2 (Fall 1987): 92-116.

expect supernatural communication and thus to interpret experiences as supernatural communication. Such a view of the supernatural also reinforced both the acceptance of the Methodist teaching central to the transformation process and the certainty achieved when a seeker received the witness to a transformation. Wesley had provided a rather detailed process for cooperation with God's supernatural work, including "works meet unto repentance" for the awakened, participation in class meetings, attendance of preaching services; reading of scripture and other appropriate material, prayer and appropriate Christian conversation. To this list was added participation in bands for those who experienced the new birth, and in the select society for those experiencing entire sanctification. Methodist structures were carefully designed, and reworked when necessary, to facilitate this synergism. Re-examination of the Methodist synergistic process was evident from several articles of the *AM* which addressed the seemingly new phenomena occurring within revivals of the increasingly mature Methodism of Great Britain. Wesleyan synergism also was re-examined in the coverage of the revivals in the Americas, especially in the racially charged settings of the southern United States and the West Indies.

#### 4.1 New Revivals in British Methodism

By the time of the first issue of the *AM* in January, 1778, Methodism was no longer primarily known for drawing crowds of thousands gathering outdoors to hear Methodist preaching, with listeners frequently crying out, fainting or going into convulsions. Such scenes still occurred, but by 1778 Methodist meetings occurred much more frequently inside their own buildings. In the 1790s, the issue of revivals

with dramatic responses would once again take center stage. Early Methodism often shared the tensions, ambiguities and struggles of its founder. Wesley was plunged into field preaching almost against his will shortly after Aldersgate and his subsequent tour of pietists in Germany. George Whitefield, former “Holy Club” member under Wesley’s leadership in Oxford, was then (1739) on the cutting edge of the beginning of the First Great Awakening, and persuaded Wesley to take over some of Whitefield’s field preaching. As distasteful as this practice was to Wesley, who was still working out the implications of his Aldersgate experience, he was no more comfortable with the dramatic responses of some of his listeners. Wesley wrote of this struggle in his journal.

I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of [p]reaching in the fields, . . . having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church.<sup>237</sup>

Yet the pattern of these meetings provided an excellent vehicle for the transformations Wesley would seek, even as he was fine-tuning his understanding of the transformation process itself.

Thence I went to Baldwin-Street, and expounded, as it came in course, the fourth chapter of the Acts. We then called upon God to confirm his word. Immediately one that stood by (to our no small surprise) cried out aloud, with the utmost vehemence, even as in the agonies of death. But we continued in prayer, till “a new song was put in her mouth, a thanksgiving unto our God.” Soon after, two other persons (well known in this place, as laboring to live in all good conscience towards all men) were seized with strong pain, and constrained to “roar for the disquietness of their heart.” But it was not long before they likewise burst forth into praise to God their Savior. The last who called upon God as out of the belly of hell, was I—  
— E——, a stranger in Bristol. And in a short space he also was

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<sup>237</sup> *Works* 1:202.

overwhelmed with joy and love, knowing that God had healed his backslidings. So many living witnesses hath God given that his hand is still “stretched out to heal,” and that “signs and wonders are even now wrought by his holy child Jesus.”<sup>238</sup>

This would be an oft-repeated scene for Wesley, and for many of his preachers. Listeners who might have only been vaguely curious were drawn quickly into the dual prerequisites of Wesleyan transformation, assent to the system of beliefs and the experience of conviction. For some this in itself was a radical shift in their lives, yet the same meetings often would result in an entrance into the first liminal state – the experience of pardon. Whether it was the novelty of field preaching, or the power of group dynamics, or the form of supernatural power that Methodists believed it to be, field meetings in mid-eighteenth century Britain proved to be highly effective settings for dramatic conviction and new birth.

Reports of field preaching, or of mass demonstrative responses to preaching, were rare in the first years of the *AM*. Usually rather isolated cases were provided, where such behavior was displayed by the subject of a narrative, and as often as not the demonstration occurred outside of a preaching service. The first detailed account of widespread demonstrations at preaching services was provided in the November, 1795 issue by a highly respected Methodist preacher and a favorite of Wesley, Alexander Mather. Mather wrote of his response to a revival at West Riding in Yorkshire, where hundreds, or perhaps even thousands, were awakened and converted. Mather's

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<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-5.



congregation was in Hull, in a different part of Yorkshire. He and his congregation decided to pray for such a revival at Hull “with ardent importunity.”<sup>239</sup>

Mather complained that when “awakening power” was evident in other places, “a too-anxious attachment to decorum and order and consequently a strong aversion to loud lamentations and cries, especially in the public congregation,” would result in resistance. This resistance ceased in Mather's society at the Christmas love feasts, “and in some degree we were willing to let God work upon the minds of the people, which way he pleased, altho.' we should incur the disagreeable reproach of being a counted enthusiasts.” One person at that meeting in great distress cried out loudly and was soon delivered. Many began to pray, and it was generally expected that God would soon answer their prayers. From that time, every opportunity was taken for meeting together to publicly pray, and they were encouraged in this “by an accession of serious hearers, and satisfaction in manifested on these occasions.”<sup>240</sup>

The issue of more than one person praying or speaking at once was introduced by Mather, but it would be a common concern in these revivals as well as in the revivals in the United States several years later. Mather's meetings occasioned two or three people praying at the same time in different parts of the chapel. Some encouraged the distressed, while others praised God for deliverance. Mather insisted that,

There was nothing irrational or unscriptural in these meetings. It is perfectly natural for sinners who were overwhelmed with a sense of their sin and misery, to cry out for help to him who is mighty to save; and on some occasions, to be inattentive to every surrounding object.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> A Mather “Letter from Mr. A Mather, Giving an Account of the Late Revival of Religion in Hull, Yorkshire,” *AM* 17:603.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 603-4.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 604.

In the evening after the initial prayer meeting many who “were groaning for redemption,” went to the vestry, and prayed for several hours. About twelve of them found peace. The work went on this way for two weeks. In every meeting ten or twelve people would experience pardon after great distress. In the mornings Mather was generally working and visiting those people who had recently experienced pardon, adding them to the society within a few days. “The class meetings were very lively and frequently four or five persons were set at liberty every time they met.”<sup>242</sup>

Mather’s report included several elements which were common features when reporting revivals, both in Great Britain and the United States, and, in the latter case, by both Methodist and Presbyterian participants. The meetings exhibited more complex patterns of seemingly spontaneous responses that would be repeated often. The distressed would fall or cry out, usually with great volume and intensity. People would pray for them, often out loud, while there might be a similar scene in another part of the meeting. The distressed would often experience pardon in the same meeting they had become distressed in, or at a later meeting. Usually those delivered from their distress would immediately offer praises every bit as loud as their previous outcries of distress. In addition to all this action and noise someone was usually trying to preach, if the demonstrations had begun early enough in the meeting. For example, Matthew Lowes wrote of frequently having to stop his discourse because of “loud outcries.”<sup>243</sup> The meetings, or the prayer gatherings before or after a meeting, often lasted for many

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 604-5.

<sup>243</sup> Matthew Lowes, “The Life of Matthew Lowes of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Extracted from His Own Narrative,” *AM* 18:526.

hours. Those reporting the events were generally careful to note how many joined the society, and usually some approximation of the number of convicted and the number of converted was offered as well.

The thread of Mather's narrative was picked up in the next issue (December, 1795), including his analysis of the decline of revivals. While since May there had been "many refreshing seasons," still there had not been so many people under such a deep conviction, nor quite so many clear conversions. "It is difficult, tho', perhaps, not impossible, to assign the reason of this decline." Those who study revivals, according to Mather, know that it is impossible to prevent irregularities from occurring, "and that even an attempt to remove some inconveniences, at such a season, is too frequently succeeded by an interruption of that fervency of spirit, and that lively exercise of faith and hope, which are so necessary for facilitating the increase in progress of the work." Also, some from other denominations maintained that the work could not be of God because it was too sudden and too irregular. Mather concluded that enough people listened to these complaints to decrease "the ardor of those who were zealous for the cause of God, and discourage others who were seeking salvation."<sup>244</sup> Rarely were accounts given of revivals without including details on opposition to the revival, along with an admission by the author that some events in the revival genuinely were objectionable. The presence of opposition, as noted above, generally strengthened the transformation process.

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 649-50.

Two sets of tensions were at work. First, for Methodist liminality to be at its most successful, it had to break past the restraints of established religion without becoming threatening to society at large and thus undercut mass appeal. As Methodism experienced its sixth decade, some feared that Methodism was becoming too staid, and needed refreshing. As Methodism had always been fairly conservative for a reform movement, even some longtime Methodists feared the apparent changes of the new revivals. In terms of liminality, the indoor re-creation of transformation events that decades before had occurred in outdoor meetings actually resulted in a more controlled process. The very complaints and divisions on the subject did not reflect greater chaos than earlier Methodism; rather, they reflected more self-conscious communal controls. To be effective, however, sufficient agreement had to be reached within the community on just how to respond to the displays of intense emotion.

The next year (1796), the *AM* published a 1794 letter from John Moon to Thomas Coke which described another revival. Moon wrote of a service in which a number of listeners were “afflicted.” At one point, one of the local preachers led the congregation in a hymn and prayed. “And now the power of God in wonderful manner filled the place. The cries of the distressed instantly broke out like a clap of thunder, from every part of the chapel, and the person’s voice who was engaged in prayer, though exceeding loud, could no longer be heard.” Once again, here is the cacophony that could be so distressing and theologically challenging to early Methodists, yet was such a fertile ground for producing more of them. Within a few minutes of the local preachers working with the afflicted, it was reported that seventeen persons had “found

peace.” That next night between seven and eight, during a time of prayer together, “the flame broke out again; and continued bearing down everything before it, till near one in the morning. The cries of the people were very loud, and . . . there were many unconcerned spectators present.” Using a stock phrase referring to God granting awakenings and conversions, the author wrote that God was “graciously present, both to wound and to heal.”<sup>245</sup>

This particular “outpouring of the Spirit” was largely among the “young persons.” Children aged ten to twelve were “so violently agitated, and so earnestly engaged to obtain mercy” that it was “marvelous to behold.” They were sometimes “sunk in the deepest distress, and crying out under the bitterest of anguish; yet when the Comforter came, their faces shone with holy joy, and their eyes sparkled with divine rapture!” This success with children and youth would be noted by observers of other revivals, although children and youth were not generally the main body of those affected. As seen in Chapter Two, dramatic spiritual exercises and transformation of youth were also of great interest to Puritans. This pattern is observable in many religious movements, such as the conversion of Huron Indians to Catholicism in New France over a century earlier.<sup>246</sup>

During the three days described by the letter, at least one hundred people were converted. This process was still continuing at the writing of the letter. Moon mentioned a recent band meeting, lasting from 9 p.m. until 1 a.m., at which four or five

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<sup>245</sup> John Moon, “Letter from Mr. Moon, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, Sheffield, Aug. 12, 1794,” *AM* 18:416-17.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 417-8. More on the impact of Christianization on Huron youth can be found in Karen Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 210-4.

people experienced entire sanctification. This second transformation, as well as the setting of the specific smaller meetings of a class, band or select society, so unique to Methodism, provided even more opportunity for mass liminality. Moon wrote that the young boys and girls were having prayer meetings among themselves, and one group of boys met every evening in a field when the weather was good, forming a circle and praying for each other, “till they have some signal answer of divine approbation. In this meeting, simple as it may appear to some, two or three have sometimes been set at liberty before they parted.”<sup>247</sup> The success of Wesleyan transformations, and of this revivalistic context for the transformations, was due in part on its reproducibility, whether it was by young children, or in vastly different regions and cultures.

The next issue contained an installment of Zechariah Yewdall’s experience in which he described a “great revival.” Yewdall felt obliged to take issue with some of the demonstrations he had witnessed.

It cannot be doubted, but that in some places there has been a considerable degree of irregularity and apparent confusion in the meetings. . . The Lord gave them such a discovery of their vileness and sinfulness, and the dangers they were in of being miserable forever, if they died in that wretched state, they continued in prayer frequently to midnight, and sometimes till four or five o'clock in the morning.<sup>248</sup>

Attributing such excesses to seekers being overwhelmed with their own sinfulness proved a useful way to acknowledge irregularities, yet partially excused in this way, by. Mather had used a similar defense, and others would follow with the same line of argument.

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<sup>247</sup> Moon 418.

<sup>248</sup> Yewdall, 18:475.

Despite Yewdall's partial defense of irregularities, his concerns ran deep. He wrote that it was not easy to dismiss the meetings, especially when "ears were assailed by the cries of those who in the bitterness of anguish of their minds were imploring help." However, Yewdall was also concerned that the "careless and uninterested spectators, who came to these meetings out of curiosity," were most offended by seeing different people praying at the same time, praising God or encouraging the "distressed" to look to God. Apparently, the editor took exception to this comment, as he added a footnote.<sup>249</sup> This was first time that the editor would express lengthy disagreement with an opinion expressed in a narrative. When Wesley was editor he simply removed or changed anything he found inappropriate, but apparently his successor, George Story, was not comfortable following that particular example of his esteemed predecessor.

Story's footnote mentioned the recent revival meetings in northern England, especially Yorkshire, and that these meetings gave "great offense" not only to non-Christians, but also to "pious, dispassionate professors." Story observed that "it is no sign that a Work is not the Work of the Spirit of God that it is carried on in such a way as the same spirit heretofore has not been wont to carry on his Work." Scripture itself leads us to believe that God will be doing new things, things never seen before. The work was not to be judged on the basis of

the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength. The influence the minds of persons are under, is not to be judged of one way or the other, whether it be from the Spirit of God or no, by such effects on the body: and the reason is, because the Scripture nowhere gives us any such rule.

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 475-6, and editorial footnote.

Story insisted that the existence of such bodily displays did not prove that the revival was of God or not of God. Nor does the absence of such displays prove that the revival was of God or not of God. Story's acceptance of God doing new things directly contradicted Wesley's beliefs. Story's approach otherwise reflected such a delicate theological and pragmatic balance that it could have come from Wesley himself. It would regularly be applied by succeeding generations of Methodists.<sup>250</sup> As seen below, whereas British Methodists and United States Presbyterians initially seemed instinctively to distrust revivals with such physical displays, leaders and laypeople alike in the Methodist Episcopal Church had a tendency early on to interpret such displays as the powerful work of God.

The argument of Mather and Yewdall that even irregular demonstrations seem a natural response of sinners persuaded of their actual danger was expanded by Story into a much more whole-hearted defense of such demonstrations. "The misery of hell is so dreadful, and eternity so vast, and if the person should have a clear apprehension of that misery as it is, it would be more than his feeble frame could bear; and especially, if at the same time he saw himself in great danger of it." Thus far the argument is rather standard, but Story proceeded to paint a vivid picture worthy of Jonathan Edwards, and reminiscent of numerous visions recorded over previous years in the narratives of the *AM*.

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<sup>250</sup> Editorial footnote to Yewdall, 476-7. One later example of the application of this principle to physical demonstrations can be seen in the Nazarite revivals in Illinois and New York in the 1850's, leading to the formation of the Free Methodist Church. See Liam Iwig-O'Byrne, "A Progression of Methodist Radicalism: An Examination of the History and Ethos of the First Sixty Years of the Nazarites and Their Heirs (1855-1915) in Their Social and Religious Context," (M.Div. Thesis, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1993).



If we should suppose that a person saw himself over a pit, full of fierce and growing glowing flames, by a thread that he knew to be very weak, and not sufficient alone to bear his weight, . . . would not, he be ready to cry out in such circumstances? How much more those that see themselves in this manner, hanging over an infinitely more dreadful pit.”

Story reasoned that it would be strange if such dramatic responses were *not* given by those so affected by the invisible realm.<sup>251</sup> The unwritten argument was that the *AM* had recorded just such responses by narrative subjects many times with nothing but full approval. This was the experience of many luminaries of early Methodism already eulogized on the pages of the magazine.

Delving still deeper, Story observed that thinking of the invisible requires some level of imagination. His reasoning seems to apply equally well to the visions, dreams and sounds experienced individually in many narratives. No one can think of the things of Christ, or “of another world, without imaginary ideas, attending his meditations.”

Indeed,

the more engaged the mind is, the more lively and strong willed the imaginary idea ordinarily be; especially when the contemplation is attended with anything of surprise. As when the view a person has is new, and takes strong hold of the passions, either fear or joy; and when the change is sudden, from a contrary extreme, as from that which was extremely dreadful, to that which is extremely delightful. And it is no wonder that many persons do not well distinguish between that which is imaginary, and that which is intellectual and spiritual; and that they are apt to lay too much weight on the imaginary part, and are most ready to speak of that in the account they give of their experiences, especially persons of less understanding.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Editorial footnote to Yewdall 477-8. Pawson here used language and imagery from Jonathan Edward’s famous sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, without directly quoting it.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 478.

From this perspective, it may well be beyond the scope of subjects or their religious leaders to sort through what is imagination inspired by spiritual realities, and what is genuinely supernatural. However, it also was not essential to know which category to put a specific experience. The experience was still legitimate and significant, yet should not be treated as authoritative divine revelation. Rather, it was a response to authoritative revelation, the gospel message. Displaying a hint of caution, Story still believed that people should try to restrain such manifestations “in the time of the solemn worship.” However, if God chooses to convict them so they cannot help such manifestations, “even to the interrupting, and breaking out those public means they were attending,” this should not be deemed mere “confusion, or an unhappy interruption; any more than if a companies should meet in a field to pray for rain, and should be broken off from the exercise by a plentiful shower.” Thus, to the balanced *principle* that neither the presence nor the absence of physical displays demonstrated either the approval or disapproval of God, was added the balanced *policy*, that such displays should neither be sought nor shunned.<sup>253</sup>

The very next issue contains a second footnote, also presumably by Story, addressing the causes of dramatic exercises found within the mind of the distressed. Here Story acknowledged that too much stress had often been laid on “sudden impressions on the mind,” especially by persons whose behavior did not demonstrate that they were genuinely converted. Story, while suggesting reasonable caution, still recommended an openness to instances

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 478-9.

where consolatory texts of Scripture are powerfully suggested to a mind oppressed with a sense of sin and demerit, and anxiously waiting for pardon and deliverance; and we see not only immediate tranquility and joy succeed to sorrow and distress, but likewise a continuation of these effects; the person still relying on the promises of God in Christ, at length enabled to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, fearing no evil, but enjoying the peace of mind which passes all understanding: there is, surely, in such a case, sufficient reason to believe, that the first impression was the work of God, and not a delusion.

Here again was a very practical, experienced-based approach that reminds one of Wesley. If such seemingly irregular displays result over a consistently Christian life over time, then, to Story, it was logical to assume the perceptions of that person under distress were genuinely of God, and any demonstrations at such a time ceased to be problematic. Story asked whether the “all-powerful savior,” who “calmed the stormy waters,” could not just as easily and instantly “speak peace” to the distressed with a single text of Scripture, “or even one word of the sacred writings. And who dared to restrict the operations of his spirit? Or prescribe the manner in which they shall be comforted?”<sup>254</sup>

The next year (1797), *AM* published James Wood’s account of James Chimley, which echoed Story’s pragmatic argument in support of some demonstrations. In examining the reaction of older Methodists to the new revival, Wood observed what he called “a double extreme.” Some of these older members of the society had been believers for a long time, and “evidenced living faith by the sure fruit which it produces.” Still, these older members had a great deal of trouble in believing that there was anything genuine “in the sorrows and joys of those” who have had their

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<sup>254</sup> Editorial footnote to H. R., “Some Account of the Latter Life of Mrs. Susanna Dunkerton, in a Letter to a Friend, Chesham, Bucks, August, 28, 1795,” 19:87.

experiences in meetings with such noise and confusion, as had apparently marked the revival. Others tended to simply accept everything as genuine, that all who mourned and then rejoiced were truly converted.

It seems probable, that the truth lies betwixt these; and therefore for any person to oppose everything that is irregular, or borders on what some may call confusion; or to condemn all in the lump, seems to be not only far from the spirit of the Christian, but even below the conduct of a candid jew [*sic*]. Acts v. 38-9. And to suppose that everyone who professes a change of heart, is really converted to God, is more than the Bible calls us to believe.

Wood used the example of James Chimley as “one proof, and there are hundreds in this circuit that who have been gathered into Society in this revival, whose conduct is every way an ornament to their profession.”<sup>255</sup> Naturally, such arguments would be difficult for any early Methodist to resist.

One might wonder why there would be any resistance to behaviors at least occasionally present in Methodism from its beginnings sixty years earlier. The answer also lay in Methodist history, for some of Wesley’s favorite cohorts, consummate revivalists, became such embarrassing problems for Wesley that he felt compelled to expel them. In 1799 a “Well Wisher in Zion” wrote in defense of the revival in “Yorkshire, Lancashire, and several other parts of this nation,” as some were comparing this revival to the 1761 London revival under George Bell. Such critics referred to Wesley’s *Journal* to show the need to stop the current prayer meetings. The author noted that much good was done at first by the 1761 revival, and that many were genuinely converted, or had the “work of Grace deepened.” The disgrace arose from

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<sup>255</sup> “The Holy Life, and Happy Death of James Chimley of Riverbridge, near Howden, in Yorkshire, Who Died April 20, 1795, in the 14th Year of His Age,” *AM* 19:139-40.

some of the leaders “giving way to dreams, visions, and *Revelations from the Lord*; whereby many were led astray.” The people were taught to have no confidence in the preachers. Such events were not occurring in the present revival.<sup>256</sup> Here the concerns of those Methodist suspicions are validated, on the one hand, because Methodism had been damaged by such movements going astray, yet challenged on the other, demonstrating that the elements so dangerous in revivals such as Bell’s were simply not present in Yorkshire. The “Well Wisher” outlined what dangers could arise from illegitimate religious exercises. It seems obvious that it was dangerous to have meetings disrupted by displays arising from what is falsely imagined to be from God, but this author explained what that danger actually was. Experience of what is, or is perceived to be, supernatural is subject to the dual test of scripture and practical results. If what is perceived and what results from it did not violate scripture, but rather conformed to it, leading to a genuinely holy life, then all is well. If not, then all is very, very wrong!

The “Well-Wisher” further explained demonstrations by fitting them within Wesley’s scheme of spiritual transformation in a very detailed fashion. In the beginning of a revival, he explained, God’s influence is very strong, with many experiencing conviction and/or becoming converted in a few days, although most of the converts had previously had their understanding “enlightened, altho’ their consciences were not

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<sup>256</sup> A Well Wisher in Zion, “Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in the Prayer-Meetings,” *MM* 21:240-1. For more detailed information on Wesley’s response to the 1761 revivals and their perceived excesses, see Stephen Gunter, *The Limits of Love Divine: John Wesley’s Response to Antinomianism and Enthusiasm* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989). Gunter points out that Wesley was criticized by fellow Methodists at the time and even after his death for not responding more quickly and decisively to the threat Bell and his supporters were perceived to be.

sufficiently alarmed to urge them to lay hold on eternal life.” Then, when God’s power was “remarkably present,” they earnestly cried for mercy, and soon were “enabled” to rejoice. Most of these converts remained steady and zealous. Soon many curious people were drawn to the meetings, becoming awakened and pardoned in the same meeting. As these people had not previously had their understandings “informed,” they were “ignorant of satan’s devices.” That very evening they might rejoin their ungodly friends and relatives and be “drawn back into their former darkness and hardness of heart,” seldom to be seen among the people again. However, there were others who “continue steadfast to this day.”<sup>257</sup> Thus a legitimate process for the initiated and informed becomes highly problematic for the newcomer. This concern over newcomers’ perceptions and responses would be a recurrent issue in many of the revivals.

This author’s solution involved some detailed advice for conducting meetings.

He suggested beginning the meeting with

a few verses, and solemn prayer. Then let two or three pray in succession, short and lively, while the congregation continued on their knees. If any persons are perceived to be in distress, some one should, in a low voice, enquire into their state; and if they be earnestly seeking pardon, or holiness, after giving them proper advice, and suitable encouragement to look upon Jesus in faith, and to venture their souls wholly upon him, let one pray for them, but not in too loud a manner; and others likewise should assist by prayer and animating exhortations, till the blessing of GOD descends upon the penitent mourners. In a little time, probably, there may be several companies engaged in the same manner, in different parts of the meeting; and while they are thus employed, a proper person should preside in the meeting, and occasionally address the congregation at large, intermixing hymns proper for the occasion, in which all may join, except those who are praying with the distressed. When there is good reason to

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 242-3.

believe that any of the mourners have found divine consolation, the person who was conduct the meeting should be made acquainted with it, in order that he may inform the congregation, when all will unite in praising GOD for his mercy and grace. Attention to these circumstances will conduce to keep the people in their places, the different parties may go quietly on with those that are in distress, and all the congregation will be encouraged to persevere in prayer and thanksgiving.<sup>258</sup>

To a large extent this pattern was already being followed and would continue to be. The author also suggested getting the names and addresses of those who found peace, either finding them a class to join or calling on them to invite them to an appropriate meeting. Those responsible for prayer meetings were to be sure that those leading in prayer were living exemplary lives. They were to avoid relying on only one person too much for leading in prayer. Following a meeting where many are “set at liberty,” the joy experienced can be an occasion for “lightness of spirit, except we guard very much against it.” This was important because any levity would deprive the congregation “of the solemn sense of the divine presence.” Even after the meetings, care must be taken, “for much good has been lost, and much evil arisen, from several persons collecting together at the door, or in the street, and in a trifling manner conversing about what has been done in the meeting, instead of retiring home, and praying earnestly to the Lord, that the good which has been done, may be lasting.”<sup>259</sup> One begins to see how apt the name “*Methodist*” was!

This level of concern for solemnity was a common theme. A high form of praise of a specific event was how solemn an occasion it was, or how solemn the response to it was. Ritual transformation requires an sense of drama at sharp odds with

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 244.

the mundane feel of the every-day, outside world. A different set of emotions and a much higher level of intensity were necessary. In describing events leading to another revival, Robert Miller described this solemn expectancy in a surprising and vivid way. “I expected the loud peal of thunder which shook the house I was in to the foundation, would strike me dead; and my conviction of the Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence and Justice of GOD, was so great, that I was afraid his thunder bolts would have executed vengeance upon me!”<sup>260</sup>

In 1801, seven years after his earlier descriptions of the Hull revival, Mather’s description of revivals within his circuits, not only in Hull (1791-1794), but also in Manchester (1794-1797) and Leeds (1797) was posthumously printed in the *MM*. Mather explained that since many were awakened and pardoned in a short space of time, these revivals did include some “irregularities, and much noise and confusion.” Mather described in detail the irregularities of these newer revivals.

On such occasions, indeed, there are never wanting headstrong and imprudent persons, who have far more zeal than discretion. These would take the work out of the hands of God into their own, and drive the people forward much faster than they can go, and persuade them to profess faith before their judgment is rightly informed concerning the nature of faith, or their conscience awakened to a sense of sin; and by so doing, ruin the work of God. These hot-headed persons generally look upon all to be gold which glitters, and account all to be enemies to the work of God, who are not as rash and as ignorant as themselves.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Robert Miller, “Memoirs of the Principal Occurrences Which Have Passed in the Seven and Thirty Years Experience of Robert Miller, Minister of the Gospel,” *MM* 24:9. Such perceptions and language, along with the physical demonstrations, would continue to leave Methodism open to charges of fanaticism. One anonymous author took the novel tack of defining fanaticism as religious frenzy, and then denying that religious frenzy even existed. “Is there such a thing as *religious* frenzy? This has been frequently asserted, and commonly taken for granted: but has never yet been proved.” “On Fanaticism, To the Editor of the Methodist Magazine,” *MM* 24:37.

<sup>261</sup> John Pawson, “A Farther Account of the Late Mr. Alexander Mather,” *MM* 24:113.



Here is a set of dangers much less problematic than those experienced under George Bell in 1761, but problematic nonetheless. According to John Pawson's comments following the narrative, Mather had the "large experience of the different ways in which the Lord generally carries on his work . . . to exercise proper prudence." A description followed of Mather's delicate balance put into practice. Mather's insistence on maintaining "proper order" in the prayer meetings produced positive results. Not only were many people helped, but the work was kept "from that reproach and contempt, which, in some other places, were brought upon it, where decorum and regularity were not maintained." At the same time,

He took great care of, and treated with remarkable tenderness, those who professed faith in Christ, and who were so suddenly and powerfully brought out of darkness into light. He well knew, that these new-born souls required much nursing; that however lively or happy they might appear to be for the present, yet they were in general exceedingly ignorant, and quite unestablished, and therefore he not only took abundance of pains with them himself, but he also was careful to appoint them to meet with those Leaders who, he knew, would carefully and tenderly instruct them. Accordingly, many of this description were preserved, and continue steady to this day, who, in all probability, if those means had not been used, would have soon turned back into the world again.<sup>262</sup>

Here Pawson suggested a detailed plan of action following the revival meetings, as Story had earlier provided a detailed plan of action for the meetings themselves.

Story also added a footnote to this narrative, characteristically explaining how natural demonstrations by those under conviction were, given their actual spiritual state and their powerful awareness of it. However, he also described in his own words how some problems arose from the meetings. When a person in a meeting was in distress,

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 114.

“very zealous people” went to them and urge them to believe, sometimes without describing what the object of belief was to be. The instructors attempted, through any means, to get distressed people to say they believe, or find some comfort, and these instructors would take for granted that these formerly distressed people are now converted. Story observed, “It is very possible, and very common, for particular persons, under divine impressions, to be graciously visited by the Lord, and to be sweetly drawn with the cords of divine love, and to experience a degree of peace, before they be either thoroughly convinced of sin, or converted therefrom.” Fortunately, continued Story, God was aware of the human tendency toward that error, that what humans easily achieve, they also easily lose. “In order that we may highly esteem, and properly improve his grace, when we have received it, he makes us deeply to feel our want, and to know the worth of it before he bestows the heavenly treasure upon us.”<sup>263</sup> This nicely incorporated the humility that Wesley insisted on, but in the form of self-abnegation. Another source of older Methodist suspicion of the intense exercises of the revivals may well have stemmed from how newly-converted people drew attention to themselves, contradicting a basic theological tenant behind Wesleyan transformations. These types of experiences in earlier narratives often occurred in more private settings, fitting better with the Wesleyan (not to mention Puritan, or even English) concerns for humility.

1801, Robert Miller concluded his personal narrative by discussing the recent revivals. He dealt specifically with the conflict between the skeptical older Methodists

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<sup>263</sup> Editorial footnote to John Pawson, “A Farther Account of the Late Mr. Alexander Mather,” *MM* 24:115.

and those newly converted in the revivals. In the last four to five years there had been many meetings “where sinners were awakened, mourners comforted, and believers sanctified; and where a wonderful spirit of prayer rested upon some of the brethren.” However, some opposed the revivals, and the inexperienced young converts “defended themselves with too much warmth of spirit; and have likewise kept their meetings noisy, when they were not attended with much real power.” The result of Satan’s “subtlety” was that some of these converts became victims of vanity, or fell back into sin. Here again was the concern for experience to fulfill the Wesleyan insistence on humility, and, for the opponents of the revival, the Wesleyan concern that anything leading to unchristian conduct should be fervently rejected. Miller, however, saw such violations as exceptions, for some

still keep close to Christ. The spirit of prayer and zeal are excellent in their places; but the holy fire must be kept burning in the heart, by inwardly waiting upon God, and guarding against our own spirits; – by being prepared to suffer for well-doing; – and wrestling in private prayer with the Lord; by avoiding the appearance of evil, and being diligent in business; and lastly, by reading, hearing, and always keeping a child-like spirit. Where the young converts have been put in classes, with old experienced members, and reading, thinking, pious leaders, they have been, in a great degree, preserved from self-will and enthusiasm, which evils have been so fatal to many others.<sup>264</sup>

What Methodist could argue with such results? For a time, very few. The turning of the tide against the increasing emphasis on revivalism would not occur until after the period of this study, resulting in several divisions forming new British Methodist denominations.

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<sup>264</sup> Robert Smith, “An Account of Mr. Robert Robinson, of Coningsby, Near Horncastle, Lincolnshire,” *MM* 24:240.

While there were no accounts of revivals in England in the following year (1802), there were reports of revivals in Ireland. Thomas Davis wrote Coke from Ireland, telling him of a response in a service where Davis preached. His account contained many of the stock elements of revival reports. “The Lord did indeed pour down such a shower of soul-reviving grace,” during which, “on the right and left, were poor returning prodigals, sunk in deep distress.” The meeting went from four until eleven that evening. At least sixteen found forgiveness, “while believers were built up in their faith, and poor backsliders brought to tremble on the brink of ruin.” It became common to take in fifteen to twenty members at a time. The last two years had been unequalled in Davis’ twenty years of ministry. Attendance at quarterly meetings had been so high that often they had to meet in fields, sometimes “under the wreck of elements, rain, and wind; but we did not think much of that inconvenience.” The insistence of a crowd to attend such outdoor meetings despite inclement weather was an element of a number of accounts of camp meetings in the United States. The weather added to the general drama, demonstrating the solemnity of the occasion and the seriousness of the seekers. This made for a still-more effective atmosphere for Wesleyan-style transformations. Davis continued his description of this increasingly intense religious drama.

O! Sir, to see the fields covered with the spiritually slain, what a blessed sight it was! – Husbands and wives, parents and children, all in a kind of regular confusion, weeping, exhorting, praying, and rejoicing alternately with and for each other. So graciously has God engaged the hearts of the people in quest of salvation, that at times I have had much to do to prevail on them to disperse and go home. I have been under the necessity of

preaching out of doors, and continuing in the blessed work until the shades of night surrounded us.<sup>265</sup>

The revival resulted in the Clones Circuit adding 746 new members. Davis also mentioned the missionaries Graham and Ouzley, reporting that their preaching was accompanied by the power of God “with such demonstrative evidence as I have never known, or indeed very rarely heard of.” Davis followed with an early account of street preaching, occurring at “fairs and markets,” something far more characteristic of Methodist revivalism several decades later. The response to “these two blessed men of God, with burning zeal, and apostolic ardour, point[ing] hundreds and thousands to the Lamb of God” had dramatic results. Significantly, these results were much more closely tied to the power of the specific preachers than in any other revival report in the first decades of the *AM*. The public location may have increased the sense of drama and the tendency to see these particular men as uniquely empowered, as their preaching occasioned

the aged and the young falling prostrate in the most public places of concourse cut to the heart, and refusing to be comforted until they knew Jesus, and the power of his resurrection: I have known scores of these poor penitents stand up and witness a good confession; and blessed be God, hundreds of them now stand, and adorn the gospel of Christ Jesus.<sup>266</sup>

Actual letters of these two Irish missionaries to Coke were also printed in the *MM*. They reported to Coke that they were more convinced than ever of the importance of “Fair and Market preaching.” Ouseley preached in the street at Oldcastle, a predominantly Catholic area, “and truly the Lord was present, and there was a noise and

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<sup>265</sup> Thomas Davis, “From Mr. Thomas Davis, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, Clones, July 18, 1801,” *MM* 25:41-2.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-2.

a shaking together with cries and tears in the congregation.” At Ballijamesduff, Graham went to where Ouseley had been preaching, and “found the poor Catholics in tears, some of them sitting on the ground, wringing their hands, and crying for mercy.”<sup>267</sup>

George Brown wrote Coke about a revival in the Cavan Circuit in Ireland. The love-feasts “were crowned with wonderful outpourings of the Spirit of Grace. Many silent tears flowed freely.” Some cried for mercy, and only a few left before having their prayer answered. Meanwhile, in one district alone Brown had added 226 in the last year. In the next issue, T. Preston, in his account of John Furnace, mentioned that in 1793 and 1794 there was a revival in the Edinburgh circuit, with several hundred converted, and in the ensuing seven or eight years many of them were “walking in the ways of holiness.” At this time reporting of British revivals waned for a time, perhaps due to a heavy preoccupation with the burgeoning Second Great Awakening (although that term was not being used at the time) in the United States.<sup>268</sup>

What made the revivals so challenging to the more established British Methodism following Wesley’s death, was that the crowds experiencing these mass responses were engaging in these exercises in unusually large numbers at the same time. To magnify the effect, this occurred in smaller meetings than the crowds of many thousands when Wesley had preached to early on. With the growth both of Britain’s population and its economy, as well as of Methodism itself, what had normally been

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<sup>267</sup> Charles Graham and Gideon Ouseley, “Letter From Messrs. Graham and Ouseley, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, Monaghan, (Ireland,) August 25, 1801,” *MM* 25:426.

<sup>268</sup> George Brown, “From Mr. George Brown, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, Boyle-Circuit, August 4, 1801,” *MM* 25:215-6, T. Preston, “A Further Account of Mr. John Furnace, Preacher of the Gospel,” *MM* 25:350.

happening on an individual basis had become more of a group effect – a mass phenomenon. This made for ritual transformation that was more uniform, and, in the minds of many, needing to be more controlled. The consensus, even among those who, like George Story, were more favorable toward the demonstrations, was that demonstrations must not be overtly encouraged but rather must be managed. This is a shift from decades earlier, when Wesley, although at first quite alarmed by such demonstrations, ultimately accepted such responses at face value and simply used the occasion to steer the distressed or delivered person along the path of transformation. However, Wesley, whose pragmatic concerns encompassed more than just the transformation of sinners into holy people, might have arrived at similar conclusions himself. Yet the increase in control would begin a move toward taming the more spontaneous and unpredictable elements of traditional Methodism that, under the leadership of a future editor of the *MM*, Jabez Bunting (1779-1858), would clearly violate the more experimental and open spirituality of Methodism's founder. Such violations would not go unchallenged, resulting in the founding of new denominations, such as the Primitive Methodists, whose commitment to camp meeting revivalism (seen by them as the legitimate continuation of Methodist field preaching) would force their expulsion from the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion in 1808.

#### 4.2 Race and North American, Caribbean and African Methodist Narratives

Methodism had been transplanted to North America before the *AM* was ever published, and to the West Indies shortly after the *AM*'s founding. As both regions came to be locations of substantial growth for the movement – growth that would soon

surpass the rate of growth of Methodism in England – transatlantic Methodism would become of increasing interest to British Methodists. The increased number and length of reports of revivals across the Atlantic would lead to these reports dominating the letter-and-news section of the *AM*. The new locations for the Wesleyan system of religious transformation would challenge that system in various ways, as it encountered

#### *4.2.1 North American Revivals*

The first accounts of North American revivals in the *AM* were published in 1788 in the form of three fairly brief letters to Wesley. Philip Cox wrote Wesley of a service with “rows on the ground, crying for mercy, being cut to the heart, and in deepest distress,” with many of them being the “principal gentry” of the county. O’Kelly described a quarterly meeting attended by hundreds “crying for mercy as on the brink of hell.” Forty to one hundred more people were professing faith every day, and their testimonies were leading others to become awakened. Finally, Hope Hull reported that 250-300 whites had been converted in the last two months, “besides blacks, how many I cannot tell.” Many opponents of the revival came to the preaching and were “struck to the earth, and cry for mercy.” People gathered and prayed for five or six hours, and then one would shout, “My soul is happy! My soul is happy! The Lord has pardoned my sins!” They would then urgently feel a need to tell their families what had happened to them and to talk and pray with them. “Presently they are deeply affected; then the



people of God gather round them again, and begin to pray; and I have nothing to do but stand still, and see the salvation of God.”<sup>269</sup>

Even in the first brief reports of North American revivals, several distinguishing characteristics were present. In common with the British revivals, these early reports described large numbers of people in distress at every meeting, sometimes to the point of prostration. In the same meeting in which distress was felt, deliverance was often experienced as well. More in common with later North American reports, the focus included the race of the converts. Characteristically, an estimated number of whites was given, followed by a vague reference to a much larger number of blacks. Opponents arriving to challenge might be struck down and converted, in common with Second Great Awakening reports some years later. Finally, the tendency of the newly delivered wanting to immediately address their family or friends concerning their spiritual state was much more marked in North American accounts than in British accounts.

Four years later a number of reports of revivals in the United States, all written by the same person, were published. Only the last name of the author, Allen, was provided. Describing meetings in 1779, Allen wrote that the wealthy and well dressed threw off “their ruffles, their rings, their earrings, their powder, their feathers.” Still there was opposition, and his life was threatened. Similarly, in meetings in 1782 some “drop[ped] to the floor in their silks, crying for mercy.” This was not the general way

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<sup>269</sup> Philip Cox, “Extract of a Letter from Mr. Philip Cox, dated Brunswick County, Virginia,” *AM* 11:487; O’Kelly, “Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Mr. O’Kelly, dated Suffix County, Virginia,” *AM* 11:488 and Hope Hull, “Extract of a Letter From Mr. Hope Hull, dated Manchester, Amelia County, Virginia,” *AM* 11:489.

the work went on, but rarely did they hold a meeting that there were not hundreds “in a flood of tears.” In the next year Allen told of praying at plantations that previously “had rung with the drunkard’s songs and profane oaths, now echoed with the prayers of poor sinners, and praises of those who had found redemption.” At a love-feast in 1789, everyone seemed “dull” until near the end. Allen spoke to the participants and soon “a flame broke out in a most rapid manner; the doors were opened and people thronged in till the large church could receive no more, but there room enough in the hearts of the people.” They seemed as “men drunken with new wine,” and “hardened” sinners were “cut to the heart,” with some who came cursing then left, praising God. This began at 11:00, and after an hour they attempted to quiet the crowd in order to preach to them, “but it was all in vain.” Allen then went to the woods and preached to about one thousand people. Some of them were still on the ground or floor at 4:00 am, and some of these had to be carried home by neighbors.<sup>270</sup> These events predated the Second Great Awakening by twenty years, yet involved many of the same phenomena. The number of people involved was highly unusual for the time, especially in the South, although they would be eclipsed in size by the camp meetings twenty years later. The focus on the response of the wealthy was also more reminiscent of later revivals, particularly of Peter Cartwright’s descriptions of them.

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<sup>270</sup> Allen, “Some Account of the Work of God in American,” *AM* 15:292, 347, 407-8. A likely candidate for the identity of this author is Beverly Allen, a convert of Francis Asbury, appointed by him in 1785 as missionary to Georgia. His fascinating story, including his murder of a sheriff coming to arrest him in 1795, his escape from law enforcement and his deathbed conversations with the famous Methodist revivalist Peter Cartwright in 1816 (whom he had maligned in letters to Asbury and Coke) was recently outlined by J. Mark Lowe of the Robertson County (Tennessee) Historical Society in the July 3, 2007 edition of the *Robertson County Times*. The article may be read at <http://www.tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007307030007>.

The same year Allen's reports were published, the *AM* provided current membership totals.

**Table 4.1: Methodist Membership Overview, 1792**

America	71,502
Europe	75,342
Africa	223
World	147,067

The totals for the Americas were broken down further.

**Table 4.2: Methodist Membership in the Americas, 1792**

North American Whites	50,680
North American Blacks	13,198
West Indies	7,624
Total	71,502

About 21% of the North American total membership was black, compared to 18% of the United States being slaves in the 1790 Census.<sup>271</sup>

The *AM*'s next significant source of information on Methodism across the Atlantic was the very lengthy autobiography of Freeborn Garretson (1752-1827). Garretson had sent Wesley his journal, but it was lost on the voyage. Some years later Garretson wrote his narrative, which was not only published in the *AM* but, given his significance to North American Methodism, it would be published separately in several editions on both sides of the Atlantic beginning in 1791, the year of Wesley's death. Three years later it was serialized in the *AM*.

Garretson's account of his early life echoed common early Methodist themes, such as the desire to be holy and supernatural communication. When about nine years old, the question, "Do you know what a saint is?" was "proposed" to Garretson's mind.

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<sup>271</sup> *AM* 15:492.

He responded that there were no longer any in the world, but “the same voice” answered him that a saint is someone “wholly given up to God.” Immediately “the appearance of such a person was presented to the view” of Garretson’s mind. This strongly affected Garretson, who earnestly prayed, “with some measure of hope,” that God would make him a “Christian indeed,” and by the age of twelve he “threw off all seriousness” and became like his other schoolmates.<sup>272</sup>

Garretson’s seriousness would return, first through the impending death of his brother John, who was miraculously avoided after he was healed in response to prayer. Both brothers knew “the moment” when their prayer was answered, and Freeborn himself immediately informed their friends that God was going to restore them. John’s change was immediate. He fell to sleep and within a few days was able to walk unaided. Then Freeborn became deathly ill. He lay on his bed singing praises without fear of death. “Who can tell what state my soul was then in?” Still, it would be some time before Garretson actually began going through the prescribed stages of transformation. Garretson dated his actual awakening at the “commencement of that late, unhappy war,” as Garretson termed the American Revolution, when he awoke to be “alarmed by an awful voice.” This voice, that to his “apprehension seemed as loud as thunder,” declared, “Awake, sinner! For you are not prepared to die!” He “was smitten with convictions,” and he cried out, “Lord, have mercy on my soul!” Garretson’s conviction led to his conversion, and then to his call to preach. He became known as a

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<sup>272</sup> Garretson, 17:4-5.

particularly powerful preacher. On one occasion nearly one half of the crowd were “struck to the ground,” crying for mercy, and were heard at some distance.<sup>273</sup>

With his superior, Bishop Francis Asbury, Garretson laid particular stress on the second transformation of entire sanctification. In 1777 Garretson became convinced of Christian perfection “and contended for it both in public and private.” God revealed to him “more fully” all of the “secret corruptions of his heart.” Garretson struggled for several days. One day, while the congregation waited for him, Garretson stepped out of the house and “wrestled with the Lord.” Garretson did not want to conduct the meeting until he was fully cleansed. After the congregation had waited for some time, he went back in to the house, but his struggle seemed to be at its climax. He meant to pray with the congregation and then dismiss them, but after praying the text “blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” came to his mind. Not only did Garretson feel God give him “uncommon liberty” in preaching, but he also received the same deliverance he was describing in his sermon. “While . . . speaking out of the travail of the soul for purity, all my inward distress vanished away, and I found it myself unspeakable happy.” While Garretson did not “embrace” the Spirit’s witness right away, yet he found “an abundance of divine peace and joy.” He then preached Christian perfection even more than he had done previously. “The plan seemed as plain to me as the noon-day sun.”

Fully earning his early Methodist preaching credentials, Garretson experienced some intense and bitter opposition. Garretson was traveling down the road when he came upon a man who had formerly been a judge. Garretson asked him the distance to

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 6, 8, 59.

a nearby town, but the man told Garretson that he must go to jail, and grabbed the horse's bridle. Garretson asked him by what authority he did this, and the man dismounted and took a long stick and beat Garretson on his head and shoulders. The man then called for help, and Garretson saw several people with a rope running to the former judge's assistance. As the man had let go of the bridle, Garretson rode away, fearing for his life. When the man had caught up with Garretson, he struck him, and Garretson fell to the ground. The fall and the blows knocked Garretson unconscious. He was carried to a nearby house. When Garretson awoke, many felt that he did not have long to live. Garretson began, with some success, to provide religious instruction to his persecutor, but once Garretson seemed destined to mend, the former judge brought the local magistrate, who was also an enemy to the Methodists. Both men came into Garretson's room "in a great rage." The magistrate began the procedure to have Garretson committed to jail. Garretson assured them that the matter would be "brought to the light in an awful eternity." Garretson then rode to a friend's home, and in the evening sat in bed and preached again. "The sufferings which I passed through, I can truly say, were for my good; and I believe they were useful to others; for the work of the Lord greatly prospered, and I met with very little persecution in that country afterwards."<sup>274</sup>

Such opposition was reminiscent of opposition Wesley reported in his journal in the 1740's and 1750's.<sup>275</sup> In time England adjusted to the presence of Methodists and attempts at legal intimidation ceased. Legal intimidation of Methodists would

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<sup>274</sup> 171-3.

<sup>275</sup> *Works* 537-45.

eventually be given up in the United States as well. Both Wesley and Garretson met such opposition more with the weapons of the religious transformational process than with the legal resources of an English or United States citizen. Those opponents who dared transgress into the faith communities ritual space, figuratively or literally, could feel the full force of God's convicting power.

In June, 1779, Garretson felt "fighting within, and persecution without." One morning his mind was so disturbed that he could not focus on any one thing "for a minute together." Garretson felt tempted, yet he did not yield to agitation. "I did not know that I had given way to sin, either inwardly or outwardly." While he felt that he was still part of God's family, Garretson did have doubts regarding being saved from all inward sin. On the tenth he felt "an inexpressible weight upon my mind." A large number of people had gathered, many being opposed to the preaching. As soon as Garretson began to preach, he felt the burden gone, and he had great freedom in speaking, "and the divine power reached their hearts." For Garretson, this was his reception of the witness to entire sanctification, occurring after an unusually long period of uninterrupted inward cleansing without such a witness.<sup>276</sup> This was the second time Garretson mirrored Wesley in preaching the experience *until* he had an experience, and then preaching the experience *because* he had the experience. Even more Garretson seemed to speak his entire sanctification and the witness to his entire sanctification into being, actually receiving what he is preaching about while he is preaching about it.

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 283-4.

Garretson experienced “a very remarkable vision” in 1780, showing him the sufferings he was about to experience, but he was assured that God would be with him. Hundreds would gather “to hear the word, and received it gladly,” while many others would devise ways to be rid of him. One morning, a few weeks later, Garretson's mind “was under a solemn weighty exercise, and in expectation of being engaged shortly in some uncommon trials.” He preached freely to a responsive congregation, and as he prepared to return to Mr. A.'s house a group of men surrounded them and took Garretson prisoner, beating his horse and cursing “bitterly.” They took Garretson to the magistrate, who found him guilty for preaching, and ordered Garretson to jail. As he was being escorted to the jail on a very dark night, within a mile of starting out, “an extraordinary flash of lightning” scattered Garretson's escort. As he was about to preach the next day, the ringleader of the persecutors rushed the pulpit. The congregation took hold of him, but Garretson asked them to release him, as he was willing to go with him to prison. His cell had no furnishings, and a dirt floor, and two open windows to let in the cold February air, but Garretson “found it a profitable season for prayer, reading, and meditation.” Potentially he could have remained in prison a year waiting for the general court to meet, but the governors of Maryland and Delaware intervened and he was released.<sup>277</sup>

Surprisingly, Garretson began to struggle with the concept of hell, particularly with the idea that a God of mercy could send people there. Embarrassed by this, he felt that God agreed to “afford” him “satisfaction through a remarkable dream or vision. “I

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 339-41.



imagined, that passing thro' a narrow gate into Eternity, a person met me, and conducted me within sight of the place of torment.” His view was inadequate, so he asked to be taken where his view would be better. He was then led “to a spot where I beheld a lake of fire as large as the Ocean. I saw myriads of unhappy souls in every attitude expressive of the utmost anguish and woe. The sight was terrible beyond all imagination!” Garretson cried out, “It is enough.” Returning to this first spot, Garretson asked to have a similar view of heaven. He was answered, “Not now; return: you have been sufficient for once: be more faithful in warning sinners; and entertain no more doubts concerning the reality of hell.”<sup>278</sup>

The next year Garretson would experience his vision of heaven, surrounded by singing angels, where upon he “imagined” he ascended a tremendous height to a bright cloud, in which he saw “a person most transcendently beautiful and glorious, and brighter than the meridian sun when shining in all its splendour.” Garretson begged to be freed of his body so as to stay, when the shining person told him that if he was faithful he would return, but that there was more work for Garretson to do. He immediately awoke, too stirred to go back to sleep.

Indeed, I am aware, that there is danger in having too much stress upon dreams and vision, and that every thing must be tried by the infallible standard of God's holy Word, the sure and certain rule of our faith and practice; nevertheless it must be acknowledged that the Almighty can impress revealed Truths upon the soul in a variety of ways, when he sees it expedient to encourage and strengthen us in the pursuit of Grace and Glory.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 391.

The content of Garretson's visions was hardly unusual for early Methodists, but the context was. Visions of heaven and hell were common in the experience of conviction, the new birth or even entire sanctification. No doubt these visions strengthened Garretson's preaching, despite occurring outside the timeframe of his transformations. The first vision happened in response to a doubt that could have short-circuited his own transformations, and would have undercut his efforts to see others transformed. To believe in, indeed, to *feel* both hell and heaven was essential for both speakers and listeners in Methodist meetings. That this liminal space was outside this "world," beyond the normal and mundane of the merely physical, was at the core of Methodist narrative strategies.

Garretson's loyalist leanings were obvious at various points in his narrative. Garretson was in Yorktown during the siege, hearing cannon fire day and night. Many of the Methodists "were absolutely against fighting," yet some had been forced into the fighting against their conscience, even though "they would as soon lose their own lives, than take the life of any [other] human creature." Garretson continued, "I saw it my duty to bear a public testimony against these violent and cruel proceedings; and likewise against the practice of slave holding. Several were convinced of the impiety of detaining their fellow creatures in bondage, and liberated their slaves; while others were induced to treat them with greater humanity and kindness."<sup>280</sup>

Garretson was in Boston in May, 1787, and here he painted a glowing picture of the success of Methodism. The success in North America was all the more amazing,

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 449-50.

given both Methodism's connections with Britain and the Tory leanings that its English leaders had in common with Wesley before and during the American Revolution. "The people in this part of the country seemed as if they would be all Methodists. It is now a small thing to be Methodist in name only; but to love God with all the heart, and a neighbor as ourselves, is a matter of very great importance." A week after arriving, Garretson preached to a large congregation. There had been a "great revival in these parts," some time previously. "The cries of those who are distressed for their sins were frequently so loud as to drown the voice of the preacher; does give offense to some, cold professors; they were afraid of wildfire; and their well-meant efforts to prevent it have bought on too much dryness, and deadness." Here, of course, are the familiar problems of multiple voices and of opposition, but this time from staid insiders rather than from offended outsiders.<sup>281</sup>

In 1797 the *AM* published a brief history of transatlantic Methodism. Several Methodists had traveled from England and Ireland to North America in 1763. They were joined a few years later by Philip Embury and Robert Strawbridge, local preachers from Ireland. Thomas Webb, a lieutenant in the army, preached quite successfully in New York and Philadelphia, and built a chapel in New York. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pillmore, two local preachers, were sent from the Leeds conference, landing in Philadelphia in 1769. One of these missionaries, unnamed in the report, went to New York, preaching to five thousand people. In 1771, Frances Asbury and Richard Wright were sent, and Thomas Rankin and George Shadford joined them in 1773. At this time

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<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 506.

there were 1,000 members on the continent, about six or seven of whom were preachers. In four years there were forty preachers, seven thousand white members, and “some thousands of *Blacks*, minds the Lord opened to receive the Gospel, although not yet united in fellowship.” In 1777 hundreds more were added, over three thousand in Sussex and Brunswick, Virginia, alone. In the 1795 general meeting, it was calculated that there were at least four hundred preachers, many hundreds of local preachers, 51,694 white members, and 13,814 black members, “who unite in close fellowship, exclusive of many hundreds who regularly attend on their ministry.”<sup>282</sup>

As the nineteenth century began, the *MM* displayed a sustained interest in revivalism in the United States. The September, 1801 issue started with a lengthy biography of Cotton Mather, which was spread over seven months, and in May, 1803, the *MM* began to publish in several parts “An Account of Mr. John Edwards.” As with the First Great Awakening, in which Wesley and Whitefield were both significant participants, the Second Great Awakening witnessed extremely detailed written reports of the events in North America being widely distributed in Great Britain, exciting great interest.<sup>283</sup> Detailed reports in the form of letters begin appearing in May, 1802 (one month after Robert Miller’s account of British revivals, and three after Mather’s), and are found in nearly every issue for the next four years, detailing events from 1801 to 1805.

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<sup>282</sup> “Narrative of the Methodist Missions to the Continent of America, and the West India Island,” *AM* 20:80-1.

<sup>283</sup> On European interest in the First Great Awakening in North America, see Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: MA, Harvard University Press, 1990), 179. Butler also argued that *First Great Awakening* is a misnomer, as he contended that outside of New England the Christianizing of the populace and revivalism spread much more slowly over the next few decades.

The primary format of this revival was the newly-devised camp meeting, the most famous of which was at Cain Ridge, Kentucky, a meeting traditionally regarded as the beginning of the awakening. These meetings usually involved several ministers conducting several outdoor services over several days, culminating in the receiving of communion, and thus were also called sacramental meetings. Denominationally, such meetings were at first predominated by Presbyterian leadership, and thus *MM* printed letters by Presbyterian ministers George Addison Baxter (1771-1841), John Evans Finley and James McGready of Kentucky, William Hodge of Tennessee, and James Hall (1744-1826) and Samuel Eusebius McCorkle (b. 1749) of North Carolina. These lengthy accounts were therefore significant to the readers of *MM*, as from their perspective they were eyewitness accounts of educated and ordained leaders of meetings that seemed so similar to some Methodist meetings, but, in size and impact, in a class of their own.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> G. Baxter, Principal of Washington Academy, to the Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander, Washington Academy, Jan. 1, 1802," *MM* 26:86-93; John Evans Findley, "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Mr. John Evans Findley of Mason-County, Kentucky," *MM* 26:125-7; James M. Gready, "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. James R. Gready, a Presbyterian Minister, in Logan County, Kentucky, to the Rev. Dr. Coke," *MM* 26:181-3; William Hodge, "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. William Hodge, of Summer County, State of Tennessee, to the Rev. Francis Asbury," *MM* 26:269-72; J. Hall, "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. J. Hall, of North-Carolina, to the Mr. W. Woodward, of Philadelphia, Containing a Narrative of the Revival of Religion in that Part of North-Carolina Which Lies South-west of the Yodkin River, Iredell County, N. Carolina, May 4, 1802," *MM* 26:272-9 and Samuel M'Corkle, "Extract from the Letters of the Rev. Samuel M'Corkle, Containing Some Important Facts Relative to the Revival of Religion in North Carolina, Which Were Omitted in Mr. Hall's Narrative; They Are of Different Dates, and Are Taken from Mr. M'Corkle's Letter Book. He Adds, 'I Know That They Are Facts, Having Seen or Heard the Most of Them Myself,' Westfield, Dec. 16, 1801," *AM* 26:179-85, 330-5. Also printed was an account from an anonymous Presbyterian minister, "From a Presbyterian Minister in Kentucky, to Another in Philadelphia, August, 1801," *MM* 25:264 and an account written in a letter by Colonel Robert Paterson to a Presbyterian minister in Pennsylvania who also taught at Dickenson College: Robert Paterson, "Extract of a Letter From Colonel Robert Paterson, of Lexington, Kentucky, to the Rev. Dr. John King, September 25, 1801," *MM* 26:83-6.

Although usually not as large as Cane Ridge, which by some reports had twenty to thirty thousand in attendance, these camp meetings were very large. Colonel Paterson recorded the following numbers for meetings in Kentucky:

**Table 4.3: Colonel Paterson’s Report on Kentucky Camp Meetings**

Meeting	Days	Attending	Communicants	Struck	Provision Wagons
Concord		4,000	250	150	12
Point Pleasant	3	8,000	350	250	40
Lexington	5	6,000	300	70	
Indian Creek	8	10,000	800	520	50
“Kainridge”	6	12,000	900	300	125

Baxter gave the number twenty thousand for Cane Ridge, with 140 wagons, and gave the number 17,000 to 21,000 in attendance, with as many as 148 wagons. Findlay wrote of ten to twelve thousand meeting for a week at a time in the Cumberland region.<sup>285</sup> There had been meetings as large during the First Great Awakening, such as Whitefield’s preaching services in Philadelphia, but religious services of this size had been confined to the larger seaport cities of the Mid-Atlantic and New England colonies and were drawn to hear one man preach rather than ostensibly to serve the sacrament. Also, meetings during the First Great Awakening, even if they went long because of the positive response, did not go on for days at a time, with multiple services. Nor did the First Great Awakening witness multiple ministers of different denominations preaching at the same time in different location to allow all to hear. The newer meetings usually included Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist ministers. Hall wrote of one that also included an Episcopalian minister, a Dutch Calvinist minister, and two German

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<sup>285</sup> J. Hall, 275; Paterson, 83-6; Baxter, 86 and Findlay, 126, 127. The anonymous Presbyterian minister also reported twenty thousand at a meeting, presumably at Cane Ridge.

Lutheran ministers. In this new, southern, wooded and often mountainous setting, astonishing ritual niches in space and time were temporarily constructed to serve the purposes of liminality. These Presbyterians provided accounts of people traveling fifty, one hundred or even two hundred miles to attend these meetings.<sup>286</sup> As seen from the above table, the total attendance was not the only number the reports were concerned with. Paterson also recorded the number “struck down.” Others reported such numbers as well. Paterson gave the total struck in a given camp meeting, while sometimes the total number struck at one brief period of time was provided, such as Baxter’s report of one thousand being struck at Cane Ridge during the sacrament, Findlay’s report of hundreds falling together in Cynthiana, Kentucky and the anonymous report of 500 lying on the ground at once, presumably at Cane Ridge.<sup>287</sup>

To accomplish the transformational purpose of the meetings, time was required. The standard days for meeting were Friday through Tuesday, a four-day format, but this varied widely, with meetings sometimes lasting a week or more. The length of time was not just measured in the number of days of encampment, but in the length of time in constant meeting. An anonymous Presbyterian minister reported meetings going seventy hours without break, again, presumably at Cane Ridge. Services, or more often, prayer with the “afflicted” following the services, would last well into the night or throughout the night. Such persistent commitment to a ritual, transformational space is reflected in the willingness, observed by Baxter, to keep services going nonstop at Cane Ridge despite rain. Hall even described rain falling at the beginning of a meeting,

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<sup>286</sup> J. Hall, 272, 278.

<sup>287</sup> Baxter, 89 and Findlay, 127, “From a Presbyterian Minister,” 264.

continuing unabated until nearly night. In the morning it began to sleet heavily, then snow, and finally to pour rain until four. It was the worst weather of the winter, yet the people gathered at ten and met in two meetings, “and all ages and sexes stood there exposed until sun setting.” The mindset behind such devotion was described by Baxter. “The congregation did not want any interruption in their devotions; and they formed an attachment. . . They conceived a sentiment like what Jacob felt in Bethel – ‘Surely, the Lord is in this place,’ ‘This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’”<sup>288</sup>

The location in space and time as well as intent were not all that were required to establish this liminality for transformation. The proper emotional atmosphere was vital. As in the British revival, this atmosphere was usually described as solemn. Paterson wrote of “a great solemnity [that] appeared all day.” The meetings themselves, with the accompanying displays, were called a “solemnity” by Baxter. “Suddenly there were several shrieks from different parts of the assembly; instantly persons fell in every direction; the feelings of the pious were suddenly revived, and the work progressed with extraordinary power, till the conclusion of the solemnity.” Hodge used the term “solemn exercises” in a similar fashion. McGready described solemnity and spiritual impressions the week before a meeting making the conducting of any business difficult. One crowd was at first described as “large, thoughtless and disorderly,” although soon they become increasingly serious and composed, so that a

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<sup>288</sup> “From a Presbyterian Minister,” 264; Baxter, 89; J. Hall, 273 and Baxter, 88.



meeting three days later was described as the most solemn M'Corkle had ever witnessed.<sup>289</sup>

Two dramatic events often functioned as the bookends of the liminality of the transformation of conversion, falling down and getting up. Usually seekers fell down at the onset of distress and arose again as the moment of deliverance. Many, especially among the Presbyterians, were disturbed by the falling and by the shrieking and other displays that often went with falling. Presbyterians did not have the history and ongoing revivalistic traditions of Methodism, leaving them nonplussed at the dramatic, mass responses. Therefore Presbyterians were less prepared to answer the general public's objections to these displays. According to Findlay, Presbyterian ministers were "shy" at first, not knowing what judgment to make. "The falling down of multitudes, and their crying out . . . was to us so new a scene, that we thought it prudent not to be over hasty in forming any opinion of it." Talking with those "affected," however, led them "in the judgment of charity" to conclude it was God's work. Baxter described a different process by which Presbyterians resolved this problem, or, at least, described it in more detail. The falling, which, for Presbyterians, was new,

excited universal astonishment, and created a curiosity which could not be restrained when people *fell* even during the most solemn parts of divine service: – Those who stood near were so extremely anxious to see how they were affected, that they often crowded about them so as to disturb the worship... – But these causes of disorder were soon removed; different sacraments were appointed on the same Sabbath, which divided the people, and the falling down became so familiar as to excite no disturbance.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Paterson, 82; Baxter, 91; Hodge, 269 and McGready, 181.

<sup>290</sup> Findlay, 126 and Baxter, 88.

Similar to the Methodists, the concern here is for order in worship. In shaping the ritual space for the liminal, some allowances could be made. As Turner had described it, liminality *was* less ordered, but not completely so. To control the falling was to control the liminality and shape the transformation. And understanding the falling was a necessary prelude to proscribing it. Thus, there are descriptions of the sequence of observed physical processes of those who fell, some extremely detailed. Findlay described one meeting which had some of the most amazing sights he had ever seen. Many were affected at the sacrament, some falling instantly, some seemingly gradually. “All appear more or less distressed, – all crying out for mercy. Some in the most pitiful and distressing manner; others with more tremendous shrieks and cries, as if they were that instant sinking down to eternal ruin.” Some, and sometimes all, of the affected seemed in profound thought. “All have distress and anguish painted in their countenances.”<sup>291</sup>

Colonel Paterson provided his own description to a Presbyterian minister of how indiscriminate the phenomenon was, happening to people “of all ages, from eight years and upwards; male and female; rich and poor; the blacks; and of every denomination; those in favour of it, as well as those (at the instant) in opposition, and railing against it.” They “instantaneously” fell, only to lie “motionless to the ground.”

Some feel the approaching symptoms by being under deep convictions; their heart swells their senses. It comes upon others like an electric shock, relaxes and falls motionless; the hands and feet become cold, and yet the pulse is as formerly, tho’ sometimes rather slower. Some grow weak, so as not be able to stand, but do not lose their speech altogether. They are all averse to any medical application; and tho’ the weather is very warm,

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<sup>291</sup> Findlay, 127.

and people in large crowds around them, yet they are not inclined to drink water. They continue in that state from one hour to twenty-four.<sup>292</sup>

No other description in the *MM* of falling down under conviction matched the careful, clinical detail of Baxter.

Persons who fall are generally such as had manifested symptoms of the deepest impressions for some time previous to that event. It is common to see them shed tears plentifully for about an hour. Immediately before they became totally powerless, they are seized with a general tremor, and sometimes, tho' not often, they utter one or two piercing shrieks in the moment of falling. Persons in this situation are affected in different degrees; sometimes, when unable to stand or sit, they have the use of their hands, and can converse with perfect composure. In other cases, they are unable to speak, the pulse becomes weak, and they draw a difficult breath about once in a minute: in some instances their extremities become cold, and pulsation, breathing, and all the signs of life, forsake them for nearly an hour. Persons who have been in this situation have uniformly avowed, that they have felt no bodily pain; that they had the entire use of their reason and reflection; and when recovered, they could relate everything that had been said or done near them, or which could possibly fall within their observation.<sup>293</sup>

Baxter presents an interesting picture of the loss, yet also of the retention, of control. In theory, the Calvinist theology of Presbyterians should fit well with God overwhelming the individual, body *and* mind, but in practice the transformation process could not involve such complete subjection of the individual. Otherwise, when they arose it would be difficult to argue against any message they spoke, as their human reason would not have been involved. Instead, those who fell retained their "reason and reflection," allowing for some measure of control of the process, as anything untoward could be attributed to the human aspects of the experience. In essence, just as a ritual niche was carved out for the group in the forest for several appointed days, so a ritual

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<sup>292</sup> Paterson, 84.

<sup>293</sup> Baxter, 89-90.

niche was carved out for individuals as they fell to the ground – physically powerless but mentally receptive and active – for the minutes or hours required.

Hall observed how outwardly varied yet inwardly consistent the experience of distress was, and regarded this fact as serious evidence that it was genuinely of God. That the physical expressions of distress differed from one person to another arose “from the different temperament or habit of body. The same difference is obvious in different constitutions or habits of body, as to swooning, outcries, &c. when the matter of grief or terror is the same, and the distress equally pungent.” However, that “those exercises which are mental, appear generally to run in the same channel,” meant that they must “neither be sympathy nor imitation; for I have observed the same in the state of Tennessee more than eighteen months ago, as well as in various places in this State, where the subjects had never seen any other person in a similar situation.”<sup>294</sup>

The group niche was at times under assault by those fighting, often unsuccessfully, their own individual niches. The presence of opponents to the meetings, sometimes vocal and active opponents, was perennial, as were accounts of these opponents ending up falling themselves, often to be converted. What could strengthen a ritual space more than passionate opposition from the outside, unless it were the most hateful of the assailants of ritual space collapsing, seemingly irresistibly, within that space, succumbing to its transforming power? Many of the one thousand who fell when communion was distributed at Cane Ridge, according to Baxter, were “infidels.” Baxter further observed that “numbers of thoughtless sinners have fallen as

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<sup>294</sup> J. Hall, 276.

suddenly as if struck with lightning. Many professed Infidels, and other vicious characters, have been arrested in this way, and sometimes, at the very moment when they were uttering blasphemies against the work.” Opposers and skeptics succumbing in this manner apparently became such a mark of the meetings that M’Corkle reported that at one meeting many opponents were present, yet not even one of them fell. This meeting was used as an argument against the genuineness of the meetings. Another argument against the meetings was the contention that at one meeting only women fell, and that falling tend to happen at the sacrament when everyone was exhausted and overwhelmed and liable to “sympathetic” responses. M’Corkle felt these objections were fully answered by the meeting at Waxhaws where nearly all the “opposers” were struck the first day. M’Corkle described these opponents as infidels brought by curiosity and seeking amusement, associates “in angry earnest,” wanting arguments, and those “of the baser sort, low, vulgar drunkards, buffoons and debauchees.” Rarely was any resistance other than prayer offered against these opponents.<sup>295</sup>

Although the power of a liminal time and space is that it is distinct from normal or mundane time and space, the dynamic of being struck down often briefly extended the boundaries of liminality as the afflicted were removed from the immediate scene, or removed themselves. J. Hall wrote of the young people of M’Corkle’s church and the young people from another congregation which had not yet had any affected at the Randolph camp meeting going into the woods a little way from the meeting to pray. When it was time to go the next scheduled service some of them were “struck down,”

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<sup>295</sup> Baxter, 89-90, M’Corkle, 284-5, 330.

and soon the majority were. Others supplied them with fire and camp furniture, and they lay there until nine o'clock the next day before being able to return to camp. Ninety percent of the young people "were deeply impressed with a sense of the great importance of salvation" by the end of the meeting. The extension of the ritual scene continued for Hall. Due to a preaching appointment his people arrived home before him, and that Sunday they held meetings in three different locations of Hall's charge, "in all of which the work broke out like fierce, and was making rapid progress before I had an opportunity of attending."<sup>296</sup>

M'Corkle described either the above or similar occurrences at the same meeting. He went out into the woods where there were many people gathered. Two or three had come there to talk and pray and were then "struck." Their cries drew others, some of whom were also struck, until there was a large crowd, many of whom were "exercised." M'Corkle remarked at this point, "I had now viewed the whole as a spectator. My mind seemed to be made up of a strange mass of sensations; and I retired for a moment to make some serious reflections." As well he might, given the controversial nature of the meetings and the exercises, and how he witnessed their seemingly contagious nature. Another intriguing incident recorded by M'Corkle involved a young man found "exercised" in the woods during a meeting, calling for his relatives and neighbors. When they arrived he gave them a passionate exhortation, being joyful by that time for himself but in pain for them. What struck M'Corkle was that this young man had never yet had a chance to see anyone exercised in the meetings and so cried out "O my

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<sup>296</sup> J. Hall 273-4.

friends, this work is the work of God, and not sympathy, as some of you suppose.” Paterson described the exercises of the convicted as if these phenomena chased people down, as though the ritual niche took on an aggressive life of its own. Some who had felt the distress coming on tried to get away, but could not. They might be struck down in the woods, while running away, at home, in the field, on the road, in bed, while plowing or even while asleep.<sup>297</sup>

This seemingly irresistible power of falling down was often described as happening to rowdy opponents of the meetings or to skeptical spectators. One “remarkable libertine” was struck, silencing and confounding his companions. M’Corkle saw one opponent struck who as he began to flee fell down and was brought to a tent where he cried for mercy. Another opponent came to see the same meeting (Waxhaws), was drinking heavily to avoid falling, but he fell anyway. M’Corkle was convinced by the man’s testimony twelve hours later that the cause was not alcohol. Two other men had ridden into the encampment swearing that same morning, one of them bragging that only his bottle should bring him down, “and that he would not for the value of the whole camp, be degraded by falling for any thing else.” M’Corkle came upon them when that man had been struck down in conviction, with his companion standing there watching. Another was urged by one of the ministers to pray, but refused, declaring that he would rather be damned. He was struck to the ground and

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<sup>297</sup> M’Corkle, 281-2, 330.

lay all night before creeping away the next morning. M’Corkle never heard of him again.<sup>298</sup>

These dramatic experiences of conviction frequently gave way to dramatic conversions. The duration of the distress varied, but usually in a short time those convicted experienced some relief. Paterson observed that after someone was struck down convictions might well continue for a time. “When they regain their speech, which comes to them gradually, they express themselves commonly in the following manner, – That they are great sinners; the vilest of the vile, and pray earnestly for mercy thro’ Christ.” Common to both Puritan and Methodist narratives of various generations, many express the sentiment that God was ready to forgive all but them. “They often continue in this state several days. Many have not yet recovered, so that it is not certain that they will: – Others recover in an hour, and speak of possessing salvation from sin.” What startled many as much as the falling was the powerful exhortations following their awakening.

They have great gifts in praying and exhortation, which they often perform in an incredible manner. Indeed it is a miracle, that a wicked thoughtless sinner, who never could address himself to an audience before, should rise out of one of those fits, and continue for the space of two hours, recommending religion and Jesus Christ to sinners.<sup>299</sup>

Individuals were not unaided in their recovery process. Those who fell were carried to another place for prayer. “Some Psalm or Hymn, suitable to the occasion, is sung. If they speak, what they say is attended to, being very solemn and affecting, (many are struck down under such exhortations.)” If they do not recover quickly,

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 279, 330.

<sup>299</sup> Findlay, 128, Paterson, 84.



praying and singing continued, while sometimes a minister exhorted, taking advantage of the presence of gathered crowd.<sup>300</sup>

Baxter also described this recovery process in some detail. He focused on what he considered the largest group of those falling, those who “fall under distressing views of their guilt, who arise with the same fearful apprehensions, and continue in that state for some days, perhaps weeks, before they receive comfort.” Like some other observers, Baxter interviewed a number of those affected. He was surprised by their response.

Their minds appeared wholly swallowed up in contemplating the perfections of God, as illustrated in the plan of salvation; and whilst they lay apparently senseless, and almost lifeless, their minds were more vigorous, and their memories more retentive and accurate than they had ever been before.<sup>301</sup>

In the midst of such startling behavior and powerful responses, the need of denominations involved in the camp meetings to distinguish these phenomena from more radical movements in church history was palpable. Baxter continued the report of his interviews with “men of respectability” concerning their testimony that they themselves needed to be cautious when they spoke, “lest they should use language which might induce their hearers to suppose they had seen such things with their bodily eyes; but at the same time, they had seen no image nor sensible representation, nor indeed any thing besides the old truths contained in the Bible.” Baxter was pleased to report that “among those whose minds were filled with most delightful communications

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>301</sup> Baxter, 91. Some who fell were actually believers at the time. Findlay noted that “Some professors were brought to lament their cold-heartedness and deadness in religion,” while Baxter observed that “some pious people have fallen under a sense of ingratitude and hardness of heart; and others under affecting manifestations of the love and goodness of God.” Findlay, 129, Baxter, 91.

of divine love,” he only seldom witnessed anything “ecstatic.” Instead, “their expressions were just and rational, they conversed with calmness and composure, and on their first recovering the use of speech.” Still, Baxter was pleased to report that “extraordinary power is the leading characteristic of this revival; both saints and sinners have more striking discoveries of the realities of another world, than I have ever known on any other occasion.”<sup>302</sup>

Here is another example of the greater discomfort experienced by Presbyterians than by Methodists over the possibility supernatural activity. Presbyterian theology made a sharper distinction than Wesley did (in his Anglican and pietistic primitivism) between the age of the early church and the modern church age. In revivals, Presbyterians felt a need to frame even the most intense and dramatic experiences as something other than a direct physical experience of the supernatural. Alternatively, Methodists tended to be uncertain as to whether they had directly physically experienced the supernatural or not.

Baxter continued his description with an emphasis on the sharp contrast evident before and after in those exercised.

They appeared like persons recovering from a violent disease which had left them on the borders of the grave. . . . It was impossible not to observe how strongly the change in their minds was depicted in their countenances; instead of a face of horror and despair, they assumed one open, luminous, serene and expressive of all the comfortable feelings of religion.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 92.

Hall presented a warning that some rose with their distress gone, yet they had not been genuinely delivered. “It is evident to those tolerably well read in the anatomy of the human heart, that tho’ they rise comfortable, may be still in the bond of iniquity.” Even the most careful Christian might incorrectly assess the “experiences or exercises” of another. The best evidence came from Scripture, for it was to be expected that “some should persevere, and others draw back,” dependent on “the nature of the soil on which the seed of the Word is sown in the human heart.” Obviously the argument that the marks of a believer proved the validity of a controversial form of spiritual experience was not unique to Wesley. Indeed, Baxter noted that even the Deists were impressed that, whatever the source of the revivals, it did seem to make people better. If comfort was not received in these exercises, then deep conviction remained. Hall was not aware of any who had received comfort the first time they were “exercised” who would then be shaken and experience these exercises again. However, some “will rise under clouds, which will not be removed until they have undergone another.”<sup>304</sup>

The comfort level of United States Presbyterians with these revivals would remain tenuous. They demonstrated a greater desire to control, to prescribe the demonstrative, seemingly supernatural elements in revivals. M’Corkle reported on a meeting at the Cross-Roads in Iredell on March 17, 1802, to develop a system of rules “for the more uniform conducting of the work.” Two rules were agreed upon.

1. That persons exercised and crying for mercy should neither be disturbed with prayer nor exhortation, unless when they requested it; or were verging to despair; or becoming careless without gaining consolation.
2. That when consolation came, thanks should be given; yet not in such

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<sup>304</sup> J. Hall, 277-8, Baxter, 87. Hall makes reference to the Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:24-30.

terms as if conversion and salvation were entirely certain; But only, in the judgement of charity, hopefully begun; and to be manifested by a future humble, active course of obedience to all the divine commandments.<sup>305</sup>

These rules were devised because, in the judgment of the ministers, some people who were exercised were pushed to move too fast, in danger of confusing conviction with conversion. The patterns of these revivals suited the Methodist understanding of assurance much better than the Calvinism of the Presbyterians. M'Corkle concurred with these rules, "for, on the one hand danger of kindling sparks; and on the other, of establishing a righteousness of our own; or of getting confidence or consolation that comes not from the Comforter." M'Corkle even suggested two additional rules.

1. Never to make it an object in prayer, preaching, or exhortation, to excite bodily affections; for in this sense bodily exercise profiteth little. It is not essential to true Religion; and is even now but an incidental circumstance, which the Wisdom of God in directing to purposes most important indeed.
2. That young people, especially children, who had spoken feelingly and sensibly under their first impressions, should not be pushed forward by their friends to speak again, after these impressions were abated or gone.<sup>306</sup>

Once again, M'Corkle's suggested rules reflect the fear Presbyterians had for sympathetic response, while Methodists sought and even relied on group responses, and were much more ready to attribute them to the Holy Spirit.

Methodists in the United States were experiencing revivals during these same years, vastly increasing their membership throughout the nation. Ezekiel Cooper (1763-1847) wrote several letters to Thomas Coke concerning these revivals. Cooper informed Coke that since General Conference there had been a revival throughout the

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<sup>305</sup> M'Corkle 283.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 283.

nation. On the Delmarva Peninsula there were three thousand members added in the last year (1801). Some circuits on the western shore of Maryland had increases from two to three hundred, and some on the eastern shore had increased by one thousand. In Philadelphia, where Cooper was writing from, Methodists were experiencing the greatest revival Cooper had ever seen, with 500 joining in the last seven months. Throughout the United States there had been an increase of perhaps eight or ten thousand. Cooper described a week-long meeting in Dover, attended by thousands, some coming nearly one hundred miles.<sup>307</sup>

In his next letter, Cooper wrote to Coke that he had sent off the letters to the preachers that Coke had sent. Referring no doubt to Graham and Ouzley, Cooper also had printed two thousand copies of the “Irish Missionary letters,” nearly all of which had been sold in two months. Meanwhile, “the work of religion goes on in a glorious manner in many parts of the United States.” Apparently his guess from the July letter was correct, for nine thousand members had been added in the last year.<sup>308</sup>

Stith Mead, writing Coke of Methodism’s success in Georgia, reported that “the work” was spreading through northern Georgia, “running like fire in dry stubble. . . Most of the Circuits in the District have caught the fire, which has continued to spread. We have now besieged the city of Augusta.” A large chapel was built in Augusta, with 1,000-1,200 in attendance in a city having a population of about four thousand. Mead estimated that two thousand had been converted in Georgia in the revival. Mead

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<sup>307</sup> Ezekiel Cooper, “From the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, to Dr. Coke, Philadelphia, June 12, 1801,” *MM* 25:422-3. The Delmarva Peninsula is so named because it is that part of the states of *Deleware*, *Maryland* and *Virginia* that is bordered by the Chesapeake Bay on the west, and the Delaware River, Delaware Bay, and Atlantic Ocean on the east.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.

assumed that Coke had received reports of the broader revival in the United States, involving the cooperation with the Presbyterians, and more recently with the Moravians. He included a letter from the “President Elder of South Carolina,” who wrote of a gathering of four thousand in North Carolina, with about three hundred converted.<sup>309</sup>

Growth continued the next year. Francis Asbury was quoted in one letter as saying that the seven conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church averaged a gain of three thousand each in the previous year (1802), for a total gain of 21,000. Meanwhile, Thomas Ware reported to Coke, that he had added six thousand to the Methodist churches in the Delmarva Peninsula from 1800-2. Ware listed several circuits with the number of added members, including Milford, who added 1,600 new members to his circuit. This increase was also reported by Richard Sneath, the preacher appointed to the Milford circuit at this time, where he “found a people much alive to God.” In July, during the quarterly meeting at Milford, “wonderful manifestations of the divine power were evinced,” some of it spilling outside the house and into the woods. The meeting went all night on Saturday, with some attendees in distress and others praising God. Following Sunday’s love-feast, no service was possible inside, so the preaching was done in the woods, with some people experiencing conviction and/or pardon. The meeting went all Sunday night as well, and following the sermon the next day twenty-eight joined the society. Eleven new places were established in three weeks, and seven classes, ranging from twenty to sixty. Sneath estimated that half of those joining the

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<sup>309</sup> Stith Mead, “From Mr. Stith Mead, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, Continent of America, District of Georgia, May 11, 1802,” *MM* 25:523.

society were already converted. In a few weeks hundreds were converted. When he was reappointed in 1802, the growth caused him to divide the circuit, adding five new locations. Moses Black reported that Methodism in Georgia had about one thousand conversions in 1802. Black hoped to double this number the next year.<sup>310</sup>

Several statements from these Methodist accounts demonstrate the favorable attitude Methodist preachers held toward the revivals, including the dramatic responses often evident. While these responses were viewed with some obvious discomfort by Methodists in England and Presbyterians in the United States, Methodists in the United States seemed, from these accounts, to have been uniformly positive. Cooper preached from a wagon on Pentecost Sunday from the account of Pentecost, “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost [Acts 2:4].” Cooper wrote of the response in joyful terms; “Surely it was a pentecost indeed!” There were thousands of listeners, “and surely many were filled with the divine life and power, and shouted for joy. I cannot describe how I felt, and how glorious a time it was.” Mentioning the multi-denominational camp meetings in Kentucky and Tennessee, Cooper reported that “the cries of the penitents, the praises of the saints, and acclamations of the assembled multitude, make the woods ring with melodious sounds.” Cooper’s letters also quoted “Brother Colbert’s” account of meetings in Pocomoke, Maryland. “Some fall motionless, and lie for some minutes, others for hours, and some for a great part of the night, without the use of their limbs or

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<sup>310</sup> Zachary Myles, “Extract of a Letter from Mr. Zachary Myles, of Baltimore, North-America, to his brother, Mr. William Myles, Minister of the Gospel, London, Baltimore, Jan. 11, 1803), *MM* 26:285; Thomas Ware, “American Letters: Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Mr. Thomas Ware, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, Duck-Creek, Delaware State, Sept. 12, 1802,” *MM* 6:370-1; Richard Sneath, “American Letters: From the Rev. Richard Sneath, to Dr. Coke, Milford, Delaware-state, Oct. 5, 1802,” *MM* 26:373-4 and Moses Black, “From the Rev. Moses Black, Georgia, Elbert Country, Dec. 24, 1802,” *MM* 26:419.

speech.” The transition, the end of the liminal limbo, was characteristically marked by the reversal of posture and speech. “Then they spring up, with heaven in their eyes, and music on their tongues, and praise the Lord, overwhelmed with love divine.”<sup>311</sup>

Mead did not go out of his way to stress or show approval for these demonstrations. Nonetheless, he did describe a meeting at a house going continuously for four days and nights, where many “awakened sinners lay across the benches, and on the floor, in agonies of distress for their souls; their groans and cries seemed to pierce the very heavens.” In contrast, Thomas Ware, holding the quarterly meeting in Milford in 1800, found it “awfully pleasing” to see that most of the congregation was “bathed in tears, while the acclamations of many, proclaimed the Holy One of Israel in the midst.” Richard Sneath, writing of a love-feast on Sunday at the Milford quarterly meeting, described the inability to preach commonly occurring after the service due to “the groans of the penitents, and the rejoicings of the happy.” Later, “the Divine Power spread thro’ the congregation. Numbers fell to the ground; and for three hours there were continual convictions and conversions.” Forty-five were added to the society the next day. While the Presbyterian accounts rarely mentioned how many joined the church, the Methodist accounts go out of their way to stress the connection between becoming convicted, converted and joining the society, often supplying numbers for each.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Ezekiel Cooper “Letter II: From the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, to Dr. Coke, Philadelphia, Sept. 7, 1801,” *MM* 25:423-5.

<sup>312</sup> Mead, 522; Ware, 370 and Sneath, 373-4.



Another distinctive feature of Methodist accounts of these revivals was the dramatic and the (often) group experience of the second transformation: entire sanctification. Mead wrote of “a soft melting time” during a communion service where some of the “advanced Christians” sought the experience of holiness. The description of this event as occurring in a communion service, but in the smaller venue of a Methodist meeting rather than a camp meeting, likely struck the readers. “Mourners” were invited by Sneath to the communion table to be prayed for. Sneath found this technique useful, as it “removed the shame which often hinders souls from coming to Christ, and excited them to the exercise of faith.” Describing a love-feast in Philadelphia, noted for some attendees experiencing the new birth and others perfection in love. Sneath described how “the divine Power descended upon the people; many struggled in the pangs of the New-Birth; others were in an agony of prayer for full sanctification; our brethren were employed in praying for the mourners, or holding up the feeble-minded.” Some twenty were converted, and “many of the old professors were stirred up, and felt the purifying fire of divine Love.” The work continued until conference in June, bringing five or six hundred into the society.<sup>313</sup> Methodist accounts of responses in meetings were similar to Presbyterians in that two crises were involved, but not always the same two crises. Many Methodist meetings, like Presbyterian meetings, had the same two crises, conviction and conversion. These meetings were generally external in appeal, targeting outsiders. Methodists were just as interested, however, in reporting the responses in meetings targeting insiders, which alternatively,

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<sup>313</sup> Mead, 522, Sneath, 373.

featured the two crises of conversion and entire sanctification. Since membership in a Methodist society was predicated not on conversion but on conviction, or more specifically, on possessing a “desire to flee from the wrath to come,” those seeking pardon were as likely to be found in members’ meetings as in evangelistic ones.

One characteristic of the Methodist accounts from the United States, distinct from the British Methodist accounts and Presbyterian accounts from the United States, was the stream of triumphalism. This triumphalism concerned how exceptional and even superior the United States was as a nation, and Methodism was as a religion. The focus of this triumphalism was the possible eschatological significance of the revivals in the context of both Methodism and nationalism. Such triumphalism was based in part on American exceptionalism, the belief in the uniqueness of the United States so often fervently believed in by its citizens. The presence of this triumphalism among United States Methodists reflected cultural assumptions far beyond those of Methodist leaders only two decades earlier. George Roberts, writing in 1802 of the revival in the United States, provided his understanding of the need and impact of these revivals. He described infidelity as growing more rapidly in the United States than possibly it had ever anywhere else in the last seven years. Infidel clubs were formed in nearly every town, “and in some places temples were reared to what they called *Reason*.” “Evangelical ministers” did not know how far it would go, and “wept day and night between the porch and the altar, crying, *Lord, revive thy work!*” When Thomas Jefferson (in the printing of the article, Jefferson’s name was left blank) was elected “to the presidential chair,” then the Deists became more bold, and went to greater lengths,

“and iniquity poured in upon us like a flood, till the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against it [Isaiah 59:16], and religion revived in a manner never known before in this, if in any other country, since the Apostolic age.” In Roberts’ opinion, any defense written of divine revelation would fall short of the effectiveness of revival.

Such writings

never will be of general use to a people who have no ears to hear, nor hearts to read and understand these things. Thousands in this country are Deists, because they *will be wicked*; and any thing that will stifle conscience, and lay their awful apprehensions of eternity asleep, is caught [*sic*] at greedily, and swallowed down with as much avidity as the most wholesome repast. People of this description seldom visit the house of God or throw themselves in the way of instruction, and nothing, except it be of the marvelous kind, will draw their attention.<sup>314</sup>

Now that the revival was happening people were coming from every direction, from distances of even more than one hundred miles, “encamping in the woods; singing, praying, preaching, and exhorting for eight or ten days and nights together, without regular intermission.” This was far “too novel” to not “draw the attention of the infidel, as well as thousands of others, and it is here that the Lord in his infinite mercy has overtaken many of them, brought them down to the ground, and blessed them with his pardoning mercy.”<sup>315</sup>

A similar sentiment was expressed by an English Methodist missionary to the island of Jamaica, John Kingston, who was visiting the United States. Kingston wrote that in his conversations with many people of other denominations, there was a general sentiment that the fear of God had declined in their nation, due to the “general tendency

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<sup>314</sup> George Roberts, “Extract of a Letter from the Rev. George Roberts, of Philadelphia, to Mr. William Myles, Minister of the Gospel, in London, Philadelphia, Nov. 17, 1802,” *MM* 26:417-8.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

to practical atheism.” This was blamed on an influx of immigrants and money from other countries, leading to greater prosperity and less interest in God. Also, many of the immigrants were French infidels, who “have disseminated their pernicious principles, . . . and are continually making proselytes, to the great injury of society at large.” Kingston particularly noted their “profanation of the Sabbath-day” in New York. Many religious business people worked together to prevent the abuse of their police and God’s Sabbaths. When they found billiard tables, “or any other matters offensive to religion and good order, they immediately suppressed them. . . . If these worthy persist in their exertions, much evil may be prevented.” These French immigrants “in attempting to heathenize the Americans, manifest the basest ingratitude for the hospitality and asylum they have met with in that country.”<sup>316</sup>

It is clear that the Methodist understanding, on both sides of the Atlantic, of the need for revival at the turn of the nineteenth century was strongly colored by their antagonism toward France, Jefferson and the Democratic Republicans. Together, this ideological triumvirate seemed to pose a serious threat in the form of religious, political and social radicalism, an abandonment of tradition and faith in favor of mere human reasoning and atheism. Methodists, particularly in the very young United States of America, these apparent traditionalists were quite experimental and democratic. This is particularly evident given the context of what so recently had been established religion of the Church of England, the monarchical government, and the traditional class structure. These older traditions were far less conducive to the experimental democracy

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<sup>316</sup> Kingston, 22:313.

of the relatively new nation and new religious tradition, and deemed inadequate defenses against the new forms of “radicalism.”

The conviction that revivalistic transformations prevented the United States from sinking under the flood of unbelief naturally led to triumphalism. Mead asked “What cannot the Methodists do, thro grace? Glory be to God, primitive Methodism shines in this Country, and thro’ America.” Mead was far more motivated by religious than by political motivations. Throughout his letter Mead never used the term *United States*, using instead the more generic *America* or *Continent of America*. Yet, whatever terms he used to describe where he lived, Mead was convinced of the revival’s lasting impact.

Glory be to God, the North is giving up, the South keeps not back; the sons of God are coming from far, and his daughters from the ends of the earth. O that this may be the ushering in of a glorious Millenium! [*sic*] May the Jews and Heathens be quickly christianized, and all brought to know the Lord, from the least to the greatest.<sup>317</sup>

Similarly, Jefferson Hamilton would conclude his letter with the fervent hope that “in a little time, the wilds of America will become Immanuel’s Land.” United States Methodists hoped that what God was doing in the United States he would also do in the homeland of Methodism. “O that it may reach my European brethren again, and may the candle of the Lord shine upon them as in days past.”<sup>318</sup> Methodists believed that they were witnessing a unique work of God in the new nation. While they viewed their

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<sup>317</sup> Mead, 523.

<sup>318</sup> Daniel Hall, “American Letters: From the Rev. Daniel Hall, Presiding Elder of the Richmond District, Virginia, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, Sept. 23, 1802,” *MM* 371-2 and Hamilton Jefferson, “From the Rev. Hamilton Jefferson, Alexandria, Feb. 25, 1803,” *MM* 26:420.

world in largely theological and religious terms, Methodists were not entirely unaware of the social and political implications of their beliefs, history and practices.

#### *4.2.2 Race and North American Methodists*

The *AM* was not a political magazine, and Wesley did not focus on political reforms, but the issue of race was unavoidable, especially when reporting on Methodism in the Western Hemisphere. Wesley was opposed to the slave trade, but did not focus nearly as much on the evil of slavery *per se*. Similarly, both in Wesley's lifetime and afterward for some time, the *AM* did not consistently attack the institution of slavery itself, but did attack the slave trade and did focus on the plight of slaves. Some of the correspondence of the ardent abolitionist, Anthony Benezet, is reprinted, praising Wesley for his stand against the slave trade. Benezet quoted two advertisements where substantially more money is offered for the severed head of a runaway slave than for the slave returned alive. Another letter of Benezet was published in 1793, "A Letter on the Slave-Trade, Written by Anthony Benezet, To Charlotte, Queen of Great-Britain." The next issue contained an account of a "Negro in the Cage," in Pennsylvania. His eyes were gone, and he was without food or water. He had been ravaged by birds, and had been there for two days. Freeborn Garretson's autobiography appeared the next year (1794). In one installment, Garretson reported that while he was in North Carolina he was particularly bothered by "the cruelties which the poor Negroes suffered."<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Anthony Benezet, "Letter CCCCXII (From Anthony Benezet, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Philadelphia, the 23d, fifth month, (May) 1774," *AM* 10:44-47, 16: 532-3 and "Negro in the Cage" in *AM* 16:599-600. The latter was part of a series of articles excerpted from Thomas Paine's magazine, *American Museum*, which, in publishing Paine's attack on slavery, became the first publication of abolitionist material in the

There was far more focus on the evils of slavery in the reprinted letters from the West Indies than the letters from the United States. This was largely due to reports from the West Indies of missionaries experiencing far more success with slaves and free people of color than with whites, who persecuted Methodist preachers far more than their counterparts in the United States. Preachers in the United States had a great deal of success, especially in light of the Second Great Awakening, in reaching slave owners than did the West Indian Methodist missionaries. This opportunity would eventually lead to the Methodist Episcopal Church compromising on the issue of slavery, resulting in the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the departure of the Methodists in the southern states to form the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church in 1843.

Unlike nineteenth-century abolitionists, neither Wesley nor *AM* focused on debunking that central tenet of slavery that black people are inferior to white people. However, it was often apparent that contributors to the magazine did not share this assumption of inherent inferiority. A 1790 account of a slave in Maryland described how he was capable of amazing math feats in his head, such as calculating how many seconds a man of so many years, months and days lived, calculating in his head in only ninety seconds, and accounting for leap years. He similarly could calculate the multiplication of a nine-digit number by a nine-digit number, “for the entertainment of another company.” This was probably thought of less as an item of curious interest and more as a demonstration of the equality of African Americans.<sup>320</sup>

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United States: William M. Van der Weyde, ed. *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*. New York: Thomas Paine National Historical Society, 1925, p. 19-20. Garretson, 17:169.

<sup>320</sup> Dr. Ruth, “An Account of an Extraordinary Negro Slave, in Maryland,” *AM* 13:136.

Freeborn Garretson's narrative contained a small amount of material on the issue of race. He wrote of trying to "inculcate the doctrine of Freedom, in a private way," which made certain people upset. He preached to the "Blacks," adapting his preaching "to their capacity." This may refer to their disadvantages rather than to any supposed mental limitations, but Garretson did not clarify.<sup>321</sup>

Although far more common in West Indian accounts, United States accounts also contained an emphasis on how well African Americans responded to the gospel, how spiritually sensitive they were. "Ethiopia is also stretching out her hands to the Lord. Great numbers of the poor Black People become Christ's free men and women." Often when reports were given of conversions or of membership, the numbers of blacks would be larger. Hope Hull wrote Wesley of 250-300 whites who converted in the last two months, "besides blacks, how many I cannot tell." Benezet told Wesley of his religious society of twenty whites and forty blacks and mulattos. The "word seems to make more impression" on the blacks and mulattos. He regarded one Mulatto woman as "a person endued with great grace." Some Sundays he had eight hundred blacks attend, who would bring food with them so they could stay all day. Benezet also wrote in the same letter of laws encouraging brutality toward people of color.<sup>322</sup>

The response of free blacks did not always result in their numerical domination of mixed congregations. Over time black Methodists in North America formed separate

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<sup>321</sup> Garretson, 17:169.

<sup>322</sup> William Hodge, "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. William Hodge, of Summer County, State of Tennessee, to the Rev. Francis Asbury," *MM* 26:272; Hope Hull, "Extract of a Letter From Mr. Hope Hull, dated Manchester, Amelia County, Virginia," *AM* 11:489 and Anthony Benezet, "Letter CCCCXII (From Anthony Benezet, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Philadelphia, the 23d, fifth month, (May) 1774," *AM* 10:44-47.



churches. In August 1785, Garretson arrived at Shelbourne. The society there had sixteen whites and many blacks, with a preaching house containing about 200 people. Very soon the preaching house was too small for congregation, and the Episcopal minister invited Garretson to preach in his church, which he did on three Sundays. Finally, Garretson preached from a large rock in the street. The preaching house was enlarged to allow for 400 hearers, but it was still too small for the crowds. At this point Garretson asked for blacks to build themselves a small house at the north in the town, so that he could preach to them separately. This was in order to have more space for the whites. This was a rare instance in which the smaller number of whites in attendance is blamed on the presence of blacks in the congregation, rather than on how the situation of blacks allowed them to be more responsive than whites. Earlier in his narrative Garretson had provided an example of African American spiritual receptivity. “Often were their sable faces overflowed with penitential tears. . . Their captivity and sufferings were sanctified, and drove them to the Friend of sinners.”<sup>323</sup>

Such receptivity was not ephemeral. R. Boardman, writing from New York, told Wesley of being “much comforted” by the death of “some poor negroes.” He asked one if he was afraid to die. She said she was not. “I have my blessed Savior in my heart; I should be glad to die: I want to be gone, that I may be with him forever. I know that he loves me; and I feel I love him with all my heart.” She continued on this line until her death.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Garretson, 17:452-3, 169.

<sup>324</sup> Several others were ready for death, longing for it. R. Boardman, “Letter CCCLVI (From Mr. R. Boardman, to the Rev. J. Wesley), New York, April 2, 1771.” *AM* 8:113.

The one Presbyterian account with significant material on African Americans is somewhat similar in perspective to Methodist authors, but more blatant in its racial assumptions and in its acceptance of slavery. M'Corkle provided an account of positive black response, but, perhaps inadvertently, he then contrasts this response with that of an "angelic" seven-year-old white girl. He also presented the relationship between a slave and her mistress as intimate and redeeming. The "first particular object" that M'Corkle felt his attention drawn to at his first camp meeting was "a poor black man" with raised hands shouting glory to God. M'Corkle "hasted" toward him from his place in the preaching tent, but before he could reach him, M'Corkle saw another black man had fallen to the ground. His "aged" mother knelt in front of him "in an agony of prayer." Close by a black woman grabbed her mistress' hand and said, "Oh mistress, you prayed for me when I wanted a heart to pray for myself. Now, thank God, he has given me a heart to pray for you and every body else." M'Corkle then passed a white girl of about seven, reclining against the arms of another young girl. "But O what a serene angelic smile was in her face! If heaven was ever enjoyed in any little creature's heart, it was enjoyed in hers. Were I to form some notion of an angel, it would aid my conception to think of her."<sup>325</sup> This account was perhaps subtle enough in its racism that it was missed by the editor when he included it, or he may have deemed it inappropriate to edit any of that body of letters reporting of the revivals.

Later in his account, M'Corkle provided a detailed description of the distress of conviction of a "stout negro woman" who had been making fun of the penitent all day,

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<sup>325</sup> M'Corkle, 280-1.

and who was then struck, falling into a terrible state of horror. She was in this state off and on for three hours.

I viewed her for all that time, and it was impossible for my imagination to conceive of her being more tormented, had she actually been in hell. She often roared out, "O hell! hell! hell! Thy pangs have seized me! O torment! torment! What torments me? Hell cannot be worse. Let me go there at once. It is my dreadful doom. . . I see hell-flames below, and myself hanging over the pit by a thread, and a sharp bright sword drawn to cut it thro'." She could not be restrained, even by two stout negro-men.

M'Corkle by that time had seen over a thousand people exercised, but this was unlike any other he had witnessed. At times she would cry, "O for mercy! But what have I to do with mercy? No mercy for poor miserable me!" However, hope finally prevailed and she shouted "Glory!" as loudly as she had shouted hell's torments.<sup>326</sup> Such visions of hell as part of conviction of sin had probably been much rarer among Presbyterians in the United States than among Methodists. It is significant that it is reported by M'Corkle as having come from a black woman, and even more significant that among such remarkable responses in the camp meetings, it was a black woman whose distress struck him as truly unique.

Among Methodists in Philadelphia, although separate black churches had been formed among the Methodists, the whites were experiencing revival attending services in the church buildings of the black congregations. Sneath reported that "the work broke out at the African Church, in the Northern Liberties, tho' chiefly among the Whites, who crowded the place at almost every meeting." The revival spread to other parts of Philadelphia. At another "African preaching-house," at Bethel, many whites

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 331-3.

came and “found the Lord.” Prayer meetings were set up to follow the sermons, and “they were blessed in an extraordinary manner, especially to those under convictions.”<sup>327</sup> The Bethel church was pastored by Richard Allen, an ex-slave who had purchased his freedom and who was appointed by Asbury in 1786 as a minister of St. George’s racially-mixed congregation. He started Bethel as a Methodist Episcopal church for African Americans. In 1799 Allen was ordained as the first black Methodist deacon, but in 1816 Bethel became independent. As Bethel’s pastor, Allen became the first bishop of the first African American denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Apparently, although it is not clearly stated, whites were eagerly responding directly to the ministry of black Methodists preaching, exhorting and praying for their white brethren.

In comparison to such positive depictions of blacks, in the context of the rejection of the Methodist message or Methodist standards whites were presented at times in *AM* as uncivilized and particularly spiritually dangerous. John Hoskins, arriving in Newfoundland, was quite concerned as he “had been on board a ship with a crew of English, cursing, swearing, savages, lest I should meet with the like people in this barren and uncultivated country.” One anonymous author, talking with the captain and crew of a slaving ship noted that whites as well as blacks were affected by the “cruelties incidental to the slave trade.” Benezet noted that in North America, wherever slavery prevailed, poor yet hardworking whites could not provide for themselves and their families as his labor is of no more value than that of a slave, so the only way to do

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<sup>327</sup> Richard Sneath, “American Letters: From the Rev. Richard Sneath, to Dr. Coke, Milford, Delaware-state, Oct. 5, 1802,” *MM* 26:372-3.

better is to become a slave-keeper himself, “with all its corrupt effects to himself and family, or lead a poor miserable life, or abandon the country.”<sup>328</sup>

The *AM* published the narratives of two African American ministers, both of whom later moved to Africa: David George, a Baptist, and Boston King, a Methodist. David George was a Baptist minister, starting the second black church in Nova Scotia, where a riot ensued when he baptized two whites. He then went to Sierra Leone, where he started the first Baptist church in West Africa. David George was born as a slave in Virginia. His account detailed the brutality of slavery. Several times George saw his oldest sister whipped until her back was “all corruption.” George himself was hung naked by his hands from a tree. His back was washed with salt water and rubbed. George had been whipped many times until the blood ran down. The worst for George was seeing his mother whipped, hearing her beg on her knees for mercy. She was the cook for the master, and if anything was not done to their liking, “instead of speaking to her as to a servant, they would strip her directly, and cut away.” It was this kind of treatment that led to George running away. After a few weeks he was tracked by Creek Indians. King Blue Salt, who could speak a small amount of English, carried George to his camp, eight hundred miles away. George’s master made a bargain with Blue Salt, but George escaped and went to live with King Jack of the “Nanitchee” Indians. He settled in Silver Bluff, South Carolina. David George was taken in by George Galphin, a slave owner, “to wait on him.” David George then became converted and began to

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<sup>328</sup> John Hoskins, “An Account of Mr. John Hoskins: in a Letter to the Rev. John Wesley,” *AM* 8:25; “The Negro-Trade, A Fragment,” *AM* 17:46 and Anthony Benezet, “Letter CCCCXII (From Anthony Benezet, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Philadelphia, the 23d, fifth month, (May) 1774,” *AM* 10:44-47.

preach. Galphin, whom George called “a great man,” kept a white school master to teach the children to read. These children gave lessons to George. “The reading so ran in my mind, that I think I learned in my sleep, as really as when I was awake; and I can now read the Bible, so that what I have in my heart, I can see again in the Scriptures.”<sup>329</sup>

The biography of Boston King was one of the longest narratives during *AM*'s first quarter century. King's narrative was, by far, larger than that of any other person of color, and longer than any contemporary biography of a subject not from England, except for Freeborn Garretson. King was born a slave in South Carolina, his father taken from Africa while young. King's father took every opportunity to hear the gospel, and prayed with his family every night. King's father also read to his family. On Sundays he read in the woods beginning at three o'clock when he was finished working; it was the only time he could work “to procure such things as were not allowed by their masters.” At age six, King waited upon the master in the house, and at nine he watched the cattle. He felt conviction of sin at age twelve, when he had a dream that the world was on fire, and saw God as judge, dividing millions to go to heaven or to hell. This distressed King, who left off swearing and bad company, but he did not know how to serve God.<sup>330</sup>

At sixteen King was apprenticed for two years at a shop where he was responsible for the tools. However, the men would often use them and either not return them or return them damaged, and so King would be beaten by the master. Once during

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<sup>329</sup> David George, “An Account of the Life of Mr. David George, from Sierra Leone in Africa; Extracted from the Account, Given by Himself in a Conversation with Brother Rippon of London and Brother Pearce of Birmingham,” *AM* 16:653-5, extracted from *Baptist Annual Register*, June 1793.

<sup>330</sup> Boston King “Memoirs of Boston King, a Black Preacher, Written By Himself, During His Residence at Kingswood-School,” *MM* 21:105-6.

a holiday the master and men were gone, and one of the younger apprentices watched the house while King was gone. The house was broken into and many things were stolen. In punishment King was so severely beaten he could do nothing for two weeks. Later he was falsely accused of stealing all the nails set aside for one of the journeymen. The master then tortured and beat him “most cruelly,” and he was unable to work for three weeks. King’s owner finally heard of this abuse, and threatened to take King away to finish his apprenticeship with someone else, so the last two years went much better.<sup>331</sup>

King’s apprenticeship ended during the Revolutionary War, when he decided to go to Charles-Town and join the English. He was well-received by them, but caught smallpox, and was sent a mile outside the camp with other infected blacks to keep the disease from the army. A whole day might go by without food or water, but one of the York volunteers knew him and brought him what he needed. King then marched with the army to Chamblen. At one point King was with 250 British troops awaiting reinforcements while 1600 American troops were nearby. This worried King, expecting “every moment to fall in with the enemy, whom I knew would shew me no mercy.”<sup>332</sup>

Having escaped from a number of difficulties, King arrived at New York, and was free under the protection of the English until the war ended in 1783. The end of the war was good news for everyone except the two thousand escaped slaves, some of whom had been with the English for three or four years. There was a report that the former slaves were to be returned to their masters, and owners from Virginia, North

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 106-7.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 107-9.

Carolina and other states were seizing their slaves on the streets of New York. “For some days we lost our appetite for food, and sleep departed from our eyes.” The English issued a Proclamation that all slaves who had sought refuge with the British troops were free, and claimed the right to protect them. Each former slave received a certificate from New York’s commanding officer, and preparations were made to take them to Nova Scotia. They arrived at Burch Town in August, and every family was given a parcel of land. “We exerted all our strength in order to build comfortable huts before the cold weather set in.”<sup>333</sup>

In a few months a revival was experienced in the community of expatriated slaves at Burch Town. King’s wife became awakened under the preaching of Moses Wilkinson. “She was struck to the ground, and cried out for mercy: she continued in great distress for near two hours.” King was sent for, and at first he was displeased and refused to go. Eventually King went and was astonished at the agony his wife was under. She experienced pardon six days later, and remained faithful to that experience for nine months, “but being unacquainted with the corruptions of her own heart, and again gave place to bad tempers, and fell into great darkness and distress.” He never saw anyone experience as much anguish over backsliding as his wife. It was so intense that it affected her physically, and she was confined to bed for a year and a half. However, God “sanctified” her afflictions. Her happiness at being restored was “too great to be concealed,” and her testimony led others to come under conviction. She was the first at Burch Town to experience “deliverance from evil tempers,” and she urged

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 157.



others to seek the same experience, experiencing serious opposition from some of the other black Christians. When Freeborn Garrettson came to Burch Town to oversee the society and to organize classes, he encouraged her to “hold fast her confidence.”<sup>334</sup>

Shortly after his wife’s conviction, Boston himself came under conviction, and “could not rest night or day.” He went to see Mr. Brown, who encouraged him in his seeking. King was overwhelmed with guilt and, returning home, he stopped in the woods to pray, but every time he tried to pray he was in such terror that he thought his hair stood up and that the earth moved beneath his feet. At class meetings sometimes six or seven would find peace. King, meanwhile, was tempted to envy those who, unlike him, managed to find peace, which sunk him “deeper into darkness and misery,” so much so he felt unworthy to live among them, even in his own house. He went out to the woods with a blanket and torch, where the snow was three or four foot deep. King started a fire and prayed, sometimes thinking “that I felt a change wrought in my mind,” but soon would fall “thro’ unbelief into distracting doubts and fears, and evil-reasonings.” He dreaded nights as much as death. He experienced these temptations for one year. King worked with a crew of sixteen, thirteen of whom were “devoted to God. . . The divine presence was with these men.” They met in prayer meeting every morning and evening. One day the Parable of the Sower “came with power to my heart.” King decided to make a solemn covenant with God:

I went into the garden at midnight, and kneeled down upon the snow, lifting up my hands, eyes, and heart to Heaven; and I intreated [*sic*] the Lord, who had called me by his Holy Spirit out of ignorance and wickedness, that he would increase and strengthen my awakenings and

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 157-8.

desires, and impress my heart with the importance of eternal things; and that I might never find rest or peace again, till I found peace with him, and received a sense of his pardoning love. The Lord mercifully looked down upon me, and gave me such a sight of my fallen state.”<sup>335</sup>

This revelation from God led King to diligently use the means of grace, and to forsake all that was sinful. Going to preaching one Sunday, King thought he heard a voice saying, “Peace be unto thee!” He stopped, looking around for who might have said it, but no one else was there. Going a little further, “the same words were again powerfully applied” to King’s heart, which removed the burden of misery from it.” He was particularly blessed as he listened to the sermon. The next morning, after his wife left, he locked his doors and knelt down, determined not to rise until “the Lord fully revealed his pardoning love.” After half an hour, God spoke to his heart, “Peace be unto thee.” His fears and doubts were gone, and by faith he saw heaven, with Christ and the angels rejoicing over him. He was now “enabled” to believe in Jesus’ name, and his heart was “dissolved into love.” “Every thing appeared to me in a different light to what they did before; and I loved every living creature upon the face of the earth. I could truly say, I was now become a new creature. All tormenting and slavish fear, and all the guilt and weight of sin were done away.”<sup>336</sup>

King rejoiced for six weeks, before “the enemy assaulted” him again. With a “flood of temptations and evil-reasonings,” it was suggested that he was deceiving himself. King was alarmed by the temptation, which depressed him, and “the enemy pursued his advantage, and insulted me with his cruel upbraidings,” asking King what

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 158-9.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 160.

had happened to his joy. Not much later King heard Garrettson preach on (John 9:25), “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see,” which allowed King to renew his faith, and his fears and doubts were once again gone. “I could say with the Psalmist, ‘the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’ for I had him always before my eyes. . . . I found his ways were ways of pleasantness, and all his paths were peace.”<sup>337</sup>

In 1791 King was appointed by William Black to the society of Presten for three years. He preached for a year without seeing any “fruit” until he prayed that if God had truly called him to preach to his “Black Brethren,” then answer “this day from heaven by converting one sinner.” Toward the end of meeting, “the divine presence seemed to descend upon the congregation: Some fell flat upon the ground, as if they were dead; and others cried out loud for mercy.” After the prayer, King dismissed the congregation, although some left reluctantly. While the society then met they heard a knock, and a woman came in and said, “This people is the people of GOD; and their GOD shall be my GOD,” and then asked to be admitted to tell “what the Lord had done for her soul.” She told of having been distressed for the past three weeks, hardly sleeping, but “under the preaching all my grief vanished away, and such light broke in upon my soul, that I was enabled to believe unto salvation.” The society was “melted into tears of joy,” and she was given membership, along with many others in the next few weeks.<sup>338</sup>

While King was quite comfortable preaching to blacks, when any whites were present he was “greatly embarrassed, because I had no learning, and I knew that they

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 160-1.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 213

had. One day, however, several whites came to hear him, and “the Lord graciously assisted me, and gave me much liberty in speaking the Truth in a simple manner.” His white hearers told the preachers that they had liked his discourse, and the preachers encouraged him to use the talent God had given him.<sup>339</sup>

As the rest of King’s narrative deals with his going to Africa, it will be discussed further below. Both George’s and King’s accounts push the boundaries of race for the *AM*, as the detailed descriptions of the cruelties that they experienced was a powerful indictment of both the slave trade and slavery itself. These well-written accounts (although George’s was dictated) also eloquently defended the inherent equality of blacks with whites. No limitations of the subjects are apparent in their accounts except the difficult outward circumstances that at times were imposed on them by whites and, later, occasionally by their fellow blacks.

#### *4.2.3 Methodism in the Caribbean and in Africa*

The first Methodist work in the West Indies occurred in Antigua. This first mission was built upon the efforts of Nathan Gilbert, Speaker of the House of Assembly in Antigua, who began meetings at his house in 1760. Gilbert preached to the blacks, despite “great reproach,” forming a society of two hundred from their ranks. In 1780 John Baxter, a Methodist local preacher, moved to Antigua as part of his job as shipwright. He began to preach, collecting “the scattered remains of Mr. Gilbert’s labours” for about seven years. Baxter built up a society of one thousand, mostly of blacks. In 1787, Methodist missionaries sailing for Nova Scotia were driven off course,

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<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

and landed in Antigua on Christmas. One stayed to assist Baxter. Three thousand blacks joined the Antigua society, “together with some White persons.” The missions had such an impact on the island that the imposition of military law during festival days to prevent slave rebellions was abandoned.<sup>340</sup>

Methodist missionaries went from Antigua to St. Vincent’s, forming a society of four to five hundred blacks. They then continued to St. Christopher’s (usually referred to as St. Kitts in the *AM*), forming a society there of one thousand. Next was St. Eustatius, where they met severe persecution that eventually forced the removal of the missionaries, yet two hundred members remained to meet for worship. In 1788 several other Methodist missionaries were sent to the West Indies, forming a society of five hundred in Nevis, then another society of five hundred in Tortola and surrounding islands. In Jamaica in 1789 Methodist missions faced serious persecution, although a society of two hundred was formed at Kingston, followed by societies at Grenada, St. Georges, and Dominica. At the time of the report (1796) there were twelve missionaries and 8,656 members. There would have been more missionaries, and thus many more members, if not for “the late disturbances,” and a few deaths by yellow fever. Across the Atlantic in Africa the mission in Sierra Leone contained 223 “Blacks and Mulattoes.” Altogether by 1796 there was a world-wide total (counting Europe’s 90,347) of 164,911 Methodists sixty-seven years after the first Methodist society was formed in 1739.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> “Narrative of the Methodist Missions to the Continent of America, and the West India Island,” *AM* 20:81-2.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-3.

Many reports from the West Indies were provided in the context of Great Britain's wars with France, beginning in 1793 following the execution of Louis XVI. Many formerly French territories had come under British control with the 1763 Treaty of Paris, including Dominica, Grenada and St. Vincent's, all islands on which Methodists had growing missions when the slaves revolted in 1795. France recaptured these three islands in 1779, after allying itself with the United States and declaring war on Great Britain. The islands were under British control again with the 1783 Treaty of Paris. Fedon, a French free mulatto in Grenada, was inspired by the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen and by the French decrees between 1791-1794, granting full citizenship to free people of color and emancipation to slaves in French Caribbean territories. Fedon initiated a rebellion against the British on March 2, 1795, followed by Chief Joseph Chatoyer of the Paramount Indians in St. Vincent's, and Colihaut in Dominica.<sup>342</sup> That year the British also had to contend with the Second Maroon War in Jamaica. Naturally, these rebellions led to fears that the other British holdings in the West Indies would see similar uprisings.

Three years later (1799), the *AM* published an anonymous article on Methodism in the West Indies, reporting rapidly increasing membership. According to the report, the converts had given up their sins, including their favorite, polygamy. The author described the converts as having been

charmed with the testimony which the believing Negroes bore for Jesus Christ. One after another, with the utmost order, they gave an account in their Negro-dialect, of the work of grace upon their souls in its different

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<sup>342</sup> Edward L. Cox, "Fedon's Rebellion 1795-96: Causes and Consequences," *The Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 7-19.

stages, with as much clearness and perspicuity as any Believer in Europe: and their own masters confess that they are the best and most faithful Servants which they possess.

The author provided totals for each island, and for all of the West Indies. Altogether there were 11,000 Methodists in the West Indies, nearly all of whom were black, with an additional forty or fifty thousand under instruction. There were fifty black preachers, and new missions in Bermuda, Providence Island and Grenada. The work in Grenada was targeted toward French slaves, so a French Methodist preacher was brought in from the Island of Jersey.<sup>343</sup>

Usually when numbers were provided in West Indies reports, blacks far outnumbered whites. Categories also often included *brown*, or *mulatto*, usually grouped with the blacks. In 1773, F. Gilbert reported in a letter from Antigua to Wesley of a society of twenty whites, forty blacks and mulattos. Several in each racial category “enjoy a sense of pardon, and adorn the gospel much.” Mr. McVean, reporting from Kingston, Jamaica, wrote of speaking to seven hundred “Browns and Negroes.” He later also used the term “Maroons,” preaching to a crowd of them at Charlestown, whom he described as “very kind and attentive.” William Fish wrote to Thomas Coke that after excluding some members from the Kingston Society in Jamaica because of “their immoral lives,” there remained “about 10 Whites, 60 Browns and 250 Blacks.”<sup>344</sup>

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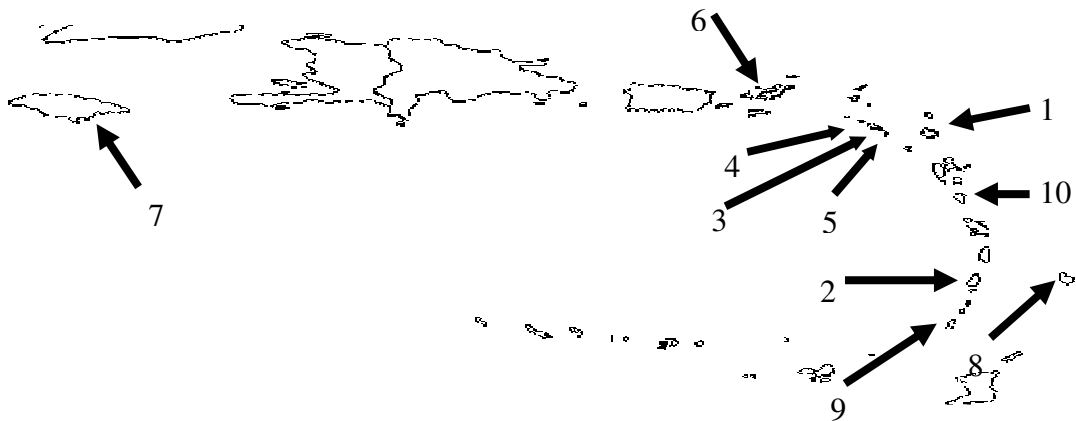
<sup>343</sup> “A Short Account of the Success of the Methodist Missionaries in the West-Indies,” *MM* 23:42-3.

<sup>344</sup> F. Gilbert, “Letter CCCIV (From Mr. F. Gilbert, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Antigua, August 25, 1773), *AM* 9:567, McVean, “From Mr. McVean; dated Kingston, Jamaica, July 21, 1796,” *MM* 23:240-1 and William Fish, “From Mr. Fish; Dated Kingston, in Jamaica, September 23, 1797,” *MM* 24:285. Thomas Coke, fellow bishop with Francis Asbury of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784, would make four missionary trips to the West Indies between 1786 and 1793, detailed in his lengthy published journals.

**Table 4.4: Methodist West Indies Missions, 1778-1803**

	<b>Year</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>1800 Totals</b>
1.	1780	Antigua	John Baxter builds upon the work by Speaker of the House Assembly, Nathan Gilbert, begun in 1760	2800
	1787	Antigua	Missionaries are driven off-course on their way to Nova Scotia, some stay to help Baxter	
2.	1787?	St. Vincent's	The Antigua Missionaries establish a society of 400-500 blacks	2000
3.	1787?	St. Christopher	The Antigua Missionaries establish society of 1000, also called St. Kitts	1800
4.	1787?	Eustatius	The Antigua Missionaries are forced out, but leave society of 200	
5.	1788	St. Nevis		500
6.	1788	Tortola	500 members in societies, including neighboring islands	3000
7.	1789	Jamaica	Mr. Hammett is sent to Kingston, and societies are also established in Port Royale, Montego Bay, Spanish Town	Almost 600
8.	1791	Barbados	John Kingston is sent by Thomas Coke to be missionary to "the Negroes"	44
9.	<1796	Grenada	Established by the Jamaica missionaries	130
10.	<1796	Dominica	Established by the Jamaica missionaries, society of 150 blacks	100
	1800	All West Indies		11,000 total Methodists





**Illustration 4.1 Location of Methodist West Indies Missions, 1780-1800**

The ratio of black Methodists to white Methodists could be quite overwhelming on some islands. Membership in Tortola in 1795 was 12 whites but 2,260 “Blacks and Mulattos.” In St. Kitt’, 1410 “Blacks and Coloured” Methodists were reported, compared to a mere 13 whites. Thomas Richardson wrote that the Antigua society had four thousand black and mulatto members, and a small number of whites. In the congregations in town the proportion of whites was one out of forty, and in the countryside whites were very rare. At the time of the Appendix (1803), there were only fourteen white members in Kingston, with the remainder “brown or black.” Such discrepancies greatly exceeded racial ratios for the population at large. For example, the ratio of blacks to white in Antigua was about 15:1 by 1774 and about 8:1 in Jamaica by 1788.<sup>345</sup>

<sup>345</sup> Turner, “From Mr. Turner; Dated Tortola, March 18, 1795” *MM* 23:381; Harper, “From Mr. Harper; Dated St. Kitts, April 17, 1794,” *MM* 23:565; Thomas Richardson, “Missionary Intelligence: From Mr. Thomas Richardson, to His Cousin at Howdon, Yorkshire, Rofeau, Dominica, Feb. 1, 1803,” *MM* 26:585 and “An Account of the Work of God in Jamaica,” *MM* 26, Appendix:9. For racial proportions, see Richard B. Sheridan, *Agricultural History*, 34, no. 3. (Jul 1960) 127, and Trevor Burnard, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 53, No. 4. (Oct., 1996), 772 for Jamaica.

The racial differences between white elites and those with African ancestry in the West Indies were occasionally expressed in the context of the Methodist meetings. The relative openness of people of color compared to whites further contributed to lopsided racial ratios among West Indies Methodists. When Methodist missionary Hammett came to Kingston in August, 1789, he was greeted by Mr. Coe, a white, reclaimed backslider. Coe's house was used for meetings, forming a society "of about a dozen Whites, and three or four People of Colour," a number which quickly increased. A large building in town was purchased, and a great deal of money spent to expand it greatly. The first floor provided "commodious habitation" for missionaries, while the second floor, "neat, without superfluous elegance," could hold 1,200 people. The chapel was attended not only by "people of colour" and blacks, but also by several gentry.

Many of the former [people of color] received the truth in the love thereof, and brought forth fruit unto God. That some of these afterwards returned to their former sins, is not a matter of wonder: but several continue to this day, ornaments to their profession; while others, having finished their course with joy, are resting in Abraham's Bosom. With most of the Whites it was otherwise.<sup>346</sup>

Methodist missionaries were often frustrated in their efforts to win over West Indian whites. In Manchioneal, Jamaica, a house was rented because many of the whites wanted to hear the preaching, and it was hoped this would open the door to preach to the slaves, but "their curiosity being satisfied, and the doctrines preached militating against their practices, the congregations dwindled away." It was this racial difference in spiritual receptivity that led some Methodists reporting from the West

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<sup>346</sup> "An Account of the Work of God in Jamaica," *MM* 26, Appendix:9.

Indies to *reverse* the typical racial assessment of many whites in speaking much more negatively of whites than of blacks or persons of mixed race. Mr. Andrews wrote to Coke that he was glad to have come to the West Indies, as it removed “a cloud of darkness and prejudice” from his mind, which he felt was shared by many “dear brethren” in England. There are a few free of it, who “see the vast importance of preaching the Gospel among the Negroes and Heathens, in this, as well as in other parts of the world.”

Is it not time for every messenger and servant of God to better himself, to open his mind, and let in light, to disperse narrowness of spirit, and prejudice, and to pray that God would send forth his light and truth far wide, and more labourers into his harvest. . . Sometimes my feelings are hurt seeing the iron rod which their immortal souls labour under. God will work a change, in his own time, in this respect. Yet some of these, enjoy the love of God in an eminent degree. I eagerly pant to see the blessed fire spread thro’ thousands more.<sup>347</sup>

John Baxter hoped that the blacks’ desperate needs would be a divine opportunity, “for they seem ripe for the gospel.” This was borne out in Baxter’s experience, which seemed to have been typical. Six hundred had joined the society, and their use of the means of grace indicated their earnestness. Some came three or four miles to the services, others seven or ten miles barefoot to their class on Sundays.<sup>348</sup>

Frequently Methodist missionaries sympathetically discussed the plight of West Indian people of color, especially slaves. From Antigua John Baxter wrote to Wesley that, “As to the poor negroes,” they lacked water and were only allowed a pint of beans a day. The use of “poor” as a modifier occurred frequently, intending to communicate

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 14 and Andrews, “From Mr. Andrews; Dated Basse Terre, St. Kitts, July 18, 1794,” *MM* 23:566.

<sup>348</sup> J. Baxter, “Letter CCCCCI (From Mr. J. Baxter, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Antigua, June 10, 1779,” *AM* 12:439.

sympathy, although it alternatively could be interpreted by much more recent readers as condescending. Along this line poignant tales were also published. Thomas Coke wrote of Mr. D. in Grenada, who decided his family needed “another servant girl.” He sent to a sale of slaves, and saw a girl of about ten, and asked her, “‘Will you come with me?’ The poor child, who was totally unacquainted with the English language, seemed, nevertheless, to understand him, and nodded her head.” After looking at some other slaves, he turned back to the girl and asked again if she would go with him. “The little naked child immediately threw her arms around him, and burst into tears. His heart was exceedingly touched, and he purchased her, and brought her home. She was immediately well clothed; and, before I left the Island, could speak several words of English, and began to sew.” Coke wrote that the “gentlemen of Grenada, be it spoken to their honour, do, I believe, treat their Negroes better than those of any other island in the West-Indies.” Their law provided for guardians in each parish responsible for the protection of slaves from “injurious treatment,” and the guardians are given substantial powers to carry that out. The law was enacted three years before, and one lady was fined £500 for cruelty “to her Negroe.” Coke’s story reflects the common tension between Methodist disgust with the slave trade and the general treatment of slaves, without actually taking a firm position against slavery itself. Similarly to Coke’s account of Grenada’s law, John Baxter wrote Alexander Mather that the next General Council of Antigua was soon to have a meeting to take up the issue of of the slaves, to pass legislation making “their state more comfortable.”<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> J. Baxter, “Letter CCCCCI (From Mr. J. Baxter, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Antigua, June 10, 1779,” *AM*

Following the above excerpt printed from Coke's journal, the *AM* printed in the same issue a number of brief excerpts concerning the mistreatment of slaves, as well as the extreme response of one slave. First was a brief description of "A Slave's Muzzle," describing how slaves in Jamaica and other islands were muzzled as they harvested grain to prevent them from eating any of it. This iron muzzle was described in great detail. Another brief article followed, entitled "The Revengeful Negro," an account of a slave tortured for something he did not do, who then took his owner's children to the roof and threw them off when the Master approached. This slave then jumped off and killed himself. An unrelated poem followed, but a poem entitled, "The Slave," concluded the issue.<sup>350</sup>

John Kingston, selected by Thomas Coke to be a missionary in the West Indies "among the Negroes," was horrified by West Indian slavery before witnessing the slaves' response to his preaching. He came to Barbados and was struck at first by the natural beauty, then was struck with the ugliness of slavery.

This Island appeared very beautiful. The sugar canes and cotton trees were just ripe, which with the cocoa-nut and cabbage trees, formed the most beautiful landscape I had ever beheld. But the scene was soon changed, for presently our eyes were attracted by the horrible sight of a slave ship, which lately arrived from Africa, laden with men and women almost naked. We were penetrated with horror and grief, when we contemplated the situation of these poor wretches, and anticipated the bondage and misery to which accursed avarice had doomed them.<sup>351</sup>

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12:439; Thomas Coke, "A Continuation of the Journal of Dr. Coke's Fourth Tour Through the West India Islands," *AM* 16:543-4 and Baxter, "From the Same, to Mr. Mather at Leads; Dated Antigua, February, 19, 1798," *MM* 23:425-6. Richard Patterson used the alternative phrase, "poor Ethiopians." in "From Mr. R. Patterson; dated Grenada, August 26, 1793," *MM* 23:287. The self-identifying term "Ethiopians" would become important to Black Methodists.

<sup>350</sup> The articles "A Slave's Muzzle" and "The Revengeful Negro," *AM* 16:555. "The Slave" appears on *AM* 16:560. See n. 319.

<sup>351</sup> Kingston, 22:210.

The identification with slaves allowed Methodists to be supportive of some normalizing of both enslaved and free people of color. Writing Coke from Tortola, Edward Turner reported that there were “many Free coloured people in Society, both men and women, and we thought it proper that those who were free should be married, agreeably to the laws of the country, as the white people are.” This was done with some difficulty, but four couples were married, three of them black. The parish minister preached the wedding sermon and strongly approved of such marriages. John Baxter wrote in 1795 that the slaves on St. Kitts and Antigua were loyal. “We have nothing to fear from them.” A corps of slaves had been formed at St. Kitts. To some extent, this statement did indicate Baxter viewing the slaves as “normal,” in that they were seen as loyal to the British.<sup>352</sup>

Thomas Richardson in Antigua believed that the slaves actually had it better than the “Free-coloured people,” for the slaves at least had a weekly allowance of salt provisions, two suits of clothes per year, and enough land to grow food. “But their morals are in a deplorable state. The Lord’s-day is scandalously profaned.” Stores remained open.

The negroes bring their provisions to market, and afterwards they spend their time in music and dancing, till called to work next morning. The men go half naked, except on Sundays: With the exception of stockings and shoes, they dress like the English. The women generally wear a handkerchief around the head, instead of a cap; and a few have hats instead of bonnets. Gowns, stays, stockings, and shoes, are not at all in

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<sup>352</sup> Edward Turner, “From the Same; Dated Tortola, Aug. 22, 1795,” *MM* 23:422-3 and Baxter, “From Mr. Baxter; Dated Old-Road, St. Christopher’s May 18, 1795,” *MM* 23:567.

use. But they look exceedingly gay in their white muslin jackets and petticoats.”<sup>353</sup>

This very disapproval reflected how increasingly “normal,” that is, like them, white British Methodists viewed people of color in the West Indies. Also like British Methodists, they were prone to the temptations of the ruling classes, particularly dressing beyond what Methodists viewed as appropriate. However, West Indian mission reports in the *AM* were just as likely to show how the behavior of at least some blacks much more closely matched Methodist ideals than the behavior of wealthy whites. In the midst of a fire in Montego Bay, one “gentleman (so called)” was swearing profusely. A black man said to him, “Ab, Mastah no use curse and swear now: cursing and swearing do all dis.”<sup>354</sup> Here, even while using the condescending rendering of black speech, this particular black man is shown to be the spiritual superior of this specific white man.

Not surprisingly, the response of West Indies blacks was often given in great detail on the pages of *AM*. Thomas Coke, attending a love-feast at St. Kitts, found it “most animating to hear the lively and clear accounts” of the blacks’ conversion. Further on in the report, Coke described the radical transformation of West Indian blacks in terms stressing how much further, seemingly, they had to go to become truly holy. The cultural bias is clear:

The Blacks, who nearly make up the whole of this number, have been brought out of heathenish darkness, more or less, to acknowledge of the truth, and a knowledge of themselves. They have left, as far as we can

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<sup>353</sup> Thomas Richardson, “Missionary Intelligence: From Mr. Thomas Richardson, to His Cousin at Howdon, Yorkshire, Rofeau, Dominica, Feb. 1, 1803,” *MM* 26:587.

<sup>354</sup> “An Account of the Work of God in Jamaica,” *MM* 26, Appendix: 13.

find, all their outward sins, even Polygamy itself; and a considerable part of them, give so clear and rational an account of their conversion, and of the influence of religion upon their hearts and lives as is exceedingly animating and encouraging to their Pastors, and Missionaries.<sup>355</sup>

John Kingston's report further established this surprising reversal, that to West Indian Methodist missionaries it was whites, particularly white slave owners, who were the true heathens, and Methodist blacks who were the true civilized Christians. Kingston found the whites of St. Kitts to be "desperately wicked." They despised ministers, and saw them as "wild enthusiasts, not fit to live." Some allowed instruction of their slaves, but others completely forbade it. Kingston wrote of one plantation where "much good had been done," with several branches of the family being converted, while the "Negroes on that estate are serious and steady in attending upon the means of Grace." Yet, unchristian blacks were still clearly "heathen" as well. He observed the black response to death on St. Kitts, which Kingston blamed for hardening their hearts. When someone died, neighbors were invited, "and sometimes multitudes assemble on this occasion," apparently no more concerned than "if it were some favourite amusement. From their entrance into the house to the carrying the corpse to the grave, the time is employed in drinking largely of burnt wine, and other strong liquours."<sup>356</sup>

Kingston's later reports from St. Vincent contained more positive descriptions of black responses. One "poor Black Woman belonging to a neighbouring plantation," who had been distressed, now rejoiced that God allowed her to conquer her "evil tempers." Kingston's congregation was large, because "the poor Negroes received the

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<sup>355</sup> Thomas Coke, "A Continuation of the Journal of Dr. Coke's Fourth Tour Through the West India Islands," *AM* 16:545, 7.

<sup>356</sup> Kingston, 22:210-1.



word with all gladness.” During the entire time of the sitting of the British Conference, his black congregation prayed in St. Vincent that God would bless those in the conference that what was done there would “promote the revival of pure Religion in every part of the World.” During the Christmas Holidays in 1797-8, Kingston baptized 250 slaves in St. Vincent, “many of whom we had reason to believe were truly seeking the Lord.” Kingston believed that a truly “glorious work of conversion” among the blacks in the West Indies was probable, provided they did not “stumble” due to “the abominable wickedness of christian Europeans who visit this part of the world, and by their cursing and swearing, lying and drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking and lewdness, extortion and cruelty, prejudice the Blacks against the christian religion.”<sup>357</sup>

Edward Turner wrote Coke that he often wished Coke could be present for the band meetings in Tortola, “to hear how simply, and yet how wisely, the poor Blacks speak of the things of God. Indeed I never meet the Bands without feeling a remarkable sense of the Divine Presence.” Response was so overwhelming in Tortola, that Turner added “I am sometimes almost ready to think, that all the poor Blacks will be brought in. When some of them are asked, Why they join Society? They answer, ‘We see every body coming, Mass, and canot stay out any longer.’” During the service the people were affected, “if floods of tears, and falling to the ground as dead, be indications of the feelings of their hearts.” Thomas Isham also wrote to Coke from Tortola, describing the responses of blacks during meetings in a chapel already too small for their growing congregation:

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 365, 7.

Some of the poor creatures with tears and sighs, inform us of their convictions, and beg to be prayed with. Others, with tears of joy, testify what God has done for their souls. I trust the time draws nigh when in a more eminent manner, Jehovah will give his Son the heathen for his inheritance; – and when all shall become one fold under one shepherd.<sup>358</sup>

Descriptions of the responses of black West Indians were presented as paradoxically both typical of Methodists everywhere, yet whose responses were quite distinct from white British responses, at least in the speech patterns and physical appearance of the subjects. Alexander wrote of a love-feast in St. Kitts that was the best he had ever attended:

Indeed it was a heaven upon earth, to hear the converted Negroes declare the goodness of God with such artless simplicity. Their attitude was very expressive, while in broken accents, and with tears running down their black faces, they spoke of the goodness of God to them in such words as these: – *‘No foder; no moder; no sister; no brother; no friend! But JESUS is all in all’* And then they blessed God that they had been taken from their native country, and brought to hear the sound of the gospel. Frequently they concluded with this short prayer, *‘May God bless all my ministers, from first to last: Bless my leader: Bless all my brothers and sisters: May we join heart and hand together, to travel in de New Jerusalem.’* If you had been there, it would have made your heart to dance for joy. The congregations are very large; and I think they are the most loving people I ever saw.<sup>359</sup>

Typical of the eighteenth-century convention of blacks in North America or the British West Indies, support for and even appreciation of the existing racial situation is expressed. Black Methodists did not, in this time period, see their transformations as an occasion for critiquing, much less overthrowing, the oppressive racial structures of their current situation. Indeed, British and United States black Methodists would never

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<sup>358</sup> Edward Turner, “From Mr. Turner; dated Tortola, July 29, 1795,” *MM* 23:422 and Thomas Isham, “From Isham; Dated Tortola, May 31, 1795,” *MM* 23:421-2.

<sup>359</sup> Alexander, “From Mr. Alexander, to Mess. Thoresby, and Tauscott; Dated Basse Terre, St. Kitts, August 22, 1794,” *MM* 23:567.

be more similar to whites, more fundamentally Anglo in their outlook, than during the first decades of Black Methodism.

Missionary Thomas Isham described how well West Indian blacks followed the same transformation patterns as British whites. “The convinced and converted Negroes appear to possess a deep sense of their depravity and unworthiness, and of the love and goodness of Almighty God in the gift of his Son; and they express the sincerest gratitude for being favoured with the glorious light of the gospel.” The plantations where the missionaries preached during the week had fifty or sixty in attendance, but at the plantation they preached at the last Sunday there were several hundred slaves from a number of different plantations. “The Love-feasts are refreshing seasons; tears of contrition, joy, and gratitude, with supplication and praises, flow from the eye and lips of many precious souls.”<sup>360</sup>

Thomas Richards compared female Methodist black exhorters in Antigua to female Methodist white exhorters in England. Antigua had between six and eight local preachers, as well as “several colored women,”

who are very lively, and possess considerable abilities for prayer and exhortation. The women, in St. John’s, hold public meetings every week. I got into a corner where they could not see me, and was astonished at their eloquence and unction. Their abilities far exceed most of the women I have heard speak or pray in England. And what is better still, they are patterns of genuine piety. The people were quite willing to testify to God’s work in them, and with a simplicity and wisdom that would astonish you.

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<sup>360</sup> Thomas Isham, “From Mr. Thomas Isham, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, St. Vincent’s, May 19, 1802,” *MM* 25:568-9.

Following Richardson's arrival a covenant service was conducted, with nearly all the women dressed in white. When the covenant was read the attendees were "solemn as death. It would have done you good to have seen them. I was never more affected in my life."<sup>361</sup>

Richards continued with further comparisons, as in how the rural Antiguans were more receptive to the gospel than the poor in England. Some of these Antigua Methodists told Richardson that they walked thirty miles to first hear preaching, serving the Lord from that first sermon. Where there was no preaching, large buildings for prayer were built. Attending the prayer meetings resulted in some of the slaves being severely punished,

but it has no effect but to make them more vigorous in serving God. I have really been astonished at the propriety and power with which they speak of the Lord's dealing with their souls. Oh! if the young men in England did but know how these poor heathen pant and thirst for the gospel of Christ, they would not be so reluctant to leave their country, and help a wretched people who are groaning for redemption.<sup>362</sup>

Richardson argued that the response of Antiguans blacks not only exceeded that of Antiguans whites, but of British whites. Addressing Coke, he wrote

O my dear Sir, I never conceived the willingness of the people to receive the gospel till I came among them; and being persuaded the call was from God, I gladly left my country. But, O! had I known their disposition, I should have wished for wings, that I might have lost no time in shewing them the way to heaven.

The work had grown sufficiently to be divided into two circuits. There were now about seven hundred in the society, compared with the letter from three months before when

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<sup>361</sup> Thomas Richardson, "Missionary Intelligence: From Mr. Thomas Richardson, to His Cousin at Howdon, Yorkshire, Rofeau, Dominica, Feb. 1, 1803," *MM* 26:586.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 587-8.

there had been four hundred. Richardson then shared with Coke recent material from his diary. He had been awakened Tuesday night by a black man who had traveled many miles to tell Richardson that God had pardoned him, so that Richardson could rejoice with him. On Wednesday three young free mulatto women sought to join the society. The day before one had come, saying that hers sins were such a burden she was unable to sleep. Richards “pointed her to the Lord Jesus,” and while praying “she prostrated herself on the floor, and seemed as in agonies of death.” God “spoke peace to her soul,” and she was able to go home rejoicing. On Sunday, fifty-eight slaves were joined to the society on trial, as well as one white man. Many “wept aloud” during the services in the morning and evening, with almost everyone affected. One of the women who had come on Wednesday arrived in a run, shouting praises. She cried out to Richardson, “I am happy, I am happy, I am happy. Praise the Lord on my account: I never was so happy in all my life.” In the Sunday evening meeting four more free blacks received a witness of pardon. The morning of the letter Richardson heard the people crying out. A black woman had “found peace,” and everyone in the field started to cry for God’s mercy. “Surely the visible change so speedily wrought in the countenance of these people, is sufficient to convince any infidel of the power and grace of God.”<sup>363</sup>

There were a few accounts of the lives and deaths of West Indies Methodists of color in the *AM*. John Kingston writes of attending the burial of a Christian slave, Quako. He had been “brought to the knowledge of Christ” by Methodist missionaries,

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 589-90.

“and adorned his profession by a holy life and happy death.” Kingston also described Pender, a Christian slave reported to be 110, who had been bed-ridden for many years,

but she was praising the Lord for all his mercies, and had a joyful hope of immortality; and although a slave, yet she experienced the service of God to be perfect freedom: Very few have I met with, either in America or England, who apparently were more devoted to God than this poor Negroe. Her grey-headed daughters also feared the Lord, and attended upon their mother with constant care and filial affection.

Thus Kingston held up these West Indian slaves as pious yet suffering examples to readers of his memoirs.<sup>364</sup>

John Baxter sent two accounts of “happy deaths” of West Indian Methodists to Coke. The first was John Corey, a mulatto slave and tailor who became “convinced” fifteen years before, when he stopped his “outward sin, and all the vain amusements practiced in this country.” Corey began to pray a great deal, and turned many “from the error of their ways.” He was an exhorter and class leader for twelve years, all the while working during the day so he could pay a dollar every week to his owner while meeting his own needs. “He departed in peace, in full assurance of faith, leaving a wife and eight children. His usefulness was proved by the lamentation made at his death. When I buried his corpse, all was silent as night for a season; but then a lamentation succeeded, enough to pierce the skies.” The second was Christopher Nibbs, a mulatto. He was “convinced” six years earlier, having lived as others did in “that country,” namely, engaging in “Sabbath-breaking, reveling, &c.” The day before Nibbs’ death he led the congregation in singing three hymns and exhorted those in the room to seek God, announcing that “he was a witness of the love of God,” and that while his body

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<sup>364</sup> Kingston 22:366-7.

was dying, yet his soul “enjoyed unspeakable happiness,” and died “in the full assurance of faith.”<sup>365</sup>

John Harris Constant, a native Antiguan, was another West Indian black to have an account of his life printed in the *MM*. Constant’s mother was a member of the society in Antigua, “under the care of Messrs. Gilberts,” one of whom had hired Constant as a servant when Constant was a boy. Following the mixed sentiments Methodists and others had about slavery, Constant “frequently expressed his thankfulness to Divine Providence, for having placed him in such a situation.” He was taught to read and write by his mother, and experienced “very serious impressions” while employed by Gilbert, but they left when Constant left Gilbert’s employ. Constant then served a “gentleman of the Navy,” moving with him to England, but later went with him to Jamaica, later leaving this man’s employ as well.<sup>366</sup>

Constant “remained utterly careless” until Hammett’s arrival as a Methodist missionary, and then was “re-awakened.” Constant experienced “very deep distress of mind,” aggravated “by an unhappy connection he had formed with two women.” He put one “away,” but the remaining one was not “serious” about religion and had a “violent temper,” so Constant did not want to marry her. However, he knew he could not “expect mercy while he lived in a state of wickedness.” After difficult struggles, “earnest prayers, much fasting, and frequent consultation with his christian friends,” Constant finally decided to marry her. “I believe it was not merely his love for her, but

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<sup>365</sup> John Baxter, “From Mr. Baxter; Dated Antigua, May 24, 1794,” *MM* 23:424-5.

<sup>366</sup> “A Short Account of the Life and Death of John Harris Constant, a Free Black, of Jamaica, Mentioned in the Foregoing Account,” *MM* 26, Appendix: 19. The account is dated March 31, 1800.

also a conscientious motive, which induced him to marry her rather than another.” A few hours after he made this decision “he was enabled to believe in Jesus Christ, and to testify that he had redemption in his blood, and forgiveness of his sins.” He remained faithful to his wife until his death six years later. His wife later “became serious; and tho’ not possessed of any great depth of religion, yet remains steady to this day.” She was a slave, and Constant purchased for a price of £100 and manumitted her.<sup>367</sup>

Shortly after the wedding, Constant experienced many troubles and temptations, yet he endured them “with exemplary patience, and held fast his integrity. His humble and peaceable deportment was remarkable; indeed the whole of his conduct was unblamable, and his experience sound and deep.” Later Constant was made a class leader, eventually leading two classes. Constant began public speaking, and “his understanding was clear, his doctrine sound, and his abilities as a speaker were good; so that the serious White People heard him, not only with pleasure, but with profit.” Any spare time was fully spent by Constant in devotion and study. He also fought with the militia as a sergeant in the Maroon War, an experience which so weakened him that he died in March, 1796.<sup>368</sup> This is an instructive example of how even for the Methodists a Christianized, or sanctified, black man was, to a large extent, an Anglicized black man. The Maroons were runaway slaves that fought the British in Jamaica in the First Maroon War in 1739, leading to a treaty giving five Maroon towns semi-autonomy. The war Constant fought in, the Second Maroon War of 1795, would destroy four of those towns.

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 20.



Only occasionally were positive responses of West Indian whites reported. A very early (1773) letter from F. Gilbert in Antigua to Wesley, printed in the *AM* in 1786, wrote that “the Whites are really patterns worthy of imitation.” John Taylor wrote Coke how well people were responding to “the plainest truths, while tears of contrition fall from their eyes.” Even the Whites would go home from the meetings thinking of their past misdeeds, and concluding that someone must have told the preacher “all that we have been doing.” Philip Debell reported to Coke that interested whites thronged around Methodist chapels in the towns, so that there were not seats for everyone. He was grateful for this, and hoped soon to be able to rejoice at their conversion. Debell felt “a degree of pain to see the white people standing all the time of divineservice [*sic*],” but they did not have the money to build new chapels that were large enough. He had received a number of invitations to visit English estates, and in anticipation the slaves of several plantations had built preaching houses, with permission of the owners.<sup>369</sup>

Active opposition rather than excited interest was a far more common response of West Indian whites to Methodism. Such opposition came not only from white planters, but from within the British military. In Grenada an officer commanding three hundred black troops was prohibiting missionary Abraham Bishop from preaching. One of the officer’s men was under such conviction that he went out alone to pray, and his soul was set “at liberty.” He went and told his comrades, and the officer asked him

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<sup>369</sup> F. Gilbert, “Letter CCCIV (From Mr. F. Gilbert, to the Rev. J. Wesley), Antigua, August 25, 1773), *AM* 9:567; John Taylor, “From Mr. John Taylor, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, St. Kitts April 9, 1802,” *MM* 25:517 and Philip Debell, “From Philip Debel, to the Rev. Dr. Coke,” *MM* 25:519-20.

what was the matter. The soldier replied that he had found the Lord. Grabbing a whip the officer said that he would whip him until he said he loved the devil. The soldier refused, but the officer was content to forbid him to go to preaching.<sup>370</sup>

Thomas Coke wrote of the “heroic conduct” of two “Negro-women,” who suffered whippings for attending Methodist prayer meetings. While receiving “severe lashes, . . . great furrows were made in their bleeding backs.” They “triumphed in persecution, and in the honour they received by suffering in their Redeemer’s cause, in a manner which astonished the numerous spectators.” Using “their Negro dialect,” they told the crowd that “they prized the torments which they then endured above all the gold and silver in the world.” They gave such unquestioned “proofs of the power of Religion, of patient suffering, and triumphant faith,” that some of the most prominent men in the Island (St. Eustatius) who had been in the crowd “acknowledged it was a thousand pities that those two Negroes should suffer at all.” The spectacle failed, however, to move Governor Rennolds to change policy.<sup>371</sup>

On St. Vincent’s, Methodist missionary Lumb had been imprisoned for preaching to the slaves in the chapel that the Methodists had built on the land they had purchased. The legislature, wanting to prevent preaching to slaves, had made it illegal for any but the rectors of parishes to preach without a license, and refused to grant a license to anyone who had not lived on the island for one year. The legislators were well aware that this would prevent Methodist preaching because of the itinerant system.

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<sup>370</sup> Abraham J. Bishop, “Letters from Mr. Abraham J. Bishop, No. IV,” *AM* 17:163.

<sup>371</sup> Thomas Coke, “A Continuation of Dr. Coke’s Journal of His Tour Through America, Letter III,” *AM* 22:439.

The very next Sunday Lumb preached, and was committed to prison on the following Thursday. Missionaries Robert Patterson and Mr. Clarke later visited Lumb in prison. Patterson, having heard of the death of Graham of Barbadoes, also expressed his “earnest hope” that deaths of Methodist preachers in the West Indies would not discourage others coming as missionaries.<sup>372</sup>

John Kingston’s black congregation in St. Vincent endured severe persecution. A firecracker was thrown into the Sunday morning service, and that Tuesday shots were fired through the keyhole of the chapel door. Nonetheless, seven hundred blacks attended the love feast and many of them “related their experience with artless sincerity and Christian simplicity: They praised the Lord with joyful lips for sending the Gospel of his Son to enlighten their dark minds, and deliver them from the cruel bondage of sin and satan.” Kingston affirmed that that the salvation experienced by “these poor despised slaves” was “real and substantial, filling them with present happiness, – and enabling them to rejoice in hope of eternal glory.” Regarding their situation as slaves, “they were resigned to the Will of Providence, being persuaded that all things would work together for their good, if they continued faithful to the end.” In the estimation of Kingston, and presumably of the slaves in his congregation, slavery “was more than compensated, by the inward freedom from the law of sin and death, which they enjoyed, and evinced in their lives and conversation.” Kingston then noted that the “public utility” of these missions was evident from that fact that no Christian slave was known to have joined the rebels “in the late unhappy insurrections, which broke out in Grenada

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 441, Richard Patterson, “From Mr. R. Patterson; dated Grenada, August 26, 1793,” *MM* 23:287-8.

and St. Vincent's." However, slaves returning from meetings were mocked and whipped, which the slaves "endured with patience and resignation, knowing that all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."<sup>373</sup> That Kingston could write of Methodist slaves being whipped for attending meetings on the same page that he wrote of their loyalty amidst slave rebellions and of how it was worth being a slave in exchange for salvation indicates how all-consuming the Methodist passion was for their transformational process. It also reflects the how conveniently inconsistent white Methodist missionaries were on issues of race.

Persecution was experienced not only by white missionaries from white legislators, white soldiers at the hands of their superiors, or by slaves at the hands of their masters; but also by Methodist congregations from angry white mobs. Thomas Coke wrote in his journal of mobs taking over Methodist chapels, and engaging in mock Methodist love-feasts, class meetings and band meetings. One night while performing a mock band meeting, a woman stood on a bench "to profess her experience," and after several statements entertaining the crowd, she declared, "Glory be to God, I have found peace, and am sanctified, and am now fit to die." As soon as she said this she fell down dead. These mock meetings then ceased.<sup>374</sup>

Kingston wrote that through God's influence some of the "principal inhabitants" of Nevis had begun to favor them, permitting them access to "the poor heathen; hundreds of whom, after having toiled hard all day beneath the beams of the scorching

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<sup>373</sup> Kingston, 22:365-6.

<sup>374</sup> Thomas Coke, "A Continuation of the Journal of Dr. Coke's Fourth Tour Through the West India Islands," *AM* 17:49.

sun, come at night with pleasure to seek and serve the living God.” When the meetings – which occurred in chapels on different plantations – were full, those unable to get in went to their knees outside, despite the weather. Kingston also mentioned American slaves purchased and brought to Nevis who had been members of Methodist societies in the United States, describing them as “truly precious Black People. . . They are – ‘Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile.’”<sup>375</sup>

In the next issue, however, Brownell wrote of severe persecution of Methodists in Nevis. “The enemy raged violently.” Some of the prominent men of Nevis led the persecution, attending the services, swearing and brandishing clubs, swords and other weapons, breaking up the meetings. Brownell applied to a magistrate, but received no help, which encouraged the persecutors to burn down the chapel and force the missionaries to leave. Even those who were friendly to Methodism did not want to interfere. People generally believed they were connected to Wilberforce and his efforts to end the slave trade. A mob went to the chapel with weapons, and during the singing a “large squib” was thrown in, to set the chapel on fire. “Such uproar, confusion, and noise, I never heard before.” The fire was put out, and the mob was prevented from doing more damage. Their anger was turned on some “Coloured People,” who had to leave the island to save their lives. Brownell, on his way to a magistrate, was clubbed. He presented grievances to the president and council. The council would have sanctioned the persecutors, but Brownell offered forgiveness of the past in exchange for an end to the persecution. Some of the persecutors were disgraced and left the island.

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<sup>375</sup> Kingston, “From Mr. Kingston; Dated Charleston, Nevis, June 4, 1793,” *MM* 23:468-9.

From that time they had not been persecuted. The work had flourished even during the persecution. One hundred had been admitted in the last year, making the total four hundred. Brownell believed that the reason for such a low number was the insistent resistance of the planters to class meetings.<sup>376</sup>

In Jamaica the “white rabble” made it impossible to conduct evening worship “in peace.” Often the lives of the attendees and the preachers were at risk. Seeking justice failed to stop them. One rioter was prosecuted, with three “respectable white” people testifying against him, but as they were Methodists, their sworn testimony was ignored for that of a friend of the rioters, a midshipman chosen to swear the defendant was with him at the time, and thus the verdict was “not guilty.” “It will scarcely be believed by those who are strangers to Jamaica, that the grand jury, to their eternal dishonor, presented the chapel as a nuisance.” This complaint also failed. The rioters, “thus supported and encouraged,” now began to attack the chapel at night, with verbal abuse and throwing of large stones. The front gates of the property were broken, but the town guard arrived and prevented further damage. A reward was offered by the magistrates for information, but no solid leads emerged. “As the people could not possibly, with any degree of attention, hear the word; it was found necessary to suspend preaching by candle-light, until the fury of the mob was somewhat abated.” During this period the society had a guard patrol the property throughout the night. The surrounding fence not yet completed. The guard discovered burnt coals on the chapel floor – a failed attempt to burn down the chapel. One night a large group of the rioters

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<sup>376</sup> Brownell, “From Mr. Brownell; Dated Nevis, May 12, 1797,” *MM* 23:523.

to set out damage the chapel, but before they could do any mischief “two very large and dreadful beings like globes of fire, were seen moving towards them with majestic pace, which struck them with such terror and dismay, that they hastily left the chapel in peace. Those horrid appearances proved to be only two harmless lamps affixed to a lady’s chariot!” This seemed, to the author, to fulfill the verse, “the wicked flee, when no man pursueth” [Proverbs 28:1]. Despite these troubles, “the gospel triumphed.” People experienced conviction and conversion. By contrast, there was little persecution at Port-Royal. Hammett was even allowed for a time to use the courthouse until some the prominent men had it stopped. In the rural areas of Port Royal, however, masters would not allow their slaves “to be instructed in the principles of Christianity.” Only two or three masters were exceptions, and gave the missionaries some very limited opportunities, resulting in some slaves converting.<sup>377</sup>

Mr. Campbell went to Montego Bay, Jamaica in May, 1799. There those who had previously “slighted the gospel” now were actively opposed to it. “To speak against their darling vices, and to attempt the conversion of the negroes (whom some confidently affirmed to have no souls) were crimes utterly unpardonable,” and Campbell was not given permission to preach in the parish despite the license he had previously been granted, violating British law, the argument being that Jamaica was now independent. When protesting that as a British subject he was protected by British law, one responded, “D—n you and the King’s Law.” “But his most violent opposition came from a poor drunkard, whose kept woman beginning to be awakened, he was

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<sup>377</sup> “An Account of the Work of God in Jamaica,” *MM* 26, Appendix: 9-11.

afraid of losing her. This man scrupled not to behave, even in the presence of the magistrates, with the ferociousness of a wild bull.”<sup>378</sup>

By 1803 in Kingston, Jamaica, most planters were very opposed to their slaves

having any thing to do with Christianity. It is pretended that it would make them idle; or perhaps it would render them unwilling to profane the Sabbath, to do which, in Jamaica, is almost esteemed a virtue. Some are peculiarly afraid lest the females should be converted, because that would hinder the gratification of their brutal huts; and others, it seems, are unwilling that the christian conduct of their Negroes should be a reproach to them for the profaneness and immorality.<sup>379</sup>

The appendix to volume 26 (1803) of the *MM* provides a description of the law passed in Jamaica prohibiting preaching by any not approved by the legislature, specifically prohibiting teaching negroes or people of color, requiring any violator be jailed as “a rogue and a vagabond.” The preamble of the act began,

Whereas there now exists in this Island an evil, which is daily increasing, and threatens much danger to the peace and safety thereof, by reason of the preaching of ill-disposed, illiterate, or ignorant enthusiasts to meetings of negroes and persons of colour, chiefly slaves, unlawfully assembled, whereby not only the mind of the hearers are perverted with fanatical notions, but opportunity is afforded to them of concerting schemes of much private and public mischief.<sup>380</sup>

In the last two decades of the eighteenth century there was some interest in repatriating ex-slaves, especially loyalists transported by the British to Nova Scotia, to Sierra Leone. By 1787 King found his mind

drawn out to commiserate [with] my poor brethren in Africa; and especially when I considered that we who had the happiness of being brought up in a christian land, where the Gospel is preached, were notwithstanding our great privileges, involved in gross darkness and

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 14-5.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 18.



wickedness; I thought, what a wretched condition then must those poor creatures be in, who never hear the Name of GOD or of CHRIST; nor had any instruction afforded them with respect to a future judgment. As I had not the least prospect at that time of ever seeing Africa, I contented myself with pitying and praying for the poor benighted inhabitants of that country which gave birth to my forefathers.<sup>381</sup>

Again, as spiritual transformation was more important than any worldly social or political concern, this ex-slave was far more concerned with free Africans in their native land than with those remaining in slavery in the Americas.

In 1792 an opportunity arose for Boston King and his society to move from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone. Married men received thirty acres, and boys under fifteen received five. Passage would be free, and on arrival a lot of land would be given sufficient for subsistence. The company funding the project also agreed to furnish all needed supplies in return for the plantations' produce. The company's goal was "as far as possible in their power, to put a stop to the abominable slave trade." While King was doing well in his current position, he still remembered his concern in previous years for the conversion of Africans, and so decided to take up the offer. The preachers gave the Rules of the Society and other booklets they thought would be helpful. The preachers also urged the émigrés "to cleave to the Lord with our whole heart, and treated us with the tenderness and affection of parents their children." They "parted with tears, as we never expected to meet again in this world."<sup>382</sup>

King and his comrades left for Africa on January 16, 1793. King's wife became very ill, and he prayed that God would at least spare her until they landed, so he could

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<sup>381</sup> King *MM* 21:209.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 261-2.

“give her a decent burial.” In fact she recovered entirely. On March 6 they arrived at Sierra Leone, and three weeks later his wife caught “putrid fever,” from which she died. “I likewise found my mind drawn out to pity the native inhabitants, and preached to them several times, but laboured under great inconveniences to make them understand the Word of GOD, as I could only visit them on the Lord’s Day.” King received permission from the governor to be employed at the company’s plantation on Bullam Shore in order to have more contact with the Africans. At one point he was sent to a town to teach the children to read, but he had difficulty getting children to teach because so few parents were interested. On Sunday he told the people,

It is a good thing that GOD has made the White People, and that he has inclined their hearts to bring us into this country, to teach you his ways, and to tell you that he gave his Son to die for you; and if you will obey his commandments he will make you happy in this world, and in that which is to come; where you will live with him in heaven; – and all pain and wretchedness will be at an end; – and you shall enjoy peace without interruption, joy without bitterness, and happiness to all eternity. The Almighty not only invites you to come unto him, but also points out the way whereby you may find his favour, viz., turn from your wicked ways, cease to do evil, and learn to do well. He now affords you his Word to be a light to your feet, and a lantern to your paths; and he likewise gives you an opportunity of having your children instructed in the Christian Religion. But if you neglect to send them, you must be answerable to GOD for it.<sup>383</sup>

King’s audience, “the poor Africans,” seemed to listen closely as he spoke to them through an interpreter. He went from four students to twenty, and fifteen stayed for five months. He taught them the alphabet, spelling two-syllable words, and the Lord’s prayer. “And I found them as apt to learn as any children I have known. But with regard to the old people, I am doubtful whether they will ever abandon the evil

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<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 262-3.

habits to which they were educated, unless the Lord visits them in some extraordinary manner.” That year the governor agreed to supply King two or three years of schooling in England. When he first came to England he was so intimidated by his lack of education compared to English people that he decided to never try to preach while he stayed in England. The preachers continued to ask him and others answered his objections, “and I found it profitable to my own soul, to be exercised in inviting sinners to Christ;” especially one Sunday when God abundantly blessed him,

and I found a more cordial love to the White People than I had ever experienced before. In the former part of my life I had suffered greatly from the cruelty and injustice of the Whites, which induced me to look upon them, in general, as our enemies: And even after the Lord had manifested his forgiving mercy to me, I still felt at times an uneasy distrust and shyness towards them; but on that day the Lord removed all my prejudices. . .

I have great cause to be thankful that I came to England, for I am now fully convinced, that many of the White People, instead of being enemies and oppressors of us poor Blacks, are our friends, and deliverers from slavery, as far as their ability and circumstances will admit. I have met with the most affectionate treatment from the Methodists of London, Bristol, and other places which I have had an opportunity of visiting. And I must confess, that I did not believe there were upon the face of the earth a people so friendly and humane as I have proved them to be.

Here an African-American Methodist had become so Anglicized as to pity African “Heathen” far more than African slaves, and King described whites as deliverers and his own people as “poor Blacks.” On September, 1796, King set sail once again for Sierra Leone, and resumed his work as the colony’s school-master, with about forty students.

“We hope to hear that they will not only learn the English Language, but also attain some knowledge of the way of salvation thro’ faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>384</sup>

On neither side of the Atlantic, and on neither side of the equator, did early Methodism entirely rise above the racial perspectives of the time or propose a radical social revolution to end slavery and root out all remnants of racial inequality and prejudice. Methodism remained a rather moderate reform, moving well beyond the standard views of the average British citizen, yet remaining to some extent within established traditions. Wesley and his followers steadfastly refused to go so far past established beliefs and practices as to become unpalatable to the majority of people, or to be perceived as an attempt to overthrow rather than repair and redirect the social order. The achievements of early Methodism can be measured by the overarching and guiding purpose of Methodism, once expressed by Wesley as the commitment “to spread scriptural holiness across the land and to reform the nation.”<sup>385</sup> In short, early Methodism existed to radically transform individuals in the social context of restoring “primitive” Christianity. The transformation of the individual was not overtly racial and political despite having some racial and political implications. Rather, the individual’s behaviors, “tempers” and relationship to God were to be changed from unholy and inadequate to holy and intimate. The church was to be changed from unholy and ineffective to holy and vitally relevant. This vision meant that the idea of abolition of slavery was not an obvious imperative to the early Methodist, and explains why decades later abolition could be seen by many Methodist in the southern states as

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 263-5.

<sup>385</sup> *Works*, 8:299.

wrong or even pernicious. The transformations promulgated by Methodism were not designed to change a convert's social situation or status. The design of Methodist transformation was no more to manumit slaves or enfranchise people of color than it was to improve the working conditions of the Kensington miners or to increase their representation in parliament. On the other hand, Methodist transformations *were* intended to change one's spiritual situation and status. Those "enslaved" by sin were set free through a detailed and prescribed process, free from the guilt, stigma and power of what the seeker believed to be sin. Those spiritually powerless were empowered to rise above their sinfulness and take their place with their spiritual peers, which included all other believers, despite social rank or differentiations.

While the intent of Methodism was not overtly racial, social or political, its implications over time often were. Early on converted Methodist slaves in the Caribbean were content, according to their own public testimony, to remain slaves, yet white Methodists could not help being increasingly troubled by the situation of their fellow Methodist believers who demonstrated such exemplary religious sensitivity. While free black Methodists in the West Indies remained "loyal" during the uprisings in 1795, free blacks in the United States would become sufficiently disgusted by ongoing segregation, particularly at the altar in prayer, that Richard Allen and others would establish black congregations that would ultimately become new black denominations. As Methodism's second century approached, Methodists across the Anglo world found they had to fall definitely on one side or the other on issues of slavery, racial equality and, eventually, segregation.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

As *The Methodist Magazine* (*MM*) entered into its own second quarter century, as well as into the nineteenth century, the number of narratives per issue continued unabated. Actually, the average number of narratives jumped from an average of two an issue in the early 1780's to three an issue by 1803. However, by 1803 these narratives tended to be shorter, and were nearly always obituaries, rather than the subject detailing his or her own experience. The earlier narratives, whether of preachers or lay people, were generally autobiographies, providing a much more varied and detailed account of the transformation process. Within a dozen years of Wesley's death the narratives in the *MM* were increasingly formulaic. The formulaic nature of the narratives may actually have been a benefit, as the first several years of the nineteenth century were a period of sustained dramatic growth for British Methodism. The last quarter of the eighteenth century witnessed an average growth rate of British Methodist membership of 4.7% per year, while the average annual growth rate in the next quarter century was nearly as high, at 4.3%.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> The percentages can be extrapolated from the data found in Hempton, 216.

This study has used several reference points to examine the transformation process that underlay the increasing number of increasingly formulaic narratives. James Day's understanding of narrative strategies has allowed me to not merely detect themes and patterns, but to see the commonalities as serving a purpose in shaping the individual and the community. There are numerous prominent narrative strategies that were employed in the *AM*'s narratives. Two particularly significant strategies were supernatural encounters and the "bewitchment" of future seekers first encountering Methodism. Supernatural events generally ushered in a crisis experience, sometimes crises of conviction, but generally crises of faith for pardon or crises of faith for entire sanctification. Authors did not report these events simply because they believed they happened. Their reporting of them furthered the sense of drama, encouraging an understanding of, and expectation for, climax. The ambiguity of authors when describing these events, sometimes describing them as occurring in their imagination, created a rather low threshold for what constituted a vision, or some other kind of divine (or demonic) encounter. A high percentage of supernatural events leading to crises involved scripture passages becoming "powerfully impressed" upon the mind of the subject. Again, this is a rather low threshold for the supernatural, yet consistently the subject or the author clearly saw such an event as supernatural. That many seekers would cross this low threshold and find divine confirmation of Methodist teaching and the seekers sudden conformity to it is hardly surprising.

The strategy of the common experience of "bewitchment" upon first encountering Methodism became less frequent by 1803, for obvious reasons. By this

time most narrative subjects first directly encountered Methodism when the movement was no longer viewed as new, strange and threatening. Despite how much more commonplace Methodism had become, accounts of being astonished and overwhelmed upon initial exposure to Methodism still were reported with some regularity through and beyond volume twenty-six. Again, clearly the transformation process was couched in drama, with an experience of “bewitchment” that often approximated a transformation crisis occurring before, or simultaneous with, the conviction of sin. These accounts of bewitchment explained to readers how being within Methodism was entirely different from or even superior to being outside Methodism, although ostensibly the point was how much better it was to be in God’s will and favor than to be outside of his will and favor. Bewitchment also offered an explanation for opposition, and why Methodism, despite authors and subjects being convinced of its truth, could seem to be so incomprehensible and objectionable to so many outsiders.

The application of Victor Turner’s model of processual ritual to early Methodist narrative reveals a movement at odds with the depiction of Methodism as socially backwards and oppressive that is common in many studies of revivalistic movements. Without clarifying whether the Methodist program of transformation was based on false assumptions, or whether or not it actually tended toward the ultimate psychological health or social welfare of its participants, an examination of the ritual process of Methodist transformation explains the appeal and effectiveness of Methodism within its own social setting. Whatever else early Methodism may have done or not done, it delivered powerful, life-changing experiences to seekers and believers. Transformed



Methodists were, in fact, delivered from their sense of guilt and from behaviors and patterns of thought and emotion that they had so strongly come to disapprove of. Methodists could function intimately with others who had likewise been delivered, and help others experience the same transformations that they had. All of this made Methodism a tremendous success, in terms of its own purposes and goals, in the late eighteenth century.

Many historians challenged Palmer and Godechot when they outlined the existence of an Atlantic culture of the late eighteenth century, although the ongoing stream of transatlantic studies continues to vindicate them. This Atlantic culture, to a large extent, was a collection of loose networks, of which Methodism was one. What allowed Methodism to be one of these numerous networks was not merely its structure, or its appealing beliefs, but its ability to fulfill its promise to bring about a lasting transformation of its adherents. Whether or not this change was actually of the supernatural nature that the subjects believed it to be, their beliefs, emotions, behaviors and social networks did undergo real change. The effectiveness of Methodism in bringing about these changes in one setting was not sufficient for success as an effective transatlantic network. Methodism had to be able to reproduce this process in various settings of the Atlantic world. Within twelve years of their founder's death, Methodism was increasingly successful in the United States, with a membership beginning to exceed that of Great Britain by 1803. Not only were Anglo Americans increasingly responsive, but free blacks and slaves were even more responsive, both in the United States and in the West Indies.

Having carefully examined the narratives in twenty-six years of publication of the *AM*, totaling over six hundred accounts, one can now ask, just how successful were Wesley and early Methodism in achieving their goals? First, were the early generations of Methodists successful in creating the kind of individual they desired, that is, how effective were they in multiplying true Methodists? To answer this, I must revisit Wesley's description of what a Methodist actually was, which is quoted at length above on pages 36 and 37 above. To sum up Wesley's description, a Methodist was one who loved God entirely and loved "his neighbor as himself." Methodists loved even their enemies because the love of God had purified their hearts "from every unkind temper or malign affection." Methodists had only one desire, to do God's will, and this desire led them to obey his commandments to do "good unto all," meeting urgent physical needs such as hunger or shelter, but "much more . . . to do good to their souls."<sup>387</sup>

Within this theological and biblical language some tangible and measurable aspects can be ascertained. Internally, fully loving God and loving one's neighbor as one's self meant no longer being subject to unholy affections or tempers. This occurred in two steps, the convert not giving in to them, and the perfected believer not sensing any of these unholy affections or tempers at all. Of course, Methodism defined what these unholy affections and tempers were. The seeker and/or believer were constantly inundated with Methodist teaching, whether at class or band meetings, or in conversations with class leaders, preachers, or with other mentors. Methodists also frequently had recourse to supernatural events to facilitate their deliverance. Externally,

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<sup>387</sup> See n. 42.

fully loving God and loving one's neighbor as one's self meant adhering to Methodist standards of conduct. These standards included observing Methodist taboos and engaging in acts of private and public devotion and in charitable works toward others. What evidence the *AM* provides of Methodist members' adherence to these standards indicates a high level of success in external as well as internal measures of love. If this accurately reflects what commonly was accomplished in a Methodist life, and if the high growth rate in Great Britain, Ireland, the United States and the West Indies is taken into consideration, then early Methodism clearly was successful in making Methodists matching Wesley's expectations in *The Character of a Methodist*.

These individual standards would apply not only to "spreading scriptural holiness across the land" but also, to complete Wesley's statement, to the further goal "to reform the nation." When judging whether Methodism reformed the nation, scholars generally use secular and more modern definitions of reform than that intended by Wesley himself. Perhaps in some ultimate sense Wesley was including political reforms, but what Wesley, who strenuously rejected national self government and passionately defended the divine right of George III to rule, envisioned as political reform likely would have been quite limited indeed. Wesley gave little indication he was concerned for increased enfranchisement, for labor or land reform, or for the abolition of slavery and granting of full civil rights to Catholics, women and people of color. To Wesley, reforming the nation must have meant, almost entirely, religious reform. Likely Wesley envisioned a nation adhering to the internal and external demands of Methodism. Such a nation would leave little to no income for purveyors of

alcohol or moderately to expensively-priced clothing and jewelry. This nation would have had a radically altered economy as its citizenry followed Wesley's dictum to "gain all you can; save all you can; give all you can."<sup>388</sup> Certainly, given Wesley's very strong ethical impulse, attending to the physical needs of the poor would have been a high priority, but it is difficult to know whether Wesley would have assumed a truly reformed nation would engage in such works in large measure through the government or almost entirely through private channels. Clearly the state of Great Britain by 1803 met virtually none of Wesley's expectations for a reformed nation, and it is doubtful that Great Britain has reached those expectations since. Although Methodists would be very involved in social reforms of the early nineteenth century and beyond, one cannot argue that Methodism itself reformed Great Britain, although it clearly had an impact.<sup>389</sup> Methodism and the holiness movement, an outgrowth of Methodism that included people of other denomination that adhered to Methodist theology and vision, played a more prominent role in reform movements in the United States, being at the forefront of the colonization, early abolitionist, temperance, anti-secret society, anti-tobacco and Sunday law reforms. Howard A. Snyder has recently argued that the founder of the Free Methodist Church, B. T. Roberts, was the catalyst for the formation of the Farmer's Alliance, which was the forerunner of the People's Party and of the populist

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<sup>388</sup> See Wesley 1760 sermon on "The Use of Money" in *Works* 5:124-32.

<sup>389</sup> The classic works on the involvement of Methodists in nineteenth-century British reform are those by Robert Featherstone Wearnmouth, including *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Epworth Press, 1945); *Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England, 1800-1850* (London: Epworth Press, 1947); *Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes, 1800-1850* (Leicester, England: E. Backus, 1954) and *Methodism and the Trade Union* (London: Epworth Press, 1959).

movement in general.<sup>390</sup> While many have argued that indeed the Wesleyan message was significant in reforming the United States, it is certainly difficult to prove just how significant that message was. However, there is a consensus among historians that Methodism had a measurable, if moderate, impact of reforming Great Britain, and quite possibly a significant impact in antebellum reform in the United States. A mitigating factor, however, is that a large percentage of Methodists would break off the main body in 1844 to form the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church specifically to allow members, and specifically a bishop, to own slaves. While there were anti-slavery sentiments expressed by the parent body, the Methodist Episcopal Church did not specifically prohibit lay members from owning slaves until the Civil War began.

Using similar techniques, there are numerous possible areas for future study. Due to limitations in length, I have not taken up the issue of a distinctive female voice in early Methodist narrative. This omission was also partly because this area has received more attention than other aspects of early Methodist autobiography.<sup>391</sup> Other time periods and locales also provide further opportunities for study. The first four decades of the nineteenth century was a significant time in United States Methodism, as expansion continued unabated and the holiness movement had just begun. The German Pietist denominations that had embraced the Wesleyan message, John Albright's Evangelical Association and Martin Boehm's United Brethren in Christ, were both

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<sup>390</sup> Howard A. Snyder, *Populist Saints: B. T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 744-88. Interestingly, Part II of Snyder's book is entitled, "Liminality," describing the crisis period in which Roberts and others would form the new denomination.

<sup>391</sup> See Paul Chilcote, *Her Own Story: Autobiographical Portraits of Early Methodist Women* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2001) and Paul Chilcote, *Early Methodist Spirituality: Selected Women's Writings* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2007).

organized in 1800 and prospered, moderately, during these decades. The African Union Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church were founded in 1813, 1819 and 1821 respectively. These last two are today the second and third largest Methodist denominations, with a total United States membership of nearly four million. The twenty years before the Civil War are important for Methodist studies not only because of the issue of slavery but because the increasing influence for reform by northeastern Methodists and the rise of the holiness movement, which included such figures as Charles Finney. Furthermore, post-bellum Methodism was even more diverse, giving rise to a broader holiness movement that in turn would give rise to Pentecostalism. All of these movements and time periods are exceedingly rich in biographical and autobiographical material, contained in literally scores of periodicals and thousands of books. Of course, many movements, religious and otherwise, have had programs of transformation and substantial biographical and autobiographical material.

Much more work can be done with the tools of ritual transformation and narrative strategy. Victor Turner himself, late in his career, suggested that the structure of the human brain and the history of its evolution might be very significant in understanding ritual transformation. Turner made reference to neurologists' three-part division of the brain into the reptilian midbrain, mammalian limbic lobe and the neocortex and into two hemispheres. The left hemisphere analyzes while the right is disposed to symbolic, holistic and metaphorical imagery, just as some Jungian psychologists have claimed a neurological basis for archetypes and the collective

unconscious. Developments in the understanding of the brain have opened up other fruitful areas to study the historical practice of religion. Brad D. Strawn and Warren S. Brown have supplied one example with their investigation of “Wesleyan Holiness through the Eyes of Cognitive Science and Psychotherapy.” Other anthropologists have offered constructs for examining religion and religious transformation without the assumptions so likely to lead to functionalism and reductionism, such as Catherine Bell.<sup>392</sup>

Wesley could not know exactly what paths his followers would choose overtime. In Great Britain Methodism gradually slowed in its rate of growth, until now the Methodist Church of Great Britain, a union of nearly a dozen off-shoots of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion which merged back into the parent body, numbers merely 330,000. The Methodist Church now represents 0.6% of the population of the UK, while in 1851 Methodists made up 2% of the population of Great Britain. Methodists still make up approximately 4% of the US population, although that percentage is down from the high in 1920 of 6.5 %.<sup>393</sup> The Methodist Church in Great Britain and the largest three Methodist denomination in the United States all give some sort of official allegiance to the traditional Wesleyan program of transformation. In practice, however, they largely stress only the *limen* of the new birth and its post-liminal aftermath, often focusing almost entirely on charitable works and social justice.

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<sup>392</sup> Bernard J. Verkamp, “Concerning the Evolution of Religion,” *Journal of Religion* 71:4 (Oct 1991): 543-4 and Brad D. Strawn and Warren S. Brown “Wesleyan Holiness through the Eyes of Cognitive Science and Psychotherapy” *Journal of Christianity and Psychology* 23:2 (Summer 2004): 121-9. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) and Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>393</sup> For membership figures see Hempton, 212, 214.

Because the Atlantic world predating the Napoleonic War is now also almost entirely beyond recognition to the average Methodist, focusing on early Methodism's system of transformation may or may not remain useful to contemporary Methodists as a model to recover and follow. However, the example of what was, for a time, a highly-effective network of the transatlantic eighteenth-century, using a method that allows the researcher to take the claims of participants seriously, remains a useful exercise for social scientists.



APPENDIX A

PERSONAL NARRATIVES IN *THE ARMINIAN MAGAZINE*, 1778-1803, BY DATE

Margaret Jenkins, Letter XXXIV: From Mrs. Margaret Jenkins, Bristol, Oct. 8, 1743, 1:5 (228-30)

John Nelson, Letter LI: From Mr. John Nelson, An Account of a Remarkable Penitent, Bristol, Feb. 1, 1747-8, 1:11 (529-30)

John Varley, Letter LII: From Mr. John Varley, The Death of William Holmes, Epworth, January 31, 1747, 1:11 (531)

Peter Jaco, A Short Account of Mr. Jaco: Written by Himself: In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, 1:11 (541-4)

John Atlay, A Short Account of Mr. John Atlay: In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, 1:12 (577-81)

Rebekah Bennet, Letter LV: From Mrs. Rebekah Bennet, The Experience of One of the Servants at Kingswood School, August 13, 1748, 1:12 (581-4)

Elizabeth Holmes, Letter LVI: From Mrs. Eliz. Holmes, The Experience of Another of the Servants, August 28, 1748, 1:12 (584-6)

John Pawson, A Short Account of Mr. John Pawson: In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, 2:1 (25-40)

Thomas Olivers, An Account of the Life of Mr. Thomas Olivers, Written by Himself, 2:2 (77-89), 2:3 (129-45)

Elizabeth Mann, Letter LXVII: From Mrs. Elizabeth Mann, Thirst For Full Salvation, London, September 14, 1749, 2:3 (150-2)

Thomas Rankin, A Short Account of Mr. Thomas Rankin: In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, London, Nov. 16, 1776, 2:4 (182-200)

Charles Perronet, Letter LXVIII: From Mr. Charles Perronet, On Communion With the Father and the Son, 2:4 (199-212)

Alexander McNab, A Short Account of Mr. Alexander McNab: In a Letter to the Mr. John Wesley, 2:5 (40-51)

Sarah Ryan, Account of Mrs. Sarah Ryan, 2:6 (296-310)

Benjamin Rhodes, An Account of Mr. Benjamin Rhodes, Written by Himself: In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, April 20, 1779, 2:7 (358-66)

John Oliver, An Account of Mr. John Oliver, Written by Himself: In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, June 1, 1779, 2:8 (417-32)

Thomas Tennant, An Account of Mr. Thomas Tennant, Written by Himself: In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, July 1, 1779, 2:9 (469-75)

John Mulin, A Short Account of Mr. John Murlin, August 1, 1779, 2:10 (530-6)

Francis Fetherston, Letter LXXXVI: From Mr. Francis Fetherston, The Breathings of a Newly-Awakened Soul, Trinity-College, Dublin, May 21, 1756, 2:10 (537-8)

John Trembath, Letter LXXXVII: From Mr. John Trembath, A Backslider Reviving, But What is He Now? Cork, June 28, 1756, 2:10 (539-40)

William Hunter, An Account of Mr. William Hunter, Written by Himself, 2:11 (589-98)

John Allen, Some Account of Mr. John Allen, Written by Himself, 2:12 (635-40)

Thomas Lee, Some Account of the Life of Mr. Thomas Lee, 3:1 (25-32), 2 (140-5)

Alexander Mather, An Account of Mr. Alexander Mather: in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, 3:2 (90-99), 3 (146-60), 4 (199-209)

John Haime, A Short Account of God's Dealings With Mr. John Haime, 3:4 (207-17), 3:5 (255-73), 3:6 (806-313)

M. G., Letter CXII: From M. G. to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, March 11, 1759, 3:5 (273-4)

John Manners, Letter CXIII: From Mr. John Manners, to the Rev. Mr. J. Wesley, June 9, 1759, 3:5 (275-6)

John Fisher, Letter XCVI: From Mr. John Fisher, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, Dublin, October 15, 1795, 3:5(279)

Thomas Mitchell, A Short Account of the Life of Mr. Thomas Mitchell, 3:6 (314-25)

Thomas Taylor, An Account of the Life of Mr. Thomas Taylor, 3:7 (367-85), 8 (420-41)

Adam Milsim, Letter CXXVI: From Mr. Adam Milsim, to the Rev. Mr. J. Wesley, London, Dec. 27, 1760, 5:8 (444-5)

Thomas Hanson, Some Account of the Life of Mr. Thomas Hanson, 3:9 (477-85)

B. B., Christian Experience, 3:9 (493-6)

Alexander Mather, Letter CXXIX, 3:9 (496-8)

Thomas Hanby, A Short Account of Mr. Thomas Hanby: In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, 3:10 (538-551)

Barbara Brough, Some Account of the Life and Death of Mrs. Sarah Brough, 3:11 (592-601)

John Mason, Some Account of the Life of Mr. John Mason: in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. J. Wesley, 3:12 (650-5)

George Bell, Letter CXLIII: From Mr. George Bell, to the Rev. Mr. J. Wesley, Whitehall, April 6, 1761, 3:12 (674-6)

Bathsheba Hall, Extract from the Diary of Mrs Bathsheba Hall, 4:1 (35-40), 2 (94-97), 3 (148-52), 4 (195-8), 5 (256-9), 6 (309-11), 7 (372-5)

M. B., Letter CXLIX: From Miss B. to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, March 7, 1761, 4:2 (107-8)

J. C. M., Letter CLI: From Mr. J. C. M. to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, May 2, 1761, 4:3 (110-1)

N. a. , An Account of Mrs. Jane Muncy, 4:3 (153-154)

N. a. , Letter CLV: From ----- to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, June 4, 1761, 4:3 (162-5)

Sarah Whiskin, An Account of Sarah Whiskin, 4:4 (198-201)

William Green, Some Account of Mr. William Green, 4:5 (251-5), 6 (304-9)

N. a. , A Short Account of John Woolley, Who Died In February 1742, Aged Thirteen Years and Some Months, 4:5 (259-63)

J. D., Letter CLXII: From Mr. J. D. to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, July 23, 1761, 4:5 (279-82)

H. H-n, Letter CLXIV (From Mrs. H. H-n, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley), 4:5 (282-3)

John Wesley, A Short Account of Susannah Wesley: Extracted From the Journal of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, 4:6 (312-6)

M. B., Letter CLXV: From Miss B. to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, April 6, 1761, 4:6 (333-6)

Erasmus Middleton, Letter CLXVIII: From Mr. Erasmus Middleton, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, Horncastle, Feb. 27, 1761, 4:6 (338-40)

Duncan Wright, Some Account of Mr. Duncan Wright (Wrote by Himself), 4:7 (367-72), 8 (414-9), 9 (469-76), 10 (526-8)

John Wesley, A Short Account of Mrs. S.: Extracted from the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Journal, 4:7 (375-6)

E. M-n, Letter CLXXIII: From Mrs. E. M-n, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, Potto, March 11, 1762, 4:7 (393-6)

Thomas Joyce, A Short Account of Mr. Thomas Joyce, 4:8 (419-21)

B., Letter CLXXIV: From Miss B. to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, Friday Evening, 4:8 (442-4)

Sarah Oddie, Letter CLXXVIII: From Mrs. Sarah Oddie to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, Baton Forge, March 18, 1762, 4:8 (449-52)

Ruth Hall, A Short Account of Mrs. Ruth Hall, 4:9 (477-80)

D. King, Letter CLXXXIII: From Mrs. D. King, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, May 11, 1762, 4:9 (501-2)

Charles Boon, Some Account of the Death of Mr. Charles Perronet (Even This Imperfect Account of the Death of So Good a Man Will Be Acceptable, At Least, to All Who Knew Him), 4:10 (528-9)

Thomas Clark, A Short Account of Mr. Thomas Clark, 4:10 (533-4)

Thomas Taylor, A Supplement to the Life of Mrs. Thomas Taylor, 4:11 (578-90)

B., An Account of Mr. Thomas Eden, 4:12 (641-6)

John Wesley, A Short Account of the Elizabeth Marsh and Two Others, 4:12(644-6)

S. C., Letter CCVI: From Miss B. to a Friend, May 25, 1762, 4:12 (668-9)

N. a. , Some Account of the Death of Mary Cook, London, May 25, 1743, 5:1 (20-1)

Sarah Colston, Some Account of the Death of Mary Thomas, Bristol, June 6, 1745, 5:1 (21-2)

N. a. , Some Account of the Death of Isaac Kilby, Bristol, June 27, 1745, 5:1 (22-3)

John Wesley, Some Account of a Child, June 28, 1746, 5:2 (78)

Henry Thornton, A Short Account of the Rector of Wesley, 5:2 (79)

John Wesley, Some Account of Francis Coxon, March 30, 1747, 5:2 (79-80)

N. a. , Some Account of Mr. Wishart, 5:2 (95-98), 5:3 (138-141)

John Wesley, Some Account of Sarah Peters, November 13, 1748, 5:3 (128-136)

John Pawson, An Account of a Very Remarkable Child, Who Died Some Years Ago, At Stockton Upon Tees, 5:4 (183-4)

John Pawson, Some Account of Joseph Taylor, 5:5 (242-3)

D. D., A Short Account of Mrs. Ann Hall, 5:5 (244-5)

N. a. , Some Account of Mr. William Ferguson: Aged 47, 5:6 (292-7), 7: (346-51)

N. a. , An Extract From the Journal of Mr. G. C., 5:6 (298-301), 7 (351-5), 8 (404-8), 9 (465-8), 10 (519-24), 11 (575-80), 12 (639-41), 6:1 (19-22), 2 (73-6), 3 (125-7), 4 (186-9), 5 (244-6), 6 (299-302), 7 (352-5), 8 (407-10), 9 (465-8)

J. J., A Short Account of Mr. Samuel Massey, 5:6 (301-3)

Jane Cooper, Christian Experience, 5:8 (408-9)

N. a. , An Account of John Warrick, Aged Ten Years, 5:9 (468-72)

Jane Cooper, Christian Experience, 5:9 (489-90)

John Furz, An Account of Mr. John Furz, 5:10 (514-9), 11 (572-5), 12 (636-9)

Hatton, Miss Hatton's Account of Her Sister's Death, 5:10 (525-6)

John Nelson, John Nelson's Account of the Death of Joseph Lee, 5:11 (580-1)

W. Smith, An Account of the Death of Richard Blackwell, 5:12 (641-2)  
 Mary James, An Account of the Death of Mrs. Doyle, 5:12 (642-3)  
 Sampson Staniforth, A Short Account of Mr. Sampson Staniforth in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, 6:1 (13-19), 2 (66-72), 3 (122-5), 4 (181-6), 5 (237-43), 6 (294-9), 7 (348-52)  
 N. a. , A Short Account of Mr. Richard Boardman, 6:1 (22-4)  
 N. a. , A Narrative of the Death of the Mon. Fr. N-t, Son is the Late -, 6:2 (83-5), 3 (132-3)  
 Thomas Rankin, An Account of the Death of Elizabeth Dunting, Aged Thirteen, 6:2 (76-7)  
 Thomas Rankin, An Account of the Death of An Belton, 6:2 (77-9)  
 Thomas Rankin, An Account of the Death of Ann Dunn, 6:3 (128-9)  
 J. Robinson, An Account of the Death of Mr. John Morgan, 6:3 (129-31)  
 Morgan, A Supplement to the Former Account, Written by His Widow, 6:3 (131)  
 A near relation, An Account of the Death of Mr. J. P. by a Near Relation, 6:4 (189-90)  
 N. a. , The Words of a Dying Saint, Who Departed This Life, July 25, 1759, 6:4 (190-1)  
 John Dillon, Letter CCXCV (From Mr. J. Dillon, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley), 6:4 (210-1)  
 James Oddie, Some Account of Mrs. Oddie, 6:5 (247-9), 6 (302-4), 7 (355-7)  
 A. Mather, An Account of the Death of William Stafford, 6:5 (249-50)  
 Henry and John Pupp Homewood, A Remarkable Account of the Death of Two Sisters, 6:5 (251)  
 D. K., An Account of the Death of Mrs. Dawson, of Dublin, 6:6 (305-6)  
 J. T., An Account of the Late Mr. Charles Greenwood, of London, Who Died Feb. 20, 1783, 6:6 (306-9), 7 (361-3)  
 John Wesley, Some Account of the Late Dr. Dodd, 6:7 (358-60)  
 John Wesley, An Account of Mr. J. V.: In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, 6:8 (404-7), 9 (459-64), 10 (514-21), 11 (574-9), 12 (635-8), 7:1 (13-9), 2 (70-75), 3 (127-32), 4 (182-6), 5 (241-3)  
 A. Short, An Account of Elizabeth Booth, 6:8 (412-13)  
 N. a. , A Short Account of Benjamin Wood, of Sheffield, 6:8 (414-5)  
 N. a. , An Account of Martha Thompson, of York, 6:9 (468-71), 10 (524-8)  
 Richard Boardman, Mr. Boardman's Account of the Death of His Wife, 6:9 (472-3)  
 Robert Roe, The Experience of Mr. Robert Roe, 6:10 (521-4), 11 (580-2), 12 (638-41), 7:1 (19-22), 2 (76-81), 3 (132-7), 4 (186-9), 5 (244-8), 6 (303-7), 7 (358-62), 8 (417-9), 9 (469-73), 10 (523-7), 11 (582-7), 12 (635-8)  
 Sarah Clay, Some Account of Sarah Clay, Written by Herself: In a Letter to the Rev. John Wesley, 6:10 (529-30), 11 (582-4), 12 (641-3)  
 William Blake, William Blake's Account of His Wife, 6:11 (584-6)  
 N. a. , Some Account of Mrs. Crask, 6:12 (643-5)  
 N. a. , A Brief Account of Mr. J. Guildford, from Saturdy the 20th of May, 177, to the Friday Following, 7:1 (23-4)  
 N. a. , A Short Account of the Life and Death of Emmanuel Jowit, 7:1 (24-5)  
 Hatton, A Short Account of the Death of John Hatton, 7:1 (25-8)

- N. a. , An Account of an African Negro: Taken from Capt. Seagrove's Journal of His Voyage to Guinea, 7:1 (44-5)
- J. V., Letter CCCXVI: From Mr. J. V. to the Rev. John Wesley, Purfleet, Aug. 20, 1767, 7:1 (50-2)
- N. a. , A Short Account of the Life and Death of William Adams, 7:2 (83-85), 3 (138-43), 4 (190-4)
- M. M., Letter CCCXXVII (From Mrs. M. M. to the Rev. J. Wesley), 7:4 (221-2)
- John Haim, An Account of a Woman Who Died in the Lord, Nov. 7, 1783, in Whitchurch, Hampshire, 7:5 (248-9)
- Richard Rhoda, Account of Mr. Richard Rodda, in a Letter to John Wesley, 7:6 (298-303), 7 (353-8), 8 (440-6), 9 (464-8)
- D. Perronet, Letter CCCXXXVIII (From Miss D. Perronet, to the Rev. J. Wesley), 7:8 (444-5)
- P. B., Letter CCCXXXIX (From Miss P. B., to the Rev. J. Wesley), 7:8 (445-6)
- George Brown, Some Account of Mr. George Brown (Written by Himself), 7:10 (518-23), 11 (577-82), 12 (632-5)
- N. a. , An Account of the Death of Sarah Utley, 7:10 (530-1)
- B. C., Some Account of the Death of William Burton, 7:12 (642-4)
- William McCornock, An Account of Mr. Wiliam McCornock, in a Letter to the Rev. John Wesley, 8:1 (16-19), 2 (77-80), 3 (135-9), 4 (186-9)
- George Story, A Short Account of the Death of John Haim, 8:1 (19-20)
- J. Rogers, A Short Account of Mrs. Martha Rogers, 8:1 (20-4), 2 (81-5), 3 (139-43), 4 (189-94), 5 (244-7), 6 (302-4), 7 (359-61)
- John Hoskins, An Account of Mr. John Hoskins: in a Letter to the Rev. John Wesley, 8:1 (24-6), 2 (85-8), 3 (143-4), 4 (194-6)
- C. Perronet, A Memorial for Miss Nancy Bissaker: Written in the Fourteenth Year of her Age, by the late Mr. C. Perronet, 8:1 (48-51), 2 (111-2), 3 (163-5)
- Margaret Wood, Letter CCCLV: (From Mrs. Margaret Wood, to the Rev. J. Wesley), 8:1 (56-9)
- C. Hopper, An Account of Mrs. S. Standering, 8:2 (80-1)
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Liam Thomas Iwig-O'Byrne graduated from Aldersgate College in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan in 1989 with a Bachelor of Theology and from Asbury Theological Seminary in 1993 with a Master of Divinity. At Asbury Liam elected to write a thesis entitled, "A Progression of Methodist Radicalism: An Examination of the History and Ethos of the First Sixty Years (1855-1915) of the Nazarites and their Heirs in the Social and Religious Context." Liam is an ordained elder in the Texas Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America, and has been a pastor since 1993. He has presented papers in October, 2000 at UTA's Transatlantic Graduate Student Forum, at Southwest Social Sciences Association in March, 2001. Both of these papers were on the topic of the co-founder of the Pilgrim Holiness Church, Martin Wells Knapp. In September, 2003, Liam presented a paper at the Free Methodist Graduate Student Theological Seminary in Indianapolis on the proposed changes to the Free Methodist Article of Religion on Entire Sanctification. Liam has presented two papers at the Wesleyan Theological Society Meeting. The first was presented in March, 2004, on, "Dress, Diversions and Demonstrations: Embodied Spirituality in the Early Free Methodist Church," and was published in the Spring, 2005, edition of the Wesleyan Theological Journal. The second, "Never Quite Good Enough: The Relentless Search for Certainty in *The Arminian Magazine*, 1778-1780," was presented in March, 2008, and will be submitted

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