

WESLEYAN BELIEFS

Formal and Popular Expressions
of the Core Beliefs
of Wesleyan Communities

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CHAPTER 5

BELIEFS ABOUT THE "WAY OF SALVATION" AFTER THE WESLEYS

INTRODUCTION

The "way of salvation" describes a cluster of teachings embracing many of the most distinctive beliefs of Wesleyan communities. Chapter 2 examined John Wesley's construals of the "way of salvation" and the second part of chapter 3 examined Charles Wesley's expression of doctrines related to the "way of salvation." This chapter offers a core sample of distinctively Wesleyan beliefs about the "way of salvation" showing how these beliefs were reflected in hymnals, catechisms, and theologies, and then also in the ways in which Methodist people gave testimonies to their own spiritual experiences.

The scope of this chapter will differ from the previous chapter in two respects. The previous chapter considered beliefs about God as they were expressed in John and Charles Wesley and then in subsequent Wesleyan literature, but it did not deal with the testimonies of Methodist people. The subject of the "way of salvation," however, has been more extensively discussed in chapters 2 and 3, so this chapter will not return to the teachings of the Wesleys. It will focus instead on the expression of this teaching in the period after them. A second difference between the previous chapter and this one is that the previous chapter did not take up the spirituality of particular men and women except in the few examples known where Methodist people actually experienced visions of the Trinity. The "way of salvation" did become part of the regular

vocabulary of Methodist people and for this reason this chapter can take up an extended account of how teachings about the "way of salvation" provided a vocabulary in which people could organize and express their own religious experiences.

THE "WAY OF SALVATION" IN FORMAL CONSENSUS

Background

Chapter 2 has shown that John Wesley, building on the understanding of the *ordo salutis* developed by Puritan authors, transmitted a set of beliefs about the "way of salvation" as the distinctive content of the Methodist movement. The second part of chapter 3 has shown how Charles Wesley, also building on the Puritan expression of the *ordo salutis* and utilizing the genre of the hymn that had been developing in the Reformed tradition, expressed distinctly Wesleyan teachings about the "way of salvation" in his hymns and other poems. I turn now to a consideration of the "way of salvation" as it is revealed in the schemata or organizational structures of Methodist hymnals, catechisms, and then in systematic theologies authorized by Methodist churches for the training of Methodist preachers. The next section will consider how this understanding of the "way of salvation" was expressed in personal testimonies of Methodist people.

The "Way of Salvation" in Methodist Hymnals

The previous chapter showed how Methodist hymnals from 1848 were organized in a creedal pattern, with hymns in praise of the divine Trinity at the beginning. Almost every one of the Methodist and Wesleyan hymnals I have studied have a lengthy section singing sinners and Christians through the "way of salvation," including repentance, faith, assurance, and the quest for sanctification or Christian holiness. In this respect the subsequent Methodist hymnals do follow the basic pattern set by John Wesley in his organization of the 1780 *Collection*. In introducing the *Methodist Hymnal* of 1964, Carlton R. Young noted this consistent organizational structure of Methodist hymnals:

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A third distinctive trait of a Methodist hymnal is the prominence placed upon hymns that reflect, in Wesley's words, "the experience of real Christians." In maintaining this topical format in a hymnbook, Wesley expressed the view that the book was to be used by Methodists and must reflect the experiences of Christians within the context of the Wesley revival.¹

Although the *Pocket Hymn Book* published by The Methodist Episcopal Church in 1793 does not clearly follow this pattern, the *Wesleyan Collection* remained in print in this early period.² The 1837 *Hymn Book of the Methodist Protestant Church* has a long section on the "Process of Salvation" with subheadings on repentance, faith, justification, regeneration, adoption, "witness of the Spirit," "graces of the Spirit," sanctification, "triumph in death," "glory in the resurrection," "approved in the judgment," and "immortality in heaven."³

Methodist hymnals after 1840 typically followed the specific pattern set by the 1780 *Collection* in dividing hymns between those appropriate to "sinners" (parts II and III of the 1780 *Collection*) and "believers" (Part IV of the 1780 *Collection*).⁴ The 1848 collection entitled *Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Episcopal Church* has a section entitled "The Sinner" followed by a section entitled "The Christian Life," with subsections on "justification by faith," "adoption and assurance," and "sanctification."⁵ The same general division between "The Sinner" and "The Christian" can be seen in the 1877 revision of this Methodist Episcopal hymnal.⁶

As of the 1905 hymnal jointly sponsored by The Methodist Episcopal Church and The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, these two sections are titled "The Gospel" and "The Christian Life," and a *Free Methodist Hymnal* from 1910 follows this pattern closely.⁷ Both of these hymnals place entire sanctification rather early in the section on the Christian life, reflecting the prominent place of the Holiness movement in this period.⁸ The British *Methodist Hymn-Book* of 1933 and The U.S. *Methodist Hymnal* of 1935 jointly produced by The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and The Methodist Protestant Church have a section titled "The Gospel" (1935) or "The Gospel Call" (1933) followed by a section titled "The Christian Life." But two important shifts occurred with these early twentieth-century hymnals. In the first place, the weight given to the two sections had

shifted. In the 1933 *Hymn-Book*, the section titled "Gospel Call" has only 28 hymns, whereas the section titled "The Christian Life" has 300 hymns.⁹ The joint American *Methodist Hymnal* of 1935 has more hymns in the section titled "The Gospel" (72 hymns in this section), but this is tempered by a second factor that appears in both of these hymnals: the first section, "The Gospel" or "The Gospel Call," is not strictly limited to "sinners" as was the pattern in earlier Methodist hymnals. Both have sections on faith in the first section titled "The Gospel," and the American hymnal even has hymns on "forgiveness" and "consecration" in this earlier section. The American hymnal of 1935 does not have a subsection explicitly labeled "sin" or "depravity," although it does have a subsection on "repentance." Moreover, in the American hymnal of 1935, the subsection on "Christian perfection" is placed at the very end of the section titled "The Christian Life," and this probably reflects a reaction against Holiness teaching that had gone on in these denominations in the early twentieth century.¹⁰ The same organizational division between "The Gospel" and "The Christian Life" is followed in the 1984 *Bicentennial Hymnal* of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.¹¹

The weakest Methodist hymnal with respect to the sequence of hymns on the "way of salvation" was the 1964 *Hymnal* of The Methodist Church, subsequently retitled *The Book of Hymns* of The United Methodist Church. This hymnal included sections on "call" and "repentance and forgiveness," but these were structured as subheadings under "The Gospel of Jesus Christ" along with other hymns on the theme of Christology and atonement. Also, they were severed from the section on the Christian life, which begins with "faith and regeneration" and runs through "Christian perfection" to "death and life eternal." This hymnal reflected the very strong momentum of the liturgical renewal movement, which was pressing Methodists in the direction of organizing hymnals according to the seasons of the Christian year. In fact, an original proposal was to do away with the "Christian Life" section entirely until the elderly Bishop Nolan Harmon pleaded, "The Christian Life is all we have," meaning that the section titled "The Christian Life" had been the most consistent and distinctive mark of Methodist hymnals.¹²

The most recent British and American Methodist hymnals have a stronger recognition of this distinctive trait of Methodist

hymnody and *Hymns and Psalms* (661-751), though from its scheme sections on "prayer and perfecting" Wesleyan the through the 19th Church of the hymns on Christifying, and so

There has been a traditional structural organization that directly acknowledges the 1780 *Collection* as a substantial portion of Wesleyan uncertainty in organizational scheme addressed to a flat pattern that under the category of prevention of these schemas appears fairly low by just and difficulties

The "Way"

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The "Catechism" of the African Methodist

hymnody and hymnal organization. The British Methodist hymnal *Hymns and Psalms* (1983) has a section on the Christian life (hymns 661-751), though I note that repentance is conspicuously absent from its schema. The 1989 *United Methodist Hymnal* has consecutive sections on "prevenient grace," "justifying grace," and "sanctifying and perfecting grace." This reflects the resurgence of interest in Wesleyan theology and spirituality that had been going on through the 1970s and the 1980s. The most recent hymnal of the Church of the Nazarene (1993) follows this pattern of organizing hymns on Christian experience by the categories of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace.¹³

There has thus been a consistent pattern in the schemata (organizational structures) of Methodist and Wesleyan hymnals explicitly acknowledged from the time of John Wesley's arrangement of the 1780 *Collection of Hymns*. In accordance with this pattern, a substantial portion of hymns are arranged in a sequence following the Wesleyan understanding of the "way of salvation." Specific organizational schemes vary from the twofold distinction of hymns addressed to "sinners" and "believers" in earlier hymnals to the flat pattern that embraces hymns on the repentance of sinners under the category of "The Christian Life" to the more recent pattern according to which hymns are organized under the headings of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. But throughout these schemata, a sequence of moments in Christian experience appears fairly consistently: namely, the repentance of sinners, followed by justification, regeneration, assurance, sanctification, trials and difficulties, and, finally, entire sanctification.

The "Way of Salvation" in Methodist Catechisms

A similar pattern of sequential moments in Christian experience can be seen in catechisms designed for the formation of children and young people by Methodist and other Wesleyan churches. There has been a long and continuous tradition of Methodist catechisms, beginning with John Wesley's *Instructions for Children* (1745) and continuing in most branches of Methodist churches with the exception of The United Methodist Church.

The "Catechism on Faith" included in the *Disciplines* of the African Methodist Episcopal Church from 1817 is the collection of

Minutes of the earlier Wesleyan conferences known more generally as the "Doctrinal Minutes." This document discusses most of the critical points of the "way of salvation" (justification, faith, regeneration, assurance, sanctification), but because it follows the pattern of the early Methodist conferences, it does not deal with these in sequential order. The other catechisms examined here have a series of questions that follow sequentially the "way of salvation," and these can be laid out synoptically as follows:

| 1793 <i>Short Scriptural Catechism</i> ¹⁴ | 1824 <i>Catechisms of the Wesleyan Methodists</i> ¹⁵ | 1852 <i>Catechism of The Methodist Episcopal Church</i> ¹⁶ | 1884 "Ten Doctrines of Grace" ¹⁷ |
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| repentance (7) | repentance | | |
| prayer (8) | | | |
| | faith in general | | |
| | faith in Christ | | |
| justification by faith (9) | justification adoption | justification and adoption | justification (5) |
| assurance (10) | | | adoption (7) witness of the Spirit (8) |
| regeneration (11) | regeneration | regeneration | regeneration (6) |
| the divine law (12) | | | |
| sanctification, including entire sanctification (13) | sanctification [begins] entire sanctification | sanctification entire sanctification | entire sanctification (9) |
| possibility of falling away (14) | | danger of falling from grace | final perseverance (10) |

There is a consistent pattern in this material despite some distinctive nuances. The 1793 *Short Scriptural Catechism* has sections on

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prayer and the divine law that do not appear in the other catechisms. The 1852 *Catechism* of The Methodist Episcopal Church puts questions on justification and adoption together, and the 1884 appended list of "Ten Doctrines of Grace" has a separate section on the witness of the Spirit, and places regeneration after justification, adoption, and the witness of the Spirit. These two catechetical documents do not have separate questions on the repentance of sinners. The "Ten Doctrines of Grace" utilizes the term "final perseverance," although the content of this section describes the same content as that of the other catechisms where they discuss the nuances, however, a common sequential pattern of moments in the "way of salvation" runs as follows:

the repentance of sinners
justification
regeneration
assurance (adoption, witness of the Spirit)
sanctification
entire sanctification
danger of falling from divine grace

These form a temporal sequence, although in Wesleyan teaching justification and regeneration and the assurance of pardon were thought of as normatively occurring at the same moment, so it is not surprising that the order of these three items is sometimes changed. Moreover, "falling away" or "falling from grace" was a danger that could present itself at any point after justification, so its location at the end of the sequence is not necessarily temporal. The sequence of these moments in Christian experience parallels the sequence in Methodist hymnals.

The "Way of Salvation" in Authorized Works of Systematic Theology

Methodist preachers and ordained clergy were trained utilizing formal works of systematic theology authorized for study by the Methodist denominations and printed by their publishing houses, beginning with Richard Watson's *Theological Institutes* (1823). Almost all of these works were published in the nineteenth

century. With the exception of Thomas O. Summers's *Systematic Theology* (1888), these works of systematic theology were organized in a pattern common to theological textbooks, including prolegomena (Watson's "evidences"), doctrinal theology ("doctrines"), ethics ("morals"), and ecclesiology ("institutions").¹⁸ Within this framework, however, they devote a great deal of attention to the defense of the Wesleyan and Arminian belief in the universal availability of grace,¹⁹ and they devote considerable space to the explanation of the "way of salvation." The exception to this is Summers, who organized his two-volume *Systematic Theology* as lectures on the Articles of Religion, and so did not have an extended discussion of the "way of salvation."²⁰ This could explain why Thomas N. Ralston's *Elements of Divinity* (originally published in 1847) remained in print in Southern Methodist churches for decades beyond the publication of Summers's textbook.

Richard Watson discussed moments in the way of salvation under "Doctrines of the Holy Scriptures." He dealt with justification in chapter 23 and in chapter 24 he continued with "Concomitants of Justification: Regeneration and Adoption (Assurance)."²¹ Four chapters (25–28) defended the universal availability of grace; then he dealt with "benefits of redemption" in chapter 29, with an extended discussion of entire sanctification.²² Ralston also dealt with moments in the "way of salvation" under the general topic of biblical doctrines. He offered a long sequence under the general heading of "The Remedial Scheme—Its Benefits" (Part I, Book IV), where he discussed the influence of the Holy Spirit (chapter 25), repentance (chapter 26), faith (chapter 27), justification (chapters 28–33), regeneration (chapter 34), adoption and the witness of the Spirit (chapter 35), perseverance of the saints (including the possibility of falling from grace, chapter 36) and Christian perfection (chapter 37).²³ This outline answered almost exactly to the sequence given in the 1852 Methodist Episcopal catechisms examined above.

William Burt Pope divided his material somewhat differently. His work had a trinitarian schema, indeed, one might say an "economic" trinitarian schema in which specific moments in the "way of salvation" are dealt with as aspects of Christology under the category of "The Administration of Redemption" and other moments are dealt with as aspects of pneumatology. Under Christology in

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the second volume of his work, Pope deals with the "preliminaries of salvation" including free will, conversion, repentance, and faith.²⁴ Under pneumatology in the third volume he discusses "the state of salvation," including regeneration and adoption, and then "Christian sanctification" including entire sanctification.²⁵

The specific content of these nineteenth-century works of systematic theology from Watson through Pope reveals a consistent defense of the Wesleyan teachings on the "way of salvation" in a dialectic with other Christian traditions. For example, the teaching about justifying faith as heartfelt trust in Christ is contrasted with beliefs in "baptismal justification" (despite the fact that Wesley believed in a version of this) and with the notion of a merely objective faith (*fides quae creditur*) attributed to Lutheran and Reformed traditions.²⁶ Thomas Langford commented on the lack of originality among nineteenth-century interpreters of the Wesleyan message, finding little doctrinal development between Wesley and Pope in the 1880s. Langford faulted Pope, in particular, for his failure to deal with critical cultural issues such as the rise of Freudian thought facing the churches in his day.²⁷ But their lack of originality indicates a remarkable consistency in Wesleyan thought from Wesley's own time through the early twentieth century. These nineteenth-century interpreters were telling their own, internal story: the story of the "way of salvation" that had structured the distinctive spirituality of the Methodist movement.

Summary

When these officially sanctioned documents—hymnals, catechisms, and works of systematic theology—are considered together, they show a consistent and stable pattern to beliefs about the "way of salvation," according to which Christian experience was understood as embracing the following typical moments in this temporal sequence:

the *repentance* of sinners, followed by
justification by faith, occurring simultaneously with
regeneration and
the *assurance* of pardon (including "the witness of the Spirit"),
followed by
the process of *sanctification*,

including trials and difficulties and the need for the
repentance of believers
and even the possibility of falling away, but culminated
hopefully in
entire sanctification.

I return, then, to the example of a Methodist laywoman in 1855 (I have Eliza Clark Garrett in mind) who would have regularly sung hymns laid out in the "way of salvation," who attended quarterly meetings or camp meetings where the preaching followed the sequence of the "way of salvation,"²⁸ keeping "a strict account" of how many souls were awakened, converted, and sanctified during the meeting, whose family might own a copy of one of the 1852 Methodist catechisms detailing the "way of salvation" in questions and answers that could be posed to children as an exercise in the evenings and on the Lord's Day, and whose circuit-riding preachers would have studied the "way of salvation" as it was explicated in a more sophisticated way in Watson's *Theological Institutes* or Ralston's *Elements of Divinity* and possibly also in Wesley's *Standard Sermons* in addition to Watson or Ralston. She would have been well familiar with the "way of salvation" as Methodists understood it.

THE "WAY OF SALVATION" IN POPULAR RECEPTION AND EXPRESSION ILLUSTRATED BY SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

How were the formal or official teachings of Methodist churches received and expressed by people in Methodist churches? Methodists produced a voluminous literature of personal conversion narratives, diaries and journals, spiritual autobiographies, and the distinctly Methodist genre of obituaries that were also used as a way of describing personal religious experience. Just as Wesley's *Sermons* and his arrangement of the 1780 hymnal set precedents for subsequent Methodist theology about the "way of salvation," so his published *Journal* set a precedent for the recording of personal religious experiences.

One way to test the level of reception of teachings about the "way of salvation" is by examining some specific spiritual autobi-

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ographies of Methodist people. Fortunately, a series of spiritual autobiographies from early American Methodist people has been published in recent decades and I will use five nineteenth-century autobiographies published in critical editions in recent decades. The first two are from a Native American, William Apess, a Pequot Indian from Massachusetts born in 1798, and his wife, Mary Apess, who was Euro-American and was born in 1788. These are published in a volume titled *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, A Pequot*.²⁹ William Apess had been a licensed preacher in The Methodist Episcopal Church but united with The Methodist Protestant Church at about the time of its organization in 1830.³⁰

The next three autobiographies are from a volume titled *Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century*, and it includes the autobiographies of three black Methodist women, Jarena Lee (1783–after 1849), Zilpha Elaw (ca. 1790–after 1845) and Julia A. J. Foote (1823–1900). Jarena Lee was associated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the time of its founding by Richard Allen and she was an early advocate of the right of women to preach in that denomination. Zilpha Elaw ministered as a lay preacher and evangelist in The Methodist Episcopal Church, and Julia Foote was a preacher in the AME Zion Church. Shortly before her death in 1900 she became the first woman ordained as an elder in the Zion Church. Lee, Elaw, and Foote were all free black women from northern states of the United States.³¹

In addition to these five nineteenth-century autobiographies, I will also have reference to one Methodist autobiography from the twentieth century, that of Bishop James K. Mathews whose personal narrative entitled *A Global Odyssey* offers an account of his own spiritual experience.³² These six autobiographies illustrate the historic Methodist understanding of the "way of salvation" and show how the formal teachings of Methodist churches were received at a popular level. The fact that four of these six individuals came from minority cultures (Native American and African American) is a significant indication of how the Methodist message was received and internalized even across significant cultural frontiers.

Repentance before Conversion

William and Mary Apess, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, and Julia Foote all recount in detail the struggles of their souls leading up to conversion, including their awareness of God's impending judgment, their intense awareness of their own sinfulness, and their need for divine grace. A few excerpts will illustrate the intensity of their experiences of repentance prior to justification.

William Apess: "My heart now became much troubled, and I felt determined to seek the salvation of my soul. . . . A conviction settled on my mind, more and more; and I was more serious than usual. . . . When I considered how great a sinner I was before God, and how often I had grieved the good Spirit of the Lord, my distress for mercy was very great."³³

Mary Apess: "This was the first time I had been warned to seek the salvation of my soul. [The preacher's] words sank deep on my mind; I began to weep as soon as he had left me; I went out, and for the first time I ever felt the need of praying or of a Savior; I knelt and poured out my soul to God, that he would have mercy upon me; although I had never seen anybody kneel, yet it was impressed on my mind that I must, and from that time I cried to God earnestly every day, during some months."³⁴

Jarena Lee, recounting an experience in early life after she had told a lie to the woman in whose household she worked as a domestic servant: "At this awful point, in my early history, the Spirit of God moved in power through my conscience, and told me I was a wretched sinner. On this account so great was the impression and so strong were the feelings of guilt, that I promised in my heart that I would not tell another lie."³⁵

Zilpha Elaw: "I never experienced that terrific dread of hell by which some Christians appear to have been exercised; but I felt a godly sorrow for sin in having grieved my God by a course of disobedience to His commands."³⁶

Julia Foote: "All this time conviction followed me, and there were times when I felt a faint desire to serve the Lord; but I had had a taste of the world, and thought I could not part with its idle pleasures. . . . [She attends a dance, and] I had taken only a few steps

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when I was seized with a smothering sensation, and felt the same heavy grasp on my arm, and in my ears, a voice kept saying, 'Repent! Repent!' I immediately left the floor and sank into a seat."³⁷

Mathews's account of his sense of sin prior to conversion is only a small notice embedded in the narrative of his conversion but dramatic in its own way.

James K. Mathews: "So earnestly did I seek that I wrote out all the sins I could recall having committed, filling four foolscap pages."³⁸

Conversion (Justification, Regeneration, and Assurance)

Each of the six Methodist autobiographies recounts a conversion narrative, usually involving a single moment in which the narrator feels her or his sins forgiven. This moment answers to justification and the "assurance of pardon" in more formal Methodist lore and probably also includes regeneration, although the term "conversion" is more common in popular Methodist literature.³⁹

William Apess: "The result was such as is always to be expected, when a lost and ruined sinner throws himself entirely on the Lord—*perfect freedom*. On the 15th day of March, in the year of our Lord 1813, I heard a voice saying unto me, in soft and soothing accents, '*Arise, thy sins that are many are all forgiven thee; go in peace and sin no more.*' There was nothing very singular, save that the Lord stooped to lift me up, in my conversion."⁴⁰

Mary Apess: "The plan of salvation was now open to my view. The Son of God was revealed to me by faith, in all his offices as prophet, priest, and king. . . . My load of sin and fear of hell were gone. . . . My burden of sin now left me; my tears were dried up. I felt a sweet peace in my soul."⁴¹

Jarena Lee, after hearing Richard Allen preach: "That moment, though hundreds were present, I did leap to my feet, and declare that God, for Christ's sake, had pardoned the sins of my soul. Great was the ecstasy of my mind, for I felt that not only the sin of *malice* was pardoned, but that all other sins were swept away

altogether. That day was the first when my heart had believed, and my tongue had made confession unto salvation."⁴²

Julia Foote; "I was converted when fifteen years old. It was on a Sunday evening at a quarterly meeting [where she felt a sense of conviction]. . . . I fell to the floor and was carried home. . . . In great terror I cried: 'Lord, have mercy on me, a poor sinner!' The voice which had been crying in my ears ceased at once, and a ray of light flashed across my eyes, accompanied by a sound of far distant singing; the light grew brighter and brighter, and the singing more distinct, and soon I caught the words: 'This is the new song—redeemed, redeemed!' . . . Such joy and peace as filled my heart, when I felt that I was redeemed and could sing the new song. Thus was I wonderfully saved from eternal burning."⁴³

In contrast to these accounts of instantaneous conversions, Elaw makes it clear that her experience of conversion was gradual rather than instantaneous, involving a growing recognition of forgiveness. Nevertheless, this culminated in an ecstatic moment in which she saw a vision of Christ that assured her of her acceptance. "After this wonderful manifestation of my condescending Saviour, the peace of God which passeth understanding was communicated to my heart, and joy in the Holy Ghost."⁴⁴

The conversion narrative given by Mathews includes the account of his awareness of sin (given above) along with his experience of conversion:

James K. Mathews: "Then [his brother Joe] returned home and told me the story [of his conversion]. At first his excessive enthusiasm and quite dogmatic beliefs put me off, but slowly I too yielded. There were other influences also, such as a concerned and appealing college pastor and a kindly woman evangelist who helped me in my struggle and search for forgiveness. So earnestly did I seek that I wrote out all the sins I could recall having committed, filling four foolscap pages. Then she gently led me to see that God's word was what God had to say to us, that to believe the word is to believe God, that my part was to confess and God's part was to forgive. Finally, I came to see that faith is taking God at his word. Because I was a Methodist a conversion experience was part of my heritage, and I fully expected that sometime, somehow I was to be reconciled to God and incorporated into the Church. This was my conversion experience—as simple, yet as

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profound and far-reaching as Joe's, yet no Damascus Road event,
no blinding lights, and no inner emotional upheaval."⁴⁵

Mathews goes on to narrate how in a subsequent experience he
felt the assurance of pardon:

James K. Mathews: "Then in the summer of 1936, during our
'evangelistic foray,' it happened! As a part of our evangelistic
program as I have said, we would hold Bible classes every morn-
ing, usually teaching whole books of the Bible, especially the
Gospels or Acts of the Apostles. One morning after I had been
teaching the Bible, I made my way, alone, back to a farmhouse
where we were living. I recall that it was a beautiful summer
morning. As I walked along the road, there suddenly came across
me the profound awareness that I was a child of God. It was not
an experience of explosive force such as Paul had along the road
to Damascus. My Methodist heritage came to my mind: could this
be the witness of the Spirit? Then, I didn't walk, I *ran* the rest of
the way to the farmhouse. When I opened the Bible to where Paul
says the Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are the
children of God, I was convinced that this was the witness of the
Spirit. I have had this sense almost constantly ever since, however
unworthy I have been at times."⁴⁶

The Scripture passage (Romans 8:14-17) to which Mathews refers
here is the one that was discussed at the Aldersgate Street meeting
at which John Wesley had felt the assurance of pardon.

Sanctification and the Trials of the Soul

Each of the nineteenth-century autobiographies considered here
recounts the trials of the soul after conversion, including moments
of "darkness" and doubt, sometimes involving "falling away" or
"backsliding" into sin. William Apess recounted that he did not
have the support of a local class meeting immediately after his con-
version and soon fell back into sin, from which he was later deliv-
ered in another dramatic religious experience.⁴⁷ Mary Apess
continued to experience doubts and melancholy after her conver-
sion, and as she recounts this she attributes it to the fact that she
had not been willing to share with her mother and others the joy of
her conversion.⁴⁸ Lee noted, "From the day on which I first went to

the Methodist church," (and this was the day of her conversion) "until the hour of my deliverance," (this refers to her subsequent experience of entire sanctification) "I was strangely buffeted by that enemy of all righteousness—the devil" and she went on to recount how she eventually came to a full consciousness of her conversion (still prior to entire sanctification).⁴⁹ Elaw recounted continuing trials and persecution on account of her identification with the Methodists: "But notwithstanding this tide of divine comforts so richly replenished my soul, Satan, my great adversary, frequently assailed me with various trials and temptations, and the young folks often derided me as being a Methodist."⁵⁰ Foote offers several chapters in her autobiography recounting her spiritual struggles: some of her chapter titles following her conversion narrative epitomize the content of these struggles: "A Desire for Knowledge—Inward Foes," "Various Hopes Blasted," "Disobedience—But Happy Results."⁵¹

Entire Sanctification

Mary Apess, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, and Julia Foote describe how they came to understand the possibility of entire sanctification as a moment in which one can love God completely as a gift of divine grace. Mary Apess indicated that she did not believe this doctrine at first but was eventually convinced of it on the grounds that to deny it would be to deny the power of God to bring about that which God desired, namely, our complete love and dedication to God.⁵² Lee was taught the doctrine of sanctification by a traveling preacher.⁵³ Foote had learned about sanctification but understood at first that it was only to be expected near death. Later she learned that due to the unlimited power of God, entire sanctification is immediately available.⁵⁴ This reflects the development of Holiness theology in the mid-nineteenth century that taught believers to expect entire sanctification early in a Christian's experience.

Apess, Lee, Elaw, and Foote all offer testimonies to the moments in which they experienced entire sanctification.⁵⁵

Mary Apess: "But before the [camp] meeting closed, God in Christ showed himself mighty to save and strong to deliver. I felt the mighty power of God again, like electric fire, go through

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every part of me, cleansing me throughout soul, flesh, and spirit. I felt now that I was purified, sanctified, and justified."⁵⁶

I would note that the use of the term "justified" is eccentric in this passage, since formal Methodist teaching would have associated justification with the earlier moment of her conversion, and this shows how language about religious experience could become fluid in popular contexts (see below).

Jarena Lee: "But when this voice whispered in my heart, saying, 'Pray for sanctification,' I again bowed in the same place, at the same time, and said, 'Lord, *sanctify* my soul for Christ's sake?' That very instant, as if lightening had darted through me, I sprang to my feet and cried, 'The Lord has sanctified my soul!' ... [After being tempted by Satan] But another spirit said, 'Bow down for the witness—I received it—*thou art sanctified!*'" The first I knew of myself after that, I was standing in the yard with my hands spread out, and looking with my face toward heaven."⁵⁷

Zilpha Elaw: "It was at one of these [camp] meetings that God was pleased to separate my soul unto Himself, to sanctify me as a vessel designed for honour. ... Whether I was in the body, or whether I was out of the body, on that auspicious day, I cannot say; but this I do know, that at the conclusion of a most powerful sermon ... I became so overpowered with the presence of God, that I sank down upon the ground, and laid there for a considerable time. ... I distinctly heard a voice speak unto me, which said, 'Now thou art sanctified; and I will show thee what thou must do.'"⁵⁸

Julia Foote: "The second day after that pilgrim's visit, while waiting on the Lord, my large desire was granted, through faith in my precious Savior. The glory of God seemed almost to prostrate me to the floor. There was, indeed, a weight of glory resting upon me. ... I lost all fear. I went straight to my mother and told her I was sanctified."⁵⁹

Use of Technical Language to Describe the "Way of Salvation"

Each of the persons whose narratives are considered here was keenly aware of their racial, social, and cultural backgrounds. William Apess wrote explicitly from his experience as a Pequot

Indian, and referred to Native Americans as "the children of the forest." He contrasted the native morality of American Indians with the corruptions of Euro-American culture and society; he recounted severe persecution at the hands of Euro-Americans, including stinging prejudice based on skin color, and he sometimes used native expressions, such as "the Great Spirit" as a way of referring to God.⁶⁰ Lee, Elaw, and Foote all recount the prejudicial treatment they received at the hands of white families for whom they worked, and Elaw narrated the particular dangers faced by a free black woman traveling (as an evangelist) in slave states.⁶¹ Mary Apess recounted her own struggles growing up as a poor, orphaned white girl.⁶² None of these five persons had any formal education beyond a rudimentary knowledge of the English language for reading and writing, and then the training they received at the hands of Methodist preachers and society members.

And yet each of these persons also knew and used the technical language that Methodists taught concerning the stages of the "way of salvation." They had become "bicultural" or even "tricultural" in their ability to use the language of the Methodist subculture in addition to the language of the majority Euro-American culture as well as their native ways of speaking. They speak, for example, of "the plan of salvation" (William Apess)⁶³ and they could recount in strikingly similar language the general scheme of the "way of salvation." Lee could write that "I have now passed through the account of my conviction, and also of my conversion to God; and shall next speak of the blessing of sanctification."⁶⁴ She recounted how a visiting black preacher, William Scott,

inquired if the Lord had justified my soul. I answered yes. He then asked me if he had sanctified me. I answered no and that I did not know what that was. He then undertook to instruct me further in the knowledge of the Lord respecting this blessing.... He told me the progress of the soul from a state of darkness, or of nature, was threefold; or consisted in three degrees, as follows:—First, conviction for sin. Second, justification from sin. Third, the entire sanctification of the soul to God.⁶⁵

Similarly, Foote wrote, "In giving my first testimony [in Boston] I told of my thorough and happy conversion, and of my sanctification as a second, distinct work of the Holy Ghost."⁶⁶

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CONCLUSION

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Reading these spiritual autobiographies, one becomes aware of the fact that in popular parlance, a number of shorthand expressions were used to describe particular moments in the "way of salvation": "conviction" was frequently used as a shorthand term for the repentance of sinners, and "sanctification" was used as a shorthand term for what would be termed "entire sanctification" in more formal Methodist doctrinal phraseology. "Conversion" was the most frequent term for the moments discretely described in formal Methodist literature as justification and assurance and regeneration, though it was natural to see these as a single moment because formal Methodist teaching from the time of John Wesley had spoken of these three events as normally occurring simultaneously. Moreover, there is some evidence of popular usages of terms that appear confused in contrast to more formal usages: in one sentence, for example, Mary Apess referred to her experience of entire sanctification as embracing "justification" as well as sanctification,⁶⁷ and although it is true that justification remains when one is sanctified, the term would be out of place in a more formal scheme of the "way of salvation."

But even noting these differences in vocabulary, one cannot help noting the strong correlation between the formal theological consensus about the "way of salvation" seen in the schemata of hymnals, catechisms, and officially sanctioned theologies, on the one hand, and the narratives of personal religious experience given by these six witnesses, on the other hand, and these six are only a small sample of the wide body of Methodist testimonial literature that bears out these correlations. The more formal theological pattern, it is true, separates justification and regeneration and the assurance of pardon, but all the while notes that these normally appear simultaneously in the experience of believers. It is to be expected, then, that these three elements of the "way of salvation" should be collapsed into the one moment of "conversion" in the actual testimonies of Methodist people.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown how Wesleyan communities consistently taught the "way of salvation" beyond the time of John and Charles Wesley as part of the core beliefs of their churches. There

were many variations on the ways in which they described the progress of the soul, but the general pattern answers closely to John Wesley's threefold pattern described in chapter 2: a description of the divine grace that comes before justification, a description of the event of justification accompanied by regeneration (new birth) and typically by the experience of assurance, and then the process of sanctification leading to entire sanctification. The structure of Methodist hymnals, in sections typically labeled "The Sinner" and "The Christian Life," consistently taught this process, as did Methodist catechisms and systematic theologies authorized for the training of Methodist preachers.

The autobiographical narratives in the second part of the chapter have shown how ordinary Methodist people, even across the frontiers of subcultures, had "received" and internalized the teaching about the "way of salvation" that John Wesley considered to be the distinctive mark of the Methodist movement.⁶⁸ These narratives typically use the terms "conviction," "conversion," and "sanctification" or "entire sanctification" to mark out the work of grace before conversion, at the time of conversion itself, and after conversion, but the narratives also reveal a consistent period of trials and doubts following conversion. One of the marks of these testimonies is the honesty with which persons were able to recount these problematic periods in their spiritual journey.

Contemporary Methodist hymnals continue to teach the "way of salvation," and in the current Nazarene and United Methodist hymnals, this is indicated in the headings "Prevenient Grace," "Justifying Grace," and "Sanctifying Grace" (or "Sanctifying and Perfecting Grace" in *The United Methodist Hymnal*). These same terms have come to prominence in a contemporary form of spirituality drawn from the Catholic Cursillo movement but which has been given a distinctly Wesleyan expression in the "Walk to Emmaus." When Walk to Emmaus was developed, the theological lectures in the retreat were focused on central elements of the Wesleyan understanding of the "Way of Salvation," including prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace. A further lecture in the Emmaus series deals explicitly with the topic of means of grace.⁶⁹ In this way, the Walk to Emmaus retreat involves key elements of Wesleyan spiritual and theological beliefs, and in many cases these lectures are offered even when the Walk to Emmaus occurs in the context of other Protestant traditions such as Presbyterian churches.

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INTRODUCTIC

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73. Cf. the article by Sam Powell, cited above.
74. Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism, 1790-1935* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), chapter 5, "From Free Grace to Free Will," 144-83.
75. Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *The Problem of God* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1930). Brightman also dealt with these issues in *The Finding of God* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1931), esp. 94-122.
76. Brightman, *The Problem of God*, 13-34.
77. *Ibid.*, 60-85.
78. *Ibid.*, 86-106.
79. John H. Lavelly, describing Brightman's view, in "Edgar Sheffield Brightman: Good-and-Evil and the Finite-Infinite God," in Paul Deats and Carol Robb, eds., *The Boston Personalist Tradition* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1986), 136.
80. *Ibid.*, 133.
81. *Ibid.*, 137.
82. *Ibid.*, 166-93.
83. *Ibid.*, 189.
84. *Ibid.*, 137.
85. John B. Cobb Jr., *God and the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 88. Cobb does not explicitly name Brightman at this point but his account seems clearly enough oriented toward Brightman's idea of "the theory of [God's] limited power."
86. Cobb, *God and the World*, 87-102 generally; the quotation is on p. 90.
87. Schubert M. Ogden, "Evil and Belief in God: The Distinctive Relevance of a 'Process Theology,'" *Perkins School of Theology Journal* 31 (1978): 29-34; quotations on 32, 32-33.
88. *Ibid.*, 34, where the phrase "pseudo-conception" is applied repeatedly to classical understandings of divine omnipotence.
89. Cf. Kelley Steve McCormick's extensively documented study "Theosis in Chrysostom and Wesley: An Eastern Paradigm on Faith and Love," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 38-103; and Michael Christensen, "John Wesley: Christian Perfection as Faith Filled with the Energy of Love," in Michael Christensen, ed., *Partakes of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in Christian Traditions* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 219-29.

5. BELIEFS ABOUT THE "WAY OF SALVATION" AFTER THE WESLEYS

1. Young, *Introduction to the New Methodist Hymnal*, 7. The quotation from John Wesley is from the preface to the 1780 *Collection of Hymns*, given above in the text. Young describes the topical layout of the 1780 *Collection* as a precedent for the organization of subsequent Methodist hymnals. However, in using the term "real Christians" Wesley seems to have denoted his sense of an ideal, that is, what a "real" Christian ought to be, where Young takes this expression as referring to the actual or lived experiences of Christians.
2. *A Pocket Hymn Book: Designed as a Constant Companion for the Pious, Collected from Various Authors* (Philadelphia: Henry Tuckniss, 1800; original printing was 1793). This hymnal, designed as an inexpensive alternative to the Wesleyan *Collection*, follows some of the categories of the 1780 *Collection* but is quite jumbled, with (for example) three different sections marked "penitential."
3. *Hymn Book of The Methodist Protestant Church: Compiled by the Authority of the General Conference*, 14th ed. (Baltimore: Book Concern, Methodist Protestant Church, 1852; original printing was 1837).
4. The version cited here is *Hymns for the Use of The Methodist Episcopal Church with Tunes for Congregational Worship* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1857), hymns 187-260.
5. *Ibid.*, hymns 261-330.
6. *Hymnal of The Methodist Episcopal Church* (Cincinnati: Cranston and Stowe, 1878). The

dism, 1790-1935 (New York: IL, 144-83.
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section "The Sinner" comprises hymns 302-417, and the section "The Christian" comprises hymns 418-762.

7. In *The Methodist Hymnal: Official Hymnal of The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1905), the section "The Gospel" comprises hymns 241-97, and the section "The Christian Life" comprises hymns 298-567. In the *Free Methodist Hymnal: Published by Authority of the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church in North America* (Chicago: The Free Methodist Publishing House, 1910), the section "The Gospel" comprises hymns 177-255 and the section "The Christian Life" comprises hymns 256-560.

8. In the 1905 Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South, hymnal, the subsection on entire sanctification is titled "entire consecration and perfect love" and comprises hymns 353-81. In the 1910 *Free Methodist Hymnal* this subsection is titled "entire sanctification" and comprises hymns 333-86.

9. *The Methodist Hymn-Book* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1933), hymns 311-38 (on "The Gospel Call") and 339-638 (on "The Christian Life").

10. The subsection "Christian Perfection" in the 1935 joint Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Methodist Protestant Church hymnal comprises hymns 371-78.

11. *African Methodist Episcopal Church Hymnal* (1984): the section "The Gospel" comprises hymns 210-25, and the section "The Christian Life" comprises hymns 226-514.

12. The quotation from Bishop Harmon is from the recollection of Professor James Logan of Wesley Theological Seminary, who was part of the process leading up to the 1964 hymnal.

13. *Sing to the Lord: Hymnal* (Kansas City: Lillenas Publishing Company, 1993).

14. *Short Scriptural Catechism* (1793), lessons 7-14 (11-26).

15. *Catechisms of the Wesleyan Methodists* (1824), 17-20.

16. *Catechism of The Methodist Episcopal Church* (1852), 37-40.

17. "Ten Doctrines of Grace" (1884), 30-31.

18. But note that Ralston places the doctrinal section ahead of the "evidences" (what we would think of as prolegomena).

19. Cf. Langford, *Practical Divinity* (1998), 1:55-56 (on Watson), 1:90-94 (on Bledsoe and Whedon).

20. Summers does have discussions of regeneration (2:73ff.), "preventing" grace (2:77ff.), justifying faith (2:102ff. and 2:125ff.), and the amissibility of grace (2:173ff.).

21. Watson, 242-452 (chapter 23) and 453-61 (chapter 24).

22. *Ibid.*, 544-53 (chapter 29); the discussion of entire sanctification is on 544-48.

23. Thomas N. Ralston, *Elements of Divinity; Or, A Concise and Comprehensive View of Bible Theology, Comprising the Doctrines, Evidences, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity, with Appropriate Questions Appended to Each Chapter*, ed. Thomas O. Summers (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1928), 329-472.

24. Pope, 2:358-85.

25. *Ibid.*, 3:1-27 (on regeneration and adoption) and 27-61 (on sanctification, including entire sanctification).

26. Watson distinguishes the Wesleyan conception of heartfelt faith from other options, 424-53; Ralston devotes six chapters to this topic, 367-416; Pope makes a similar distinction between living faith and "dead faith" in his discussion of the "preliminaries of salvation," 2:358-85; Summers elaborates a similar argument about justifying faith in 2:102ff. and 2:125ff.

27. Langford, *Practical Divinity* (1998), 1:62-63 (on Pope), 1:95 (on Ralston and Bascom), and 1:96 (on Summers).

28. Russell E. Richey's *The Methodist Conference in America* makes the point that early Methodist conferences (quarterly as well as annual conferences) were primarily occasions for preaching, worship, hymn-singing, and generally matters related to spirituality rather than business meetings (chapter 6, 51-61).

29. William Apress, *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apress, a Pequot*, ed. Barry O'Connell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).

30. He actually gives the date of his joining The Methodist Protestant Church as 11 April 1829, and this was during the period when the Methodist Protestant denomination was

becoming separate from The Methodist Episcopal Church, but prior to its formal organization (133).

31. William Andrews, ed., *Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). In addition to these five complete autobiographies, we have some excerpts published in a volume recently edited by Lester Ruth titled *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality: A Reader* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2005).

32. James K. Mathews, *A Global Odyssey: The Autobiography of James K. Mathews* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

33. Apess, 126, 127; the entire section from 121 through 127 recounts the period of mourning over sin leading up to William Apess's conversion.

34. Ibid., 134; the entire section from 133 through 139 recounts the period of mourning over sin leading up to Mary Apess's conversion.

35. Lee, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 27.

36. Elaw, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 55.

37. Julia Foote, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 178.

38. Mathews, *A Global Odyssey*, 76.

39. Lester Ruth's collection of materials titled *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality: A Reader* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990) includes a number of testimonies to conversion experiences in language similar to these, 72-82.

40. Apess, 129.

41. Ibid., 139-40.

42. Lee, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 29.

43. Foote, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 180 (the conversion narrative continues through the next page).

44. Elaw, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 55-57; the quotation is on 57.

45. Mathews, *A Global Odyssey*, 76.

46. Ibid., 86-87.

47. Apess, 130-32.

48. Ibid., 140-42.

49. Lee, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 27-32.

50. Elaw, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 58.

51. Foote, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, chapter titles on 182 (chapter 8), 184 (chapter 9), and 186 (chapter 10).

52. Apess, 142.

53. Lee, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 33.

54. Foote, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 186: "They told me that sanctification was for the young believer, as well as the old."

55. Lester Ruth's collection of materials exhibiting early Methodist life includes a number of testimonies to entire sanctification, 115-30.

56. Apess, 143.

57. Lee, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 34.

58. Elaw, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 66.

59. Foote, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 186-87.

60. Apess, 119-21. He refers to God as "the Great Spirit" on 121.

61. Elaw in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 98-99.

62. Apess, 133-35.

63. Ibid., 122.

64. Lee, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 32-33.

65. Ibid., 33.

66. Foote, in *Sisters of the Spirit*, 192.

67. Apess, 143.

68. This is consistent with Russell Richey's argument that Methodist conferences and other institutional structures in the nineteenth century were primarily concerned with spirituality rather than business matters; see his conclusions in *The Methodist Conference in America*, 199-204.

69. Robert V. 2001), 22-29.

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16. Ibid.,

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