# Women and Religion in America

## *Volume 2: The Colonial and Revolutionary Periods*

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or educational information: for when I was afterwards called to examine her in order to communion. I found her defective in this kind of knowledge, and dissuaded her from communicating at that time, tho' she much desired it. This I have since regretted, for I do believe, on cool reflection that she possessed that experimental knowledge of salvation, which is infinitely preferable to all the doctrinal or systematic knowledge in the world without it. But to return.

I pressed through the congregation in a circuitous direction to the preaching tent, viewing one in the agony of prayer; another motionless, speechless, and apparently breathless; another rising in triumph, in prayer and exhortation. Among these was a woman 5 hours motionless, and a little boy under 12 years of age who arose, prayed and exhorted in a wonderful manner. After themselves I observed that their next concern was their nearest relations. . . .

Natural affections begin with self, and then spread around: so do the affections that shew themselves in this work. First what shall I do to be saved. Then O my child, my brother, or sister, "Repent and believe." Surely this must be the work of God, and marvellous in our eyes!

# Black Women and Religion in the Colonial Period

LILLIAN ASHCRAFT WEBB

Black women, brought as slaves to North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, responded to conditions of servitude from perspectives of their West African cultural heritage. It is important, therefore, to understand this African background when assessing black women's interactions with religious forces in colonial America, particularly in English Protestant territories.

## AFRICAN BACKGROUND

In most West African tribes, women were persons in their own right, with responsibilities and privileges not always based on their husbands' and fathers' patriarchal powers. Women controlled marketplaces, and their economic monopoly provided them with leverage for autonomous activity and with opportunities for leadership experiences.

In religious ceremonies, for example, women frequently were priests and leaders of cults. They sometimes maintained secret societies of their own. Whatever was the extent of West African women's participation in society beyond the marketplace and the immediate residential compound, it was based on realities of their economic initiative and contribution. These helped refine and solidify communal sharing and group identification.

Traditional religious systems permeated all facets of life in Africa, blurring distinctions between sacred and secular. Religious laws regulated sexual relationships, marriage rituals and responsibilities, and ceremonies of passage through puberty. They prescribed women's activities during pregnancy and shortly after childbirth, regulated dietary habits, and provided for lifetime continuance of sexual and other physical and psychological nurture.[1] Religious beliefs and practices primarily were localized tribally and were inherited from ancestors, but several tribes often shared similar elements and patterns of beliefs, practices, and rituals.

## EUROPEAN REACTIONS

European Christians had inherited strict monogamous views on sexuality. Believing themselves to have a monopoly on virtue and right-living, they curiously devoured licentious travel narratives about life in Africa. People in Africa, unlike their European contemporaries, practiced pragmatic approaches to human sexuality such as arranging for the fulfullment of sexual needs "in absentia" when spouses were deceased or otherwise away. Some tribes adhered to a system of levirate—a widow's being inherited by her brother-in-law. This insured that: (1) widows would have "continuity" in "mating with the deceased husband," and (2) the children of the deceased would have the presence of a father figure and an assured share in the deceased father's inheritance (Document 1).[2] Several societies with disproportionately high female populations assured virtually all women benefits of marriage through polygamy.[3] (Polyandry was of negligible dimensions by the sixteenth century in Africa.) Such institutional practices as these offended Western Christian sensibilities, and explorers fueled European ethnocentrism by circulating narratives that described Africans as savages.

Religious fervor that had only smoldered in sixteenth-century Europe caught ablaze in the seventeenth century, and the African narratives had an especially disquieting effect upon English settlers in the American wildernesses.

> The age was driven by the twin spirits of adventure and control . . . [with] voyages of discovery overseas . . . [and] inward voyages of [self-]discovery. . . . [Within] this charged atmosphere of self-disocvery, . . . Englishmen . . . used peoples overseas as social mirrors, . . . and . . . they were especially inclined to discover attributes in . . . [those] they called savages which they found first but could not speak of in themselves.[4]

Although Winthrop Jordan made this statement to describe English religious zealots, it remains valid when applied to other seventeenth-century Euro-Americans.

The most probable frontal attack upon populations introduced into a male-oriented and -dominated society is that of denigrating the image of the "conquered" people's males. From that assault there follows aspersions upon the women. Europeans looked at blacks through stereotypes and not as human beings with individual strengths and weaknesses in character.

Prior to the importation of African women, settlers already had begun differentiating among character types when assigning work to European female servants (Document 2). Because of their own Christian piety, their acceptance of rumors that Africans were savage, and their need for cheap labor, colonists arbitrarily presumed that every black woman was "nasty' and "beastly." Consequently, the colonial mind was set early in the seventeenth century to be insensitive to individual black character or sex when assigning work.



## SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BLACK EXPERIENCES

African women's initial experiences with the "churched" in North America was one of exclusion from church membership. The Anglican-dominated legislature in Virginia, for example, enacted a law that distinguished between servants. European servants were designated "Christian," and African laborers were referred to as "Negro servants" (implying that they were non-Christian).[5] Colonists underscored the distinction by neglecting to bring "Negro servants" into the Christian church, sometimes legislating against black church attendance and discouraging black conversions. Settlors took these steps in an effort to protect their property (their black servants) since they were uncertain that Christianized servants could be held in bondage.

Ever since the Diet of Worms (1521), "the notion half-lurking . . . was that baptism and consequent conversion to Christianity affected the freedom of a slave." This posed a problem, but on the surface it seemed easily resolved. If masters did not teach Africans to be Christians, they could "justly" enslave them for the purpose of Christianizing them at some future, undesignated time. That way pious masters were less disturbed in their consciences, believing they had complied with the letter of the Diet and with the spirit of English Common Law by bringing Africans into geographical proximity to Christianity.[6] One clergyman's extrapolation was representative of that generation's thinking; according to him, "perpetual bondage among Christians made useful servants of savages."[7]

Whenever colonists introduced Christianity to Africans, black women quickly played a prominent role. Many already had Spanish Christian names when imported (Angela, for example). This indicated, according to one social scientist, that a number of Africans previously had been baptized. More recently, though, Murray Heller (editor of a study of black names) concluded to the contrary: "It appears . . . that whether or not baptism was involved, whites tended to supply their black slaves, to a great extent, with biblical and Christian names."[8] The second, recorded Spanish-christened woman imported to North America from Africa was Isabella. Her "brush" with Christianity is among the earliest written accounts mentioning an African woman. She arrived on the first shipment of African "servants" to dock at a North American port. (Anthony —also spelled variously—whom she later married, was also on that vessel, which sailed into Jamestown in 1619.)

A brief entry (1624–1625) in parish church records mentions: "Anthony, negro, Isabell, a negro, and William, her child, baptized."[9] Whether or not this was a family baptism into Christianity is unclear.

Probably William only was ceremonially baptized as the first child born to African parents in North America. St. George Tucker noted in his dissertation on slavery that whether baptized or not, Negroes were uniformly reported as infidels.[10]

Before African women were imported to America, adultery and rape were legally punishable by death and fornication by whipping. The legislation charged local church parishes with publishing and enforcing that code (Document 3). It is doubtful that the law ever was applied to curb the raping of black women by white men. Whipping was a common form of punishment during the colonial period, but local church parishes seemed less reluctant to whip black women than white men for sexual offenses. A point of reference is the 1640 Sweet case in which the white man (Sweet) was found guilty of getting a black woman servant pregnant. She was whipped, and he was sentenced to public penance.[11] The close association between church officials and unfair penal enforcements is not likely to have gone unobserved by black women, even those most recently arrived from Africa.

Massachusetts, though close on the heels of Virginia in practicing and instituting slavery, was the first recorded English colony to accept an adult of African ancestry into full fellowship among Christians. John Winthrop recorded in his memoirs that a black woman, after having proven her "true godliness" over many years, was baptized and communed into the Puritan congregation in 1641.[12] Black conversion to Christianity in North American colonies was token and generally without positive impact upon white attitudes towards Africans.

By 1660, Massachusetts, Virginia, and other English colonies already established at that time had taken steps to make slavery a legal, self-perpetuating institution. Intending to settle the question of whether or not converted slaves should be freed, Virginia passed legislation in 1662 which stated that children would inherit their mothers' social statuses—not their religious conditions.[13] Still not certain that Christians could be enslaved, for there was no English positive law to that effect, Virginia enacted legislation which prohibited a slave's status from being altered because he or she was baptized.[14]

The Church of England kept its distance while these disincentives to Christian conversion were imposed on African slaves. Their avaricious owners jealously guarded slave property against the potentially enlightening influences of Christian teachings. Eventually, an evangelizing unit was organized—the Council for Foreign Plantations—for the purpose of converting Africans and Indians. After 1660, the restored crown tried to centralize English authority. In 1661, 1680, and 1682, the crown urged royal colonies to support the council as it introduced ministers who would specialize in the work of converting Negroes and Indians to Christianity.[15]

Not even Quakers, however, expressed full awareness of the evils of



slavery, although the system was crystallizing into an ominous institution by the mid-seventeenth century. Though Fox and other Quakers showed concern over the plight of slaves, they accepted slavery as a *fait accompli* and encouraged those of their faith to give slaves religious instruction and to take slaves to meetings.[16] In 1672, Virginia and other colonies enacted stalemating legislation that forbade Negro attendance at Quaker meetings.[17]

Black women more frequently were identified as converts than black men. Before the turn of the eighteenth century, "free" black women were motivated to join churches. Ginney Bess was one of the first identified by name to take her child for baptism. Her action, in 1683, probably indicates that she had been baptized at a time previous to presenting her child for this sacrament.[18] Reasons for joining churches were numerous. DuBois (and, more recently, Alex Haley) conjectured that African women usually made the initial breakthrough to "accept" Christianity, hoping their conversion would benefit them and their families. Masters of slaves commented that the birth of children (those born in America) motivated black women to embrace Christianity.[19]

Sometimes women as well as men sought asylum from harsh masters in Catholic Florida under the guise of being anxious for baptism and religious instruction. Spanish Florida was a refuge for the alert and enterprising from nearby colonies.[20]

"Witchcraft mania" spread throughout the Christian world during the seventeenth century. Congregationalists, believing "powers of the devil could be executed by human witches," seemed particularly prone to this witchcraft mania, and it assumed noticeable proportions beginning in 1647 in Connecticut and climaxing in 1692 at Salem. A black woman servant named Marja was one of its first victims. Marja was accused of conspiring with two men to burn down a building in Roxbury, Massachusetts. She alone was executed by burning at the stake because she did "not . . . have 'the feare of God before her eyes' [and her actions were] 'instigated by the divil.' " Her punishment was unusually harsh and of the genre mostly reserved for those thought to be devil-possessed. The severity of the punishment was an apparent indication that paranoia had set into the colony, that social instability prevailed there, and that a mind-set fixed on impending "spiritual" doom abounded.

In Salem, the epidemic was related to the failure of Puritans to put forth a concerted effort to Christianize African people. It was compounded by a decline in old-fashioned piety and by conflicting social interests. A major character in the Salem hysteria was a half-Indian, half-African slave woman named Tituba, whom the town's pastor had imported from Barbados. As she worked to complete household chores, Tituba unraveled tales about witches, demons, and ghosts, holding the pastor's daughter and other teenage girls in rapt attention. Soon the impressionable girls began to experiment with fortune-telling. Feeling

guilty about their activities, the girls began to believe themselves to be punished for being "tools of the devil." They imagined themselves the victims of witchcraft and pointed accusing fingers at townsfolk, setting off a panic. The hysteria ended with trials, during which twenty residents were executed. One hundred fifty others, including Tituba and another Negro servant, Mary Black, were jailed. Both were later released, and Tituba was sold to pay for her jail expenses. Her quick confession "exorcised" the evil spirits from her body and saved her life. "Clemency" for Tituba suggests that the real source of the furor was elsewhere. It lends credence to recent interpretations which indicate that no small amount of the confusion was touched off by conflicting class interests and religious tensions in the Puritan town (Document 4).

## EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BLACK EXPERIENCES

In the wake of the Salem trials, a group of slaves in Massachusetts requested (in 1693) that Cotton Mather organize them into a body for weekly religious instruction and worship.[21] Only in 1701 did leadership within the Church of England form a united drive to evangelize and teach among slaves. This missionary band was called the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). The SPG operated out of London and was financially independent of local church parishes. As a result, the SPG bypassed usual problems that individual pastors often had encountered and took its preachments more successfully into slave communities. The SPG appointed some 30 missionaries and catechists to preach and teach a gospel with emphasis on morality and ritual. Although the SPG owned slaves in its early years and took the position that emancipation was not a mandatory result of conversion, settlers were suspicious that the intentions of the society were to initiate the first step toward freedom for black slaves.[22]

The SPG was not intentionally sexist in its conversion program. But it did make special appeal to males and provided an all-male leadership role model. Moreover, missionaries and catechists sometimes directed lessons in reading and writing to particularly apt male youths, grooming them to become teachers (tutors) among other black slaves. Many women and girls, nevertheless, were numbered among SPG missionaries' acclaimed converts (Documents 5.)[23]

Missionaries soon became aware of African cultural retentions among slaves. Discussion of this problem took place in missionary reports to the SPG headquarters in London about, for example, polygamous tendencies, male separations from women who either could not or had not given birth as a result of their mating, and the women's frequent changing of "husbands." These reports revealed the cultural parochialism typical among Anglican clergy (Document 6).[24] Their consternation, however, inspired legislation to "regularize" marriage procedures and to control



immorality among slaves.[25] The clergy complained that white settlers were poor exemplars of moral virtue.[26]

White women in New York City tried to alleviate social repression against women of African ancestry. Much of this repression was caused by the colonist's belief that African women could not become productive or responsible for their behavior outside of slavery. These white women reflected the influence of Enlightenment thought, which stressed possibilities for improving the social environment—both people and institutions.

In 1712, the white women opened a school to "train" black women, hoping they would be socially responsible and assimilable. Alleged "Negro plots" to burn down the city and massacre white colonists fueled fear of blacks and renewed urgency to restrict their social mobility. These controls apparently brought about the demise of the 1712 school movement, but several other schools for Negro women were opened in 1740 and later in the century.[27]

The Great Awakenings, which highlighted American sectarianism and fragmented Anglican SPG activity around mid-century, also gave Africans/Afro-Americans an opportunity for virtually unrestricted participation in Christianity in North America for the first time. During the religious ferment and widespread conversion experiences, white antislavery sentiment and black assertiveness intensified. In 1743, for example, a black woman and her husband sued a white man for trespassing upon her character. They made clear their understanding that a Christian woman's (including a black woman's) moral reputation should not be impugned without legal challenge. The suit also indicated the extent to which Christian puritanism had seeped into the black community, causing the ostracism of reputedly immoral black folk (Document 7).

Popular Great Awakening evangelists, such as George Whitefield, commented on the enthusiasm with which Negroes, particularly women, received the gospel and its messrngers (Document 8). John Wesley, himself an antislavery advocate, noted in his Diary that the first Negroes that he baptized into Methodism were two women slaves. Yet sentiment against slave conversions still abounded, and circuit riders had to urge owners to send slaves to religious instruction and to worship. Quakers and other antislavery groups increased their proclamations and other active challenges to the institution of slavery.

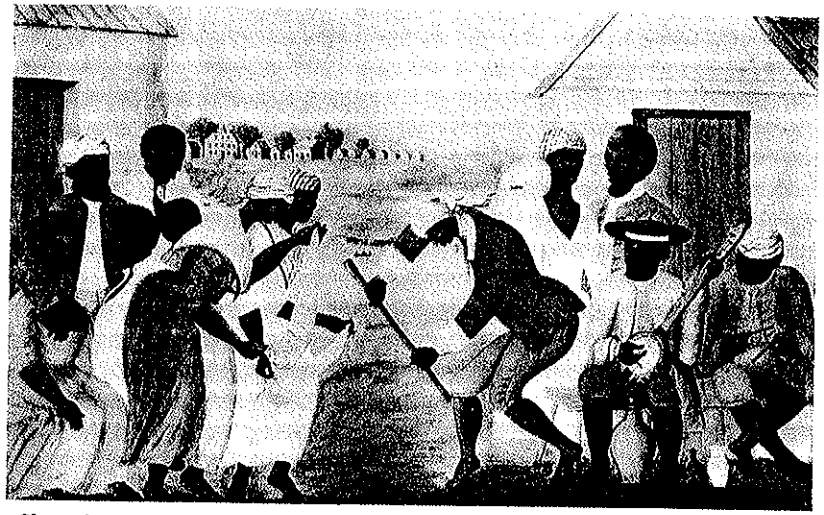
The best-known black Christian writer in the prerevolution decade was Phillis Wheatley. Her writings suggest that she had been accepted into membership in Boston's Old South Meeting House before 1769 when her pastor, Reverend Sewall, died.[28] By the time she was eighteen (1772), Miss Wheatley showed herself to be a fully converted, zealous Congregationalist. Her writings, when analyzed from the perspective of one's conversion, indicate that Phillis rejoiced in the psychological succor of her Christian faith and had little awareness of her African back-

ground. In this respect, hers was not a singular reaction, even among slaves. Missionaries of the period said of slave converts, "They will ever bless God for their knowing good things which they knew not before [their enslavement]." Phillis's letters—rather than her poems, which have been overly politicized by biographers—demonstrate her responsiveness to Christian conversion (Document 9).

In other ways, black women who came of age under the tutelage of American colonial evangelistic and missionary zeal, claimed rights to creative religious action (Document 10). Katherine Ferguson, organizer of the first Sabbath school for children in New York City, is one example. In her early years, Katy's mistress was a Christian woman who permitted the young slave girl to attend church services. This early involvement probably accounted in part for Miss Ferguson's later religious devotion and charitable efforts as much as her having been purchased by a sympathetic friend when she was sixteen. Although she herself never learned to read or write, she helped to make such learning available to children from the poorhouse without regard to race or color. Having been separated from her own mother at the age of eight, she expressed an affinity for reaching out to children from destitute backgrounds, to neglected youths and unwed mothers. Her "work contributed to the development of free secular education for the poor. For this reason, her name is noted among those considered pioneer educators in America. . . . In tribute to Katy and in recognition of her early contributions, a home for unwed mothers—the Katy Ferguson Home—in New York was named in her honor" (Document 11). Wives and women converts of pioneering black preachers and church pastors were among the more obscure missionaries and charitable workers at the turn of the century (Document 12).

Ironically, the century closed with discordant tones from the ranks of Quakerism. Several black women applied for membership into that faith. They were subjected to prolonged monthly, quarterly, and annual meetings where their applications were scrutinized, tabled, and kept in committee for months before the women eventually were admitted. It is possible that they never would have been admitted, except that they were mulattos (Document 13).

Sarah Johnson, who died in 1845 after a life that spanned more than a century, is an example of the black Christian of this period. The poignancy of black women's religious experiences in North American colonies is summarized in the black pastor's eulogizing at her funeral. In a manner characteristic of Christian clergy, her African Methodist Episcopal pastor referred continuously to what was commendable that he had observed in her outward behavior (Document 14).



Slave dance, possibly at a wedding. The use of canes and scarfs reflect African customs, and the head scarfs resemble West African Yoruba cloth. One musician plays an African molo, a precursor of the banjo, while another taps a gudu-gudu drum. The painting, circa 1700, is reproduced courtesy the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, Williamsburg, Virginia.

English settlements in the West Indies, like their North American counterparts, occasioned black women active in religious affairs. One such was Maria, a Moravian missionary from St. Thomas. She died in 1749. [From *Herrnhut: Ursprung und Auftrag* (Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1972), no. 39.]


**Phillis Wheatley** (1753–1784), poetess. This portrait appeared as the frontispiece of her poems published in 1773. [From Linda de Pauw and Conover Hunt, *Remember the Ladies: Women in America, 1750–1815* (New York: Viking, 1976), p. 141.]

**Elizabeth Freeman (Mumbet)**, a slave in Massachusetts who won her suit for freedom under the United States Constitution, which says that all *men* are created free and equal. Portrait by Susan Sedgwick, courtesy the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

# *Documents: Black Women and Religion in the Colonial Period*





### *Document 1: An African Leviratic Statement*

*Leviratic customs, which once thrived across the continent, have been preserved in sections of East Africa (Tanzania and Kenya). The legal statement below is a contemporary Luo (Bantu descendants) expression of this centuries-old custom.*[29]

When a husband dies his widow may either: (A) continue to live in her deceased husband's home, in which case she may cohabit with either (1) one of her dead husband's brothers, (2) one of her husband's male relatives, or (3) any man who has been adopted into the deceased husband's clan, though originally a stranger, e.g., a *Jadak Mocham Musuma.* However, her choice is subject to the approval of the family and clan elders . . . of her deceased husband. If she cohabits with a man of whom they do not approve, the man may be sued by the . . . [clan elders] for adultery.

The children of a levirate union belong to the family of the dead husband.

(B) return to her father's home. In such a case the . . . (bride-wealth) may be returnable according to the number of children the widow has. . . . However, a widow may *not* return to her father's home before she first cohabits (even though for a very short period) with someone under (A) above, i.e., a leviratic union must be formed before a widow can sever her connections with the late husband's clan, and go back to her father.

### *Document 2: Kinds of Work for Servants*

*The tasks assigned to servants were among the Reverend John Hammond's several observations on the English colonial scene. In this excerpt, he specifies that women, more than men, were given tasks on the basis of their behavior and reputation.*[30]

The labour servants are put to is not hard nor of such continuance as Husbandmen, nor Handecraftmen are kept at in England, I said little or nothing is done in winter time, none ever work before sun rising nor after sun set, in the summer they rest, sleep or exercise themselves five houres in the heat of the day, Saturdayes afternoon is alwayes their own, the old Holidayes are observed and the Sabboath spent in good exercises.

The Women are not (as is reported) put into the ground to worke, but occupie such domestique imployments and houswifery as in England, that is dressing victuals, righting up the house, milking, imployed about dayries, washing, soeing, &c. and both men and women have times of recreations, as much or more than in any part of the world besides, yet som wenches that are nasty, beastly and not fit to be so imployed are put into the ground, for reason tells us, they must not at charge be transported and then maintained for nothing, but

those that prove so aukward are rather burthensome then servants desirable or usefull.

### *Document 3: Punishments Prescribed for Colonial Sexual Offenders*

*The punishments meted out for sexual infractions during the colonial period, particularly in early the Virginian settlement, are noteworthy because: (1) they were extended to masters and mistresses as well as to servants, and (2) local church parishes were the chief administrators of such applicable laws. These two points are evident in following codes, which were designated by settlers before they left England.*[31]

11. He or she that can be lawfully convicted of Adultery shall be punished with death. No man shall ravish or force any woman, maid or Indian, or other, upon pain of death, and know ye that he or shee, that shall commit fornication, and evident proffe made therof, for their first fault shall be whipt, for their second they shall be whipt, and for their third they shall be whipt three times a week for one month, and aske publique forgiveness in the Assembly of the Congregation.

19. Every minister or Preacher shall every Sabboth day before Catechising, read all these lawes and ordinances, publikely in the assembly of the congregation upon paine of his entertainment checkt for that weeke.

### *Document 4: Tituba's Testimony in the Salem Witchcraft Trials*

*Witchcraft trials began in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, when a black West Indian slave, Tituba, was accused of bewitching the children of Mr. Samuel Paris. Tituba testified that the devil, which at times appeared to her in the shape of various animals, had come to her as a man with white hair and dressed in black. He had told her that he was God and that she must serve him six years. He had shown her a book, and she had made a mark in it, "red like blood." There were nine other marks in the book, two of them made by Salem women, Good and Osborne. Tituba also described night-riding on the stick in the company of Good and Osborne and two other witches from Boston. This detailed confession set the stage for a proliferation of examinations and trials in Salem. Two different accounts of Tituba's testimony have been preserved. The following version was taken from two contemporary commentators on the Witchcraft trials at Salem: Robert Calef (More Wonders of the Invisible World, 1700) and John Hale* (A Modest Inquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft, *1702).*[32]

The first complain'd of, was the said Indian Woman, named Tituba. She confessed that the Devil urged her to sign a Book, which he presented to her, and also to work Mischief to the Children, etc. She was afterwards Committed to Prison, and lay there till Sold for her Fees. The account she since gives of it is, that her Master did beat her and otherways abuse her, to make her confess and accuse (such as he call'd) her Sister-Witches, and that whatsoever she said by way of confessing or accusing others, was the effect of such usage; her Mas-ter refused to pay her Fees, unless she would stand to what she had said . . .

I. In the latter end of the year 1601, Mr. Samuel Paris, Pastor of the Church in Salem-Village, had a Daughter of Nine, and a Neice of about Eleven years of Age, sadly Afflicted of they knew not what Distempers: and he made his application to Physitians, yet still they grew worse: And at length one Physitian gave his opinion, that they were under an Evil Hand. This the Neighbours quickly took up, and concluded they were bewitched. He had also an Indian Man servant, and his Wife who afterwards confessed, that without the knowledge of their Master or Mistress, they had taken some of the Afflicted persons Urine, and mixing it with meal had made a Cake, and baked it, to find out the Witch, as they said. After this, the Afflicted Persons cryed out of the Indian Woman, named Tituba, that she did pinch, prick, and grievously torment them, and that they saw her here and there, where no body else could. Yea they could tell where she was, and what she did, when out of their humane sight. These Children were bitten and pinched by invisible agents; their arms, necks, and backs turned this way and that way, and returned back again, so as it was impossible for them to do of themselves, and beyond the power of any Epileptick Fits, or natural Disease to effect. Sometimes they were taken dumb, their mouths stopped, their throats choaked, their limbs wracked and tormented so as might move an heart of stone, to sympathize with them, with bowels of compassion for them.

. . . Paris seeing the distressed condition of his Family, desired the presence of some Worthy Gentlemen of Salem, and some Neighbour Ministers to consult together at his House; who when they came, and had enquired diligently into the Sufferings of the Afflicted, concluded they were preternatural, and feared the hand of Satan was in them.

II. The advice given to Mr. Paris by them was, that he should sit still and wait upon the Providence of God to see what time might discover; and to be much in prayer for the discovery of what was yet secret. They also Examined Tituba, who confessed the making a Cake, as is above mentioned, and said her Mistress in her own Country was a Witch, and had taught her some means to be used for the discovery of a Witch and for the prevention of being bewitched, etc. But said that she her self was not a Witch.

. . . In a short time after other persons who were of age to be witnesses, were molested by Satan, and in their fits cryed out upon Tituba and Goody O. and S. G. that they or Specters in their Shapes did grievously torment them; hereupon some of their Village Neighbours complained to the Magistrates at Salem, desiring they would come and examine the afflicted and accused together; the which they did: the effect of which examination was, that Tituba confessed she was a Witch, and that she with the two others accused did torment and bewitch the complainers, and that these with two others whose names she knew not, had their Witch-meeting together; relating the times when and places where they met, with many other circumstances to be seen at large. Upon this the said Tituba and O. and S. G. were committed to Prison upon suspicion of acting Witchcraft. After this the said Tituba was again examined in Prison, and owned her first confession in all points, and then was her self afflicted and complained of her fellow Witches tormenting of her, for her confession, and accusing them, and being searched by a Woman, she was found to have upon her body the marks of the Devils wounding of her.

IV. Here were these things rendred her confession creditable. (1). That at this examination she answered every question just as she did at the first. And it was thought that if she had feigned her confession, she could not have remembred her answers so exactly.

. . . (2). She seemed very penitent for her Sin in convenanting with the Devil. (3.) She became a sufferer her self and as she said for her confession. (4.) Her confession agreed exactly (which was afterwards verified in the other confessors) with the accusations of the afflicted. Soon after these afflicted persons complained of other persons afflicting of them in their fits, and the number of the afflicted and accused began to increase. And the success of Tituba's confession encouraged those in Authority to examine others that were suspected, and the event was, that more confessed themselves guilty of the Crimes they were suspected for. And thus was this matter driven on.

### *Document 5: Black Religious Instruction in New York City: A Tally (1705)*

*On October 3, 1705, missionary and catechist Elias Neau wrote a letter to the headquarters of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) from his assignment in New York. In that letter, he included a chart that indicated the numbers of black women who had received religious instruction. Neau had been appointed to his position in April, and he went from door to door, trying to convince masters and mistresses to send their slaves and servants to catechism classes. His intention in constructing the following chart was to list for SPG officials the names of prominent whites who were supportive of the society's program, but in addition, Neau reveals that more women than men attended sessions.*[33]



| *Master/Mistress* | *Women Sent* | *Men Sent* | *Catechisms Given* | *Other Books* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| My Lord Cornbury | 1 Mulatress | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Mr. Vesey | 2 Negresses | 0 | 2 | 2.2 letters |
| | 2 Negresses | 1 Indian | 3 | 3.3 letters |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | 1 letter |
| Mrs. Widow Keep | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | 1.1 letters |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | 1.1 letters |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | 1.1 letters |
| Mr. Joseph Smith | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | 1.1 letters |
| | 1 Negress | 1 Negro | 2 | 2.2 letters |
| | 1 Negress | 1 Negro | 2 | 2.2 letters |
| | 0 | 1 Negro | 1 | 2.2 letters |
| | 0 | 1 Negro | 1 | 1.1 letters |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | 1.1 letter |
| | 0 | 1 Negro | 1 | 1.1 letter |
| Mrs. Jourdain | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | 1.1 letter |
| Mr. Fauconnier | 1 Negress | 1 Negro | 2 | |
| | | 1 Negro | 1 | |
| | | 1 Negro | 1 | |
| | | 1 Negro | 1 | |
| | | 1 Negro | 1 | |
| Mr. Abraham Keep | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| | 1 Negress | 1 Negro | 2 | |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| | | 1 Negro | 1 | |
| | | 1 Negro | 1 | |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| | 1 Negress | 0 | 1 | |
| Mrs. Van Vosse | | 3 Negroes | 2 | |
| Mrs. Marcomb | 1 she Indian | 2 Indians | 2 | |
| *Totals:* | 27 Negresses/ Mulatresses | 15 Negros | | |

### *Document 6: African Polygamy Versus Western Christianity: SPG Missionary Letters*

*The Reverend Francis Le Jau was a missionary assigned to Goose Creek Parish Anglican Church in South Carolina from 1706 to 1717. He expressed his concern that slaves who had received rudiments of religious instruction often still did not fully understand the moral precepts of Christianity when they applied for baptism and communion. What he thought were polygamous practices that persisted among slaves who professed Christianity compelled him to present repeatedly the matter to SPG headquarters. The following excerpts from two letters written by Le Jau, dated 1708 and 1709, presents his views. In addition, a third excerpt, from a letter written by the Reverend Elias Neau (SPG missionary in New York) and dated July 4, 1714, also reflects Anglo-cultural perspectives via the medium of pastoral concern.*[34]

. . . Whether or no we are not to answer for grievous sins dayly Committed by all our Slaves here & elsewhere, and tolerated or at least Connived at by us under a pretence of Impossibility to remedy them; tho' I'm sure we cou'd prevent all those evils if we wou'd take pains about it; . . . The evil I complain of is the constant and promiscuous cohabiting of Slaves of different Sexes and Nations together; When a Man or Woman's fancy dos alter about his Party they grow up one another & take others which they also change when they please this is a General Sin, for exceptions are so few they are hardly worth mentioning. [Rev. Francis Le Jau, September 15, 1708]

Since I came I baptised in all two adults and 47 children. . . . On Sunday next I design God willing to baptise two very sensible and honest Negro men whom I have kept upon tryal these two Years. Several others have spoken to me also; I do nothing too hastily in that respect. I instruct them and must have honest life and sober Conversation. . . .

One of the most scandoulous and common crimes of our slaves is their perpetual Changing Wives and husbands, which occasions great disorders: I also tell them whom I baptise, "The Christian Religion dos not allow plurality of Wives, nor any changing of them: You promise truly to keep to the Wife you now have till Death dos part you." [Rev. Francis Le Jau, October 20, 1709]

. . . A man married his Brother's Wife because said he she had no children by him. Now I humbly ask whether the ceremony can make such a Marriage Lawfull. My opinion is that it cannot be lawful and I will not commune them. [Rev. Elias Neau from New York, July 4, 1714]



### *Document 7: A Black Christian Woman Sues a White Man for Slander*

*During the fervor of the Great Awakening, a white man verbally attacked a black woman, calling her a "damned Negro whore." She and her husband filed suit, seeking payment for damages done to her Christian reputation in the black community. Unfortunately, the outcome of this case is unknown.*[35]

Bucks County Courts September term in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and forty-five.

Adam Jourdan was attach'd to answer William Hood and Elizabeth his wife of a plea of trespas . . . and where upon the said William and Elizabeth by John Cox their attorney Complain that whereas the said Elizabeth is a good true faithfull and honest . . . Subject of our Lord the King . . . from her nativity hitherto hath behaved . . . herself and [is] of good name fame Creditt and reputation as well amongst her neighbours . . . with whom [she] allways hath been, free from all manner of Incontinence Adultery or the Suspicion thereof . . . not undeservedly obtained, Nevertheless the said Adam not being ignorant of the promisses but well knowing the same and Envying the happy State and Condition of her the said Elizabeth but Contriving and Intending . . . her good name, fame, Creditt and Reputation to hurt, and to bring her into the hate and Evil Opinion of all her Neighbours and other . . . Subjects of our said Lord the King but also innocently to Cause her to be brought into Danger of the pains and penalties Enacted and Proscribed by the laws of the province of Pennsylvania for the punishment of persons guilty of the Crime of Adultery the twenty fourth Day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and forty five at Newton in the County of Bucks and within the jurisdiction of this Court in the presence & hearing of severall . . . Subjects of our said Lord the King falsly Scandalously & publickly did say and with a loud voice publish malitiously to the said William Hood . . . of the said Elizabeth his Wife these false, Scandalous & Defamatory English Words Viz. Take your damned Negro whore . . . home with you, . . . upon which the aforesaid William Hood than & therebeing present, answering said, to the said Adam, No, I have no Negro Whore to take home, to which the said Adam then and there in the hearing of the Subjects aforesaid Said & replied "you, . . . Sent your damned Negro whore of a wife, . . . to abuse my folkes—go you son of a whore, . . . with her . . . to Maryland, and bring the Negro bastard home with [you]. . . , pronouncing and publishing of . . . English words, the same Elizabeth not only in her good name, fame, reputation Estimation, & Creditt amongst her aforesaid acquaintance is greatly hurt, Scandaliz'd, degenerated and . . . fell in great disgrace so that divers Creditable

persons of her Neighbourhood and other faithfull Subjects of our said . . . Lord the King with whom the said Elizabeth before that had Conversation and Acquaintance, . . . have refused to have any further Conversation or Acquaintance . . . with her in any manner to Converse and have withdrawn themselves from the Conversation of the same Elizabeth as from a whore and more & more had kept themselves from the Conversation of the same Elizabeth with whom she had used to Converse . . . to the Damage of them the said William & Elizabeth forty pounds proclamation money and thereof they bring this Suit &C.

Coxe atty.

### *Document 8: A Woman Convert Comforts George Whitefield*

*During a return trip to North America in the late 1740s, George Whitefield suffered a grave illness. In the following passage, he tells of the loving concern a black woman convert showed for him and of her "prophecy" that he would recover.*[36]

. . . Such affects followed the word, I thought it worth dying for a thousand a times. Though wonderfully comforted within, at my return home, I thought I was dying indeed. I was laid on a bed upon the ground, near the fire, and I heard my friends say, "He is gone." But God was pleased to order it otherwise. I gradually recovered; and soon after, a poor negro-woman would see me. She came, sat down upon the ground, and looked earnestly in my face, and then said, in broken language; "Master, you just go to Heaven's gate. But Jesus Christ said, Get you down, get you down, you must not come here yet; but go first, and call some more poor Negroes."

### *Document 9: Evangelical Zeal in the Letters of Phillis Wheatley*

*Phillis Wheatley (1753–1784) was bought as a child from a slave ship by the wealthy Boston merchant, John Wheatley. Recognizing the girl's precocity, John Wheatley educated her and treated her more as a daughter than as a slave. In her teens, she was touted as a prodigy by Boston society because of both her youth and her race. She was even entertained by the Countess of Huntingdon in England, who arranged for the publication of her verses, including her elegy on George Whitefield. But, with the scattering of the Wheatley family by death and marriage, Phillis was forgotten and she died in poverty. In these two letters written to her friend, Arbour Tanner of Newport, Rhode Island, when she was nineteen, we see her zealous evangelical Christianity.*[37]

Boston, May 19th, 1772

Dear Sister,—I rec'd your favour of February 6th for which I give you my sincere thanks. I greatly rejoice with you in that realizing view,



and I hope experience of the saving change which you so emphatically describe. Happy were it for us if we could arrive to that evangelical Repentance, and the true holiness of heart which you mention. Inexpressibly happy should we be could we have a due sense of the beauties and excellence of the crucified Saviour. In his Crucifixion may be seen marvellous displays of Grace and Love, sufficient to draw and invite us to the rich and endless treasures of his mercy; let us rejoice in and adore the wonders of God's infinite Love in bringing us from a land semblant of darkness itself, and where the divine light of revelation (being obscur'd) is as darkness. Here the knowledge of the true God and eternal life are made manifest; but there, profound ignorance overshadows the land. Our observation is true, namely that there was nothing in us to recommend us to God. Many of our fellow creatures are pass'd by, when the bowels of divine love expanded towards us. May this goodness & long suffering of God lead us to unfeign'd repentance.

It gives me very great pleasure to hear of so many of my nation, seeking with eagerness the way of true felicity. O may we all meet at length in that happy mansion. I hope the correspondence between us will continue, (my being much indispos'd this winter past, was the reason of my not answering yours before now) which correspondence I hope may have the happy effect of improving our mutual friendship. Till we meet in the regions of consummate blessedness, let us endeavor by the assistance of divine grace, to live the life, and we shall die the death of the Righteous. May this be our happy case, and of those who are travelling to the region of Felicity, is the earnest request of your affectionate

FRIEND & HUMBLE SERVANT

PHILLIS WHEATLEY.

Boston, July 19th, 1772.

My Dear Friend,—I rec'd your kind epistle a few days ago; much disappointed to hear that you had not rec'd my answer to your first letter. I have been in a very poor state of health all the past winter and spring, and now reside in the country for the benefit of its more wholesome air. I came to town this morning to spend the Sabbath with my master and mistress. Let me be interested in your prayers that God would please to bless to me the means us'd for my recovery, if agreeable to his holy will. While my outward man languishes under weakness and pa[in], may the inward be refresh'd and strengthen'd more abundantly by him who declar'd from heaven that his strength was made perfect in weakness! May he correct our vitiated taste, that the meditation of him may be delightful to us. No longer to be so excessively charm'd with fleeting vanities: but pressing forward to the fix'd mark for the prize. How happy that man who is prepar'd for the night wherein no man can work! Let us be mindful of our high calling, continually on our guard, lest our treacherous hearts should give the

adversary an advantage over us. O! who can think without horror of the snares of the Devil. Let us, by frequent meditation on the eternal Judgment, prepare for it. May the Lord bless to us these thoughts, and teach us by his Spirit to live to him alone, and when we leave this world may we be his. That this may be our happy case, is the sincere desire of, your affectionate friend, & humble serv't,

PHILLIS WHEATLEY.

### *Document 10: A Pastoral Recommendation of a Black Woman*

*The Reverend Georgie Liele, a former slave who acquired his freedom after the Revolutionary War, was pastor of the first Negro Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia. When one of his members went to London, Liele wrote the following brief recommendation for her. Although the woman's social status is not specified here, she probably was a slave who was being relocated in London with the family that owned her.*[38]

Kingston, Jamaica, we that are of the Baptist Religion, being separated from all churches, excepting they are of the same faith and order after Jesus Christ, according to the scriptures, do certify, that our beloved *Sister, Hannah Williams,* during the time she was a member of the Church at Savannah, until the evacuation, did walk as a faithful, well-behaved Christian, and to recommend her to join any church of the same faith and order. Given under my hand this 21st day of December, in the year of our Lord, 1791.
George Liele.

### *Document 11: Katherine Ferguson—Sabbath School Founder*

*By 1793, when she opened New York City's first Sabbath School, Katherine Ferguson had suffered many personal losses and heartaches. She had grown up in slavery without knowing her mother, and she had given birth to two children who died young. Out of this suffering emerged a woman who empathized with neglected and orphaned children. She is remembered in the sketch below, which was written by a woman who had known her.*[39]

Katy Ferguson was known to me from my very young days as a comfortable-looking colored woman of firm Christian faith and consistent and useful religious life. Her occupation was the making of excellent cake such as was found in the pantries of the Old Dutch housewives of New York, whose daughters alone were able to compete with her skill.

. . . Others besides my self must call her to mind. Her cheery look and talk, her devoted Christian spirit, her benevolence could not but elicit respect. She professed her Christian faith in early life and became a member in full communion in the Old Scotch Presbyterian



Church . . . then under the pastorate of the Rev. John Mason, D.D. At that time race prejudice was so prevalent that the prescence of a colored person sitting, even at the Lord's table, and partaking of the elements side by side with the white members was looked upon with offishness. As a rebuke to this spirit, on the first Communion Sunday after her reception, as she entered the church Dr. Mason walked down the aisle to meet her, and taking her by the hand led her up and placed her in her seat at the table. Her name must still be enrolled in the list of church members in that church, now of course uptown.

I can recall her now in my mind as she started out, the basket on her arm, her hands clasped before her, her peaceful countenance shining because of her loving spirit. Her Sunday school was, I think, established in her own neat home, which was not, as I remember it, in the mean portion of the city. Her scholars were many poor white children. . . . As a school girl I often called on her on my way from school to my home in Fulton Street. I think her home was on one of the side streets leading to Broadway. Her cakes and her kindly, wholesome talk were her attractions.

### *Document 12: Defending a Corps of Black Nurses*

*The corps of nurses supplied by the African Church to nurse the sick and dying during Philadelphia's yellow fever epidemic was accused of stealing from and neglecting patients. In excerpts below, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones publicize the health risks and personal sacrifices that the women undertook to serve the community. Here the women's sense of Christian mission often surfaces.*[40]

Sarah Bass, a poor black widow, gave all the assistance she could, in several families, for which she did not receive any thing; and when any thing was offered her, she left it to the option of those she served. . . .

A woman of our colour nursed Richard Mason and son; when they died, Richard's widow considering the risk the poor woman had run, and from observing the fears that sometimes rested on her mind, expected she would have demanded something considerable, but upon asking what she demanded, her reply was half a dollar per day. Mrs. Mason, intimated it was not sufficient for her attendance, she replied it was enough for what she had done, and would take no more. Mrs. Mason's feelings were such, that she settled an annuity of six pounds a year on her, for life. Her name is Mary Scott.

. . . An elderly black woman nursed _____ with great diligence and attention; when recovered he asked what he must give for her services—she replied "a dinner master on a cold winter's day," and thus she went from place to place rendering every service in her power without an eye for reward. . . .

A young black woman, was requested to attend one night upon a white man and his wife, who were very ill, no other person could be had;—great wages were offered her—she replied, I will not go for money, if I go for money God will see it, and may be make me take the disorder and die, but if I go, and take no money, he may spare my life. She went about nine o'clock, and found them both on the floor; she could procure no candle or other light, but stayed with them about two hours, and then left them. They both died that night. She was afterward very ill with the fever—her life was spared. . . .

It has been alledged, that many of the sick, were neglected by the nurses; we do not wonder at it, considering their situation, in many instances, up night and day, without any one to relieve them, worn down with fatigue, and want of sleep, they could not in many cases, render that assistance, which was needful. . . . The causes of complaint on this score, were not numerous. The case of the nurses, in many instances, were deserving of commiseration, the patient raging and frightful to behold; it has frequently required two persons, to hold them from running away; others have made attempts to jump out of a window, in many chambers they were nailed down, and the door was kept locked, to prevent them from running away, or breaking their necks, others lay vomiting blood, and screaming enough to chill them with horror. Thus were many of the nurses circumstanced, alone, until the patient died, then called away to another scene. . . .

### *Document 13: Quaker Reluctance to Accept Black Women Into Membership*

*These excerpts from Quaker monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings reveal that racial bias invaded even these quarters during the late eighteenth century. Two local Quaker groups hesitated to accept two mulatto women into fellowship.*[41]

At the Concord Monthly Meeting 7th month 4th, 1781, a query came from the Birmingham (Pennsylvania) Meeting whether, if an applicant for membership is known or believed to be sincere, he or she should be rejected on account of color. This was referred to a committee of men and women and, subsequently, to the Quarterly Meeting. The latter appointed a committee "to inquire more minutely into the disposition, color and circumstances of the individual on whose account the application took its rise." The committee reported three months later that some of them had visited the young woman and that

> her disposition they apprehended to be worthy of Friends' notice; and her color appeared to them not darker than some who are esteemed white: and we find by inquiry that her great grandfather was an African Negro and her great grandmother an American Indian; her grandfather a descendant of them and her grandmother an Indian; her father a descendant of them and the mother a white woman.



The matter was, however, not settled even then, but referred to the Yearly Meeting, which, by minute of 10th Month 1st, 1783, recorded:

> The request of Chester Quarter last year respecting the application of a woman to Concord Monthly Meeting to be received into membership, and which was referred for further consideration to this or a future meeting being now revived, the subject opening with weight, it is the sense and judgment of the meeting that Concord Monthly Meeting may safely consider the application of the person on the same ground in common with other applications for admission into membership.

The minutes mentioned no opposition at any stage, but only "weighty and edifying deliberations and a spirit of condescension," "a weighty exercise," and "divers just observations." Evidently, there was doubt or objection. This was apparent in a personal letter of a friend of the applicant who, after the Yearly Meeting's decision, wrote "that the mountains of opposition are leveled before her." By the following May, Abigail Franks was accepted into membership in the Birmingham Meeting:

> Women Friends . . . inform that Cynthia Miers, a mulatto woman, had also requested to be joined in membership with Friends, but this being a case of a singular nature amongst us the meeting thinks it best to proceed very cautiously herein and therefore appoints to take the subject into their serious consideration and report to the next meeting —John Haydock [and eleven other men].

The next month's minutes reported progress of the committee and acceptance of its suggestion that some men be appointed to "join women Friends in a visit to her, they to report their sense of her disposition of mind to our next meeting." At the next meeting, the visitors reported that they believed "her to be convinced of the principles of Truth as professed by us and desirous of walking agreeable thereto"; but the meeting accepted the judgment of the original committee that the case should "go forward to the Quarterly Meeting for their advice and direction herein." A Scottish Friend, John Wigham, who was present in this monthly meeting, described the case in his journal as follows:

> The case of a Mulatto woman, who had applied for membership with Friends, came before the meeting: a committee had been appointed to visit her, and reported their satisfaction as to her convincement but thought it unsafe to receive her on account of her colour! After much discussion it was at last concluded to refer the matter to the Quarterly Meeting. How hard it is to overcome old prejudices.

The Quarterly Meeting adopted the following course:

> From Rahway and Plainfield [New Jersey] Monthly Meeting we are informed that Cynthia Myers, a Mulatto woman, had applied to be received into membership with them, had been visited by a committee from their meeting, who made a favorable report respecting her, yet as they could not fully unite in judgment in her case, it was referred to this Meeting where claiming our solid attention, and many friends expressing their sentiments thereon, it was thought best to refer it to the Yearly Meeting as friends here could not unite in the propriety of receiving The without the concurrence of that meeting.

The Yearly Meeting appointed a committee to consider the question, to which both women Friends and visitors from other parts were admitted. Their report, made in writing and accepted by the Yearly Meeting, stated:

> We are united in believing that our Discipline already established relative to receiving persons into membership is not limited with respect to Nation or Colour.

The Committee recommended that applicants for membership should be investigated as to their views and practices, and when the results of these investigations were satisfactory, monthly meetings "may in their freedom receive such with propriety without respect of persons or colour."

The minutes of the Rahway and Plainfield Monthly Meeting showed that in the next month Cynthia Miers's case was resumed and that, in the following month, she was received into membership.

***Document 14: Funeral Sermon for Sarah Johnson***

*Sarah Johnson was 104 years old when she died in 1845. Her funeral sermon was preached by the Reverend J. N. M'Jilton, rector in charge of St. James' First African Church, Baltimore. The excerpts below from that sermon indicate the confident faith appropriate to such a believer.*[42]

Methodist

. . . It is not my purpose today, to speak of the just as a body. I esteem it a privilege to be able to delineate the character from *individual example*—example seen, and known, and admired among us. There was one, but recently in our midst, whose walk and conversation gave evidence that she had been washed in the waters of Regeneration. The proofs of her walk of faith were the fruits of a holy and devoted life. During her later years, the fear of God was continually before her eyes, and it appeared to be her steady aim to render such obedience to His commandments as would secure her peace of mind, and justify the hope, that when her worn out frame should be consigned to the earth, her spirit should be with God who gave it.

Sarah Johnson, the subject of my remarks, was born at Snow-hill, on the Eastern shore of Maryland, in the early part of the year 1742. She died on the night of the 4th of September, 1845, at the advanced age of nearly ONE HUNDRED AND FOUR YEARS.



She expressed the strongest confidence in God. . . . [A]fter the communion on Easter day, I asked her if she felt that she was getting near to Heaven, as she approached the grave. Her reply was the usual acknowledgment of her unworthiness. . . . "I am sinful, . . . but my Redeemer is all righteousness, in myself I am lost, but in Him I am safe. I pray that I may be faithful to the end and that my Saviour may be my portion forever."

The last time I saw her at home and in life, . . . she had not then a doubt but that she would be saved; and when I asked how that great work was to be accomplished, she answered, "Not by me, but by faith in Jesus Christ, my Saviour." I asked her if she was willing to die. She said with great animation, "My dear child, if it is my Saviour's will, I am not only willing to die, but I am anxious to be gone." I asked her if she was weary of the world in which she had lived so long. She replied, "Yes, I am really and truly weary of the world; I have lived so long in it and seen so much of its evil that I am sometimes impatient to leave it." I asked her if she was perfectly satisfied that she was safe, knowing that she had been sinful in the sight of God. "I am safe not in myself," she answered, "but in my Saviour; I know that my soul is safe in His hands. O I know it so well, . . . that I am anxious He should have it. Would that He might take it now!" A short time after I held this conversation with her, I was told that she was dead. . . . My inquiry . . . was, how the lamp of the aged Christian had expired. I was told that she had died as she had lived, an humble, self-accusing yet trusting disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her exit was as peaceful as the passing of a lovely summer's eve. The sun of life went down without a cloud, and she laid as calm and still in dying as the smooth unruffled lake when the night shadows are slowly stealing over it. A friend at her side was reading to her the Word of God, and as she listened to the recital of the Sacred Record, her spirit departed to look upon the realities which were rehearsed in her ear of flesh. . . . Perhaps the first realities that broke upon the sight of her released soul, were those that confirmed the truth of what she had heard. She laid so still while the reader was performing his task, that one approached to look upon her to ascertain if she was not asleep. The examination disclosed what had hardly been indicated by suspicion. She was indeed asleep,—asleep to wake no more until the trump of the Archangel shall awaken the millions of the sepulchre for the judgment of the Lord.

. . . It is the example of the deceased's virtues that I would hold up to your sight, for your admiration and for your imitation. . . . her devotion to the church. . . . her integrity as a christian professor. . . . her ardent piety. . . .