
**THE SUPERNATURAL
OCCURRENCES OF
JOHN WESLEY**

Daniel R. Jennings

**SEAN
MULTIMEDIA**

The Supernatural Occurrences of John Wesley

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Lucas I.XXXVII

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Chapter 1

THE MAN JOHN WESLEY



John Wesley and the Holy Club

John Wesley (1703-91) was born as the fifteenth child of British clergyman Samuel Wesley. He was educated at Charterhouse School and Christ Church at the University of Oxford. In 1725 he was ordained as a deacon in the Church of England and three years later was admitted to the priesthood. While at Oxford he joined the Holy Club, a group of students who 'methodically' held to religious practices and precepts such as visiting the sick and those in prison. Eventually this society came to be teased as the 'Methodists'.

In 1735 Wesley went to Georgia as an Anglican missionary but returned three years later, having

achieved little. While on his way to America he met some German Moravians whose simple evangelical faithfulness greatly impressed him.

During this whole time Wesley was plagued by a deep, intense spiritual void that he sensed in his heart.

After returning to England he sought out the Moravians again and while attending one of their meetings in Aldersgate Street, London, Wesley felt his 'heart strangely warmed'¹ as he entered into a personal relationship with Christ for the first time. This experience gave Wesley the confidence that all could have an inner assurance that their sins were forgiven and became one of his main theological driving points.

Initially he found resistance from the Church of England and was forced to open-air type outside meetings in which he preached to the lower class peoples that the established church did not want to reach. He met great success as he tirelessly traveled 5000 miles a year, delivering up to as many as four or five sermons a day, establishing Methodist societies along the way. Today his theology stands as the most influential and powerful force in evangelical Christianity.

One of the most interesting aspects about John Wesley is his now famous journal. Throughout his career, he kept notes of the various incidents and events that marked his ministry. It was while reading through this journal that I discovered Mr. Wesley had experienced

¹ *Works of John Wesley, Vol. 1:2, May 24, 1738, Sec. 14*

several brushes and encounters with what we would call the *supernatural*. I have compiled the majority of these reports here in this book, dividing his experiences into eleven different categories and reprinting the words from his journal as he recorded the incidents.² Today, for your reading pleasure, I submit unto you *The Supernatural Occurrences of John Wesley*.

² The journal entries that I chose are from the third edition of *The Works Of John Wesley* published in 1872, hereafter referred to as *WJW* followed by the volume number and reference information.

Chapter 2

JOHN WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH SPIRITUAL WARFARE



**Lord, even the devils are subject unto
us through thy name. Luke 10:17**

It seems to be little known, but John Wesley's ministry involved very much Spiritual Warfare. I know that while studying at John Wesley College, I heard much concerning Wesley's evangelical work but nothing at all of his face to face encounters with demoniacs. After reading through his journal and finding many of these case I discovered that his encounters were strikingly the same as those instances found in the Bible. Demons were just as real in Wesley's day as they had been in Jesus' day and just like in Jesus' day they could only be dealt with

through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Woodseats' Demoniac

June 5, 1753. — I rode over to Jonathan Booth's, at Woodseats, whose daughter had been ill in a very uncommon manner. The account her parents gave of it was as follows: — About the middle of December, 1752, ELIZABETH BOOTH, junior, near ten years old, began to complain of a pain in her breast, which continued three days: On the fourth day, in a moment, without any provocation, she began to be in a vehement rage, reviling her mother, and throwing at the maid what came next to hand. This fit continued near an hour; then in an instant she was quite calm. The next morning she fell into a fit of another kind, — being stretched out, and stiff as a dead carcass: Thus she lay about an hour. In the afternoon she was suddenly seized with violent involuntary laughter; and she had some or other of these fits several times a day, for about a month. In the intervals of them she was in great heaviness of soul, and continually crying for mercy; till one Saturday, as she lay stretched out on the bed, she broke out, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."³ Her faith and love increased from that time; but so did the violence of her fits also. And often while she was rejoicing and praising God, she would cry out, "O Lord!" and, losing her senses at once, lie as dead, or laugh

³ *Job 19:25*

violently, or rave and blaspheme. In the middle of February, she grew more outrageous than ever. She frequently strove to throw herself into the fire, or out of the window.⁴ Often she attempted to tear the Bible, cursing it in the bitterest manner; and many times she uttered oaths and blasphemies, too horrid to be repeated. Next to the Bible, her greatest rage was against the Methodists, — Mr. W. in particular. She frequently told us where he was, and what he was then doing; adding, “He will be here soon;” and at another time, “Now he is galloping down the lane, and two men with him.”⁵

In the intervals of her fits she was unusually stupid, and moped, as if void of common understanding; and yet sometimes broke out into vehement prayer, to the amazement of all that heard. Sometimes she would strip herself stark naked, and run up and down the house, screaming and crying, “Save me! Save me! He will tear me in pieces.” At other times she cried out, “He is tearing off my breasts; he is pouring melted lead down my throat. Now I suffer what the Martyrs suffered; but I have not the Martyrs’ faith.” She frequently spoke as if she was another person, saying to her father, “This girl is not thine, but mine. I have got possession of her, and I will keep her;” with many expressions of the same kind. She often seemed to be in a trance, and said she saw

⁴ Reminiscent of Mark 9:22 where a demon often threw a young boy into fire to try and kill him.

⁵ Reminiscent of the demon-possessed slave girl who had ESP in Acts 16:16-18.

many visions; sometimes of heaven or hell, or judgment; sometimes of things which she said would shortly come to pass.

In the beginning of March, Mrs. G. came over to Rotherham, who herself gave me the following account: — “Soon after I came in, she fell into a raging fit, blaspheming and cursing her father and me. She added, ‘It was I that made Green’s horse so bad the other day: (Which had been taken ill in a most unaccountable manner, as soon as he was put into the stable:) I did it that thou mightest have the preaching no more; and I had almost persuaded thee to it. It was I that made thee bad last night.’ I was then taken in an unusual way. All the time she spoke she was violently convulsed, and appeared to be in strong agony. After about a quarter of an hour she brake out into prayer, and then came to herself; only still dull and heavy.”

John Thorpe, of Rotherham, had often a desire to pray for her in the congregation; but he was as often hindered, by a strong and sudden impression on his mind that she was dead. When he came to Woodseats, and began to mention what a desire he had had, the girl, being then in a raging fit, cried out, “I have made a fool of Thorpe!” and burst out into a loud laughter. In the beginning of May all these symptoms ceased; and she continues in health both of soul and body. (WJW2:9)

The Case Of The Bristol Demoniac

October 25, 1739. — I was sent for to one in Bristol, who was taken ill the evening before. (This fact too I will simply relate, so far as I was an ear or eye witness of it.) She lay on the ground, furiously gnashing her teeth, and after a while roared aloud. It was not easy for three or four persons to hold her, especially when the name of Jesus was named. We prayed; the violence of her symptoms ceased, though without a complete deliverance.

In the evening, being sent for to her again, I was unwilling, indeed, afraid, to go: Thinking it would not avail, unless some who were strong in faith were to wrestle with God for her. I opened my Testament on those words, "I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth."⁶ I stood reprov'd, and went immediately. She began screaming before I came into the room; then broke out into a horrid laughter, mixed with blasphemy, grievous to hear.

One who from many circumstances apprehended a preternatural agent to be concerned in this, asking, "How didst thou dare to enter into a Christian?" was answered, "She is not a Christian. She is mine." Q. "Dost thou not tremble at the name of Jesus?" No words followed, but she shrunk back and trembled exceedingly. Q. "Art thou not increasing thy own damnation?" It was faintly answered, "Ay, ay:" Which was followed by fresh cursing and blaspheming.

⁶ *Matthew 25:25*

My brother coming in, she cried out, "Preacher! Field preacher! I don't love field-preaching." This was repeated two hours together, with spitting, and all the expressions of strong aversion. We left her at twelve, but called again about noon on Friday, 26. And now it was that God showed He heareth the prayer. All her pangs ceased in a moment: She was filled with peace, and knew that the son of wickedness was departed from her. (WJW1:3)

The Kingswood Demoniac

October 27, 1739. — I was sent for to Kingswood again, to one of those who had been so ill before. A violent rain began just as I set out, so that I was thoroughly wet in a few minutes. Just at that time, the woman (then three miles off) cried out, "Yonder comes Wesley, galloping as fast as he can." When I was come, I was quite cold and dead, and fitter for sleep than prayer. She burst out into a horrid laughter, and said, "No power, no power; no faith, no faith. She is mine; her soul is mine. I have her, and will not let her go." We begged of God to increase our faith. Meanwhile her pangs increased more and more; so that one would have imagined, by the violence of the throes, her body must have been shattered to pieces. One who was clearly convinced this was no natural disorder, said, "I think Satan is let loose. I fear he will not stop here." And added, "I command thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to tell if thou hast commission to torment any

other soul?" It was immediately answered, "I have. L—
—y C—r, and S—h J—s." (Two who lived at some
distance, and were then in perfect health.) We betook
ourselves to prayer again; and ceased not, till she began,
about six o'clock, with a clear voice, and composed,
cheerful look, — *Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.*
(WJW1:3)⁷

The Strange Case Of Convulsions

October 28, 1739. — I preached once more at Bradford, at
one in the afternoon. The violent rains did not hinder
more, I believe, than ten thousand, from earnestly
attending to what I spoke on those solemn words, "I take
you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of
all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all
the counsel of God."

Returning in the evening, I called at Mrs. J—'s,
in Kingswood. S—y J—s and L—y C—r were
there. It was scarce a quarter of an hour, before L—y
C—r fell into a strange agony; and presently after, S—
—y J—s. The violent convulsions all over their bodies
were such as words cannot describe. Their cries and
groans were too horrid to be born; till one of them, in a
tone not to be expressed, said, "Where is your faith now?
Come, go to prayers. I will pray with you. 'Our Father,

⁷ Reminiscent of demons speaking through people in Luke 4:33-35,
41 and demons causing illness in Luke 13:11.

which art in heaven.”” We took the advice, from whomsoever it came, and poured out our souls before God, till L—y C—r’s agonies so increased, that it seemed she was in the pangs of death. But in a moment God spoke: She knew his voice; and both her body and soul were healed. We continued in prayer till near one, when S— J—’s voice was also changed, and she began strongly to call upon God. This she did for the greatest part of the night. In the morning we renewed our prayers, while she was crying continually, “I burn! I burn! O what shall I do? I have a fire within me. I cannot bear it. Lord Jesus! Help!” — Amen, Lord Jesus! when thy time is come. (WJW1:3)⁸

The Strange Case Of Elizabeth Hobson

May 25, 1768. — 1. ELIZABETH HOBSON⁹ was born in Sunderland, in the year 1744. Her father dying when she was three or four years old, her uncle, Thomas Rea, a pious man, brought her up as his own daughter. She was

⁸ Reminiscent of the young boy in Mark 9:17-27 who suffered convulsions as a result of demonic attack.

⁹ The case of Elizabeth Hobson is a long one and I want to break it down, using footnotes, to show how Satan takes a person and manipulates them to bring about confusion. You will see how that if Elizabeth had known her Bible better Satan would not have been able to mislead her as he did.

serious from a child, and grew up in the fear of God.¹⁰ Yet she had deep and sharp convictions of sin, till she was about sixteen years of age, when she found peace with God, and from that time the whole tenor of her behavior was suitable to her profession. On Wednesday, May 20, 1768, and the three following days, I talked with her at large; but it was with great difficulty I prevailed on her to speak. The substance of what she said was as follows:

“2. From my childhood, when any of our neighbors died, whether men, women, or children, I used to see them, either just when they died, or a little before: And I was not frightened at all, it was so common. Indeed many times I did not then know they were dead. I saw many of them by day, many by night. Those that came when it was dark brought light with them. I observed all little children, and many grown persons, had a bright, glorious light round them.¹¹ But many had a gloomy, dismal light, and a dusky cloud over them.

“3. When I told my uncle this, he did not seem to be at all surprised at it; but at several times he said, ‘Be not afraid, only take care to fear and serve God. As long as he is on your side, none will be able to hurt you.’ At other times he said, (dropping a word now and then, but seldom answering me any questions about it,) ‘Evil

¹⁰ Proof against the false assumption that a demonic presence will not be found in a situation where the individuals have always been involved in church.

¹¹ Reminiscent of 2Corinthians 11:14.

spirits very seldom appear but between eleven at night and two in the morning: But after they have appeared to a person a year, they frequently come in the day-time. Whatever spirits, good or bad, come in the day, they come at sunrise, at noon, or at sunset.'

"4. When I was between twelve and thirteen my uncle had a lodger, who was a very wicked man. One night I was sitting in my chamber about half-hour after ten, having by accident put out my candle, when he came in, all over in a flame. I cried out, 'William, why do you come in so to fright me?' He said nothing, but went away. I went after him into his room, but found he was fast asleep in bed. A day or two after, he fell ill, and, within the week, died in raging despair.

"5. I was between fourteen and fifteen, when I went very early one morning to fetch up the kine¹². I had two fields to cross, into a low ground which was said to be haunted. Many persons had been frightened there, and I had myself often seen men and women (so many, at times, that they are out of count) go just by me, and vanish away. This morning, as I came toward it, I heard a confused noise, as of many people quarreling. But I did not mind it, and went on till I came near the gate. I then saw, on the other side, a young man dressed in purple, who said, 'It is too early; go back from whence you came. The Lord be with you, and bless you;' and presently he

¹² Cows.

was gone.¹³

“6. When I was about sixteen, my uncle fell ill, and grew worse and worse for three months. One day, having been sent out on an errand, I was coming home through a lane, when I saw him in the field, coming swiftly toward me. I ran to meet him; but he was gone. When I came home, I found him calling for me.¹⁴ As soon as I came to his bedside, he clasped his arms round my neck, and, bursting into tears, earnestly exhorted me to continue in the ways of God. He kept his hold, till he sunk down and died: And even then they could hardly unclasp his fingers. I would fain have died with him, and wished to be buried with him, dead or alive.

“7. From that time I was crying from morning to night, and praying that I might see him. I grew weaker and weaker, till, one morning, about one o’clock, as I was lying crying, as usual, I heard some noise, and, rising up, saw him come to the bedside. He looked much displeased, shook his head at me, and in a minute or two went away.

“8. About a week after, I took my bed, and grew worse and worse; till, in six or seven days, my life was despaired of. Then, about eleven at night, my uncle came in, looked well pleased, and sat down on the bedside. He

¹³ We see here the Devil’s continued work at confusing this girl. She is being led to believe that messengers of blessing from Heaven have been sent to her.

¹⁴ Foreknowledge of hitherto unknown events, an experience not uncommon with those possessed or oppressed by demons.

came every night after, at the same time, and stayed till cock-crowing. I was exceeding glad, and kept my eyes fixed upon him all the time he stayed. If I wanted drink or any thing, though I did not speak or stir, he fetched it, and set it on the chair by the bedside.¹⁵ Indeed I could not speak; many times I strove, but could not move my tongue. Every morning, when he went away, he waved his hand to me, and I heard delightful music, as if many persons were singing together.

“9. In about six weeks, I grew better. I was then musing, one night, whether I did well in desiring he might come; and I was praying that God would do his own will, when he came in, and stood by the bedside. But he was not in his usual dress; he had on a white robe, which reached down to his feet. He looked quite pleased. About one, there stood by him a person in white, taller than him, and exceeding beautiful. He came with the singing as of many voices, and continued till near cock-crowing. Then my uncle smiled, and waved his hand toward me twice or thrice. They went away with inexpressibly sweet music¹⁶, and I saw him no more.

“10. In a year after this, a young man courted me, and in some months we agreed to be married. But he

¹⁵ Reminiscent of “poltergeist” activity in which objects are mysteriously discovered moved or seen levitating and then flying across the room.

¹⁶ Some believe that Satan’s role in Heaven prior to his fall was that of music director. His influence on secular music is blatantly obvious.

purposed to take another voyage first, and one evening went aboard his ship. About eleven o'clock, going out to look for my mother, I saw him standing at his mother's door, with his hands in his pockets, and his hat pulled over his eyes. I went to him, and reached my hand to put up his hat; but he went swiftly by me, and I saw the wall, on the other side of the lane, part as he went through, and then immediately close after him. At ten the next morning he died.

"11. A few days after, John Simpson, one of our neighbors, a man that truly feared God, and one with whom I was particularly acquainted, went to sea, as usual. He sailed out on a Tuesday. The Friday night following, between eleven and twelve o'clock, I heard one walking in my room; and every step sounded as if he was stepping in water. He then came to the bedside, in his sea-jacket, all wet, and stretched his hand over me. Three drops of water fell on my breast, and felt as cold as ice. I strove to wake his wife, who lay with me; but I could not, any more than if she was dead. Afterward I heard he was cast away that night. In less than a minute he went away: But he came to me every night, for six or seven nights following, between eleven and two. Before he came, and when he went away, I always heard sweet music. Afterwards he came both day and night; every night about twelve, with the music at his coming and going, and every day at sunrise, noon, and sunset. He came, whatever company I was in; at church, in the preaching-house, at my class; and was always just before

me, changing his posture as I changed mine. When I sat, he sat; when I kneeled, he kneeled; when I stood, he stood likewise. I would fain have spoke to him, but I could not; when I tried, my heart sunk within me. Meantime it affected me more and more, so that I lost both my stomach, my color, and my strength. This continued ten weeks, while I pined away, not daring to tell any one. At last, he came four or five nights without any music, and looked exceeding sad. On the fifth night he drew the curtains of the bed violently to and fro, still looking wishfully at me, and as one quite distressed. This he did two nights. On the third, I lay down, about eleven, on the side of the bed. I quickly saw him walking up and down the room. Being resolved to speak to him, but unwilling any should hear, I rose and went up into the garret. When I opened the door, I saw him walking toward me, and shrunk back; on which he stopped, and stood at a distance. I said, 'In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, what is your business with me?' He answered, 'Betsy, God forgive you for keeping me so long from my rest. Have you forgot what you promised before I went to sea, — to look to my children, if I was drowned? You must stand to your word, or I cannot rest.' I said, 'I wish I was dead.' He said, 'Say not so; you have more to go through before then: And yet, if you knew as much as I do, you would not care how soon you died. You may bring the children on in their learning, while they live; they have but a short time.' I said, 'I will take all the care I can.' He added, 'Your brother has

wrote for you, to come to Jamaica; but if you go, it will hurt your soul. You have also thoughts of altering your condition; but if you marry him you think of, it will draw you from God, and you will neither be happy here nor hereafter.¹⁷ Keep close to God, and go on in the way wherein you have been brought up.’ I asked, ‘How do you spend your time?’ He answered, ‘In songs of praise. But of this you will know more by and by; for where I am, you will surely be. I have lost much happiness by coming to you: And I should not have stayed so long without using other means to make you speak; but the Lord would not suffer me to fright you. Have you anything more to say? It draws near two, and after that I cannot stay. I shall only come to you twice more before the death of my two children. God bless you.’ Immediately I heard such singing, as if a thousand voices joined together. He then went down stairs, and I followed him to the first landing. He smiled, and I said, ‘I desire you will come back.’ He stood still till I came to him. I asked him one or two questions, which he immediately answered;¹⁸ but added, ‘I wish you had not

¹⁷ Notice how Satan has stepped up his work at controlling this young woman. He is now telling her how to spend her life (i.e. taking care of this man’s children and who she can and cannot marry). Satan’s ultimate desire of all human beings is their domination. Oftentimes Satan will imitate the voice of God in our minds, telling us things in an attempt to make us feel guilty and then use that to control us.

¹⁸ Satan now has Elizabeth desiring the company of these spirits and even seeking information from them, despite God’s Biblical warning

called me back; for now I must take something from you.' He paused a little, and said, 'I think you can best part with the hearing of your left ear.' He laid his hand upon it, and in the instant it was deaf as a stone; and it was several years before I recovered the least hearing of it. The cock crowed as he went out of the door, and then the music ceased. The eldest of his children died at about three years and an half, the younger before he was five years old. He appeared before the death of each, but without speaking: After that I saw him no more.

"12. A little before Michaelmas, 1763, my brother George, who was a good young man went to sea. The day after Michaelmas-day, about midnight, I saw him standing by my bedside surrounded with a glorious light, and looking earnestly at me. He was wet all over. That night the ship in which he sailed split upon a rock, and all the crew were drowned.

"13. On April 9, 1767, about midnight, I was lying awake, and I saw my brother John standing by my bedside. Just at that time he died in Jamaica.

"14. By his death I became entitled to an house in

against it (*Dt 18:10-11*). This brings him one step closer to controlling Elizabeth. A similar story is told of a minister who would open his body up to the control of a spirit who would cause him to write messages. At first the messages were pure and put forth in beautiful language but as time progressed they began to be filled with obscenities. Then he began to hear voices and became so mentally anguished that he had to be hospitalized. He died three months later, raving mad. (*The Fundamentals, Vol. 4, Ch 12:5:2*)

Sunderland, which was left us by my grandfather, John Hobson, an exceeding wicked man, who was drowned fourteen years ago. I employed an Attorney to recover it from my aunts, who kept possession of it.¹⁹ But finding more difficulty than I expected, in the beginning of December I gave it up. Three or four nights after, as I rose from prayer, a little before eleven, I saw him standing at a small distance. I cried out, 'Lord bless me! what brings you here?' He answered, 'You have given up the house: Mr. Parker advised you so to do; but if you do, I shall have no rest:²⁰ Indeed Mr. Dunn, whom you have hitherto employed, will do nothing for you. Go to Durham, employ an Attorney there, and it will be recovered.'²¹ His voice was loud, and so hollow and deep, that every word went through me. His lips did not move at all, (nor his eyes,) but the sound seemed to rise out of the floor. When he had done speaking, he turned about, and walked out of the room.

"15. In January, as I was sitting on the bedside, a quarter before twelve he came in, stood before me,

¹⁹ This may give us some insight as to why Satan was allowed to torment Elizabeth. Sinful behavior is an open door to demonic oppression and in hiring an attorney to help her recover what was taken from her Elizabeth was disobeying Jesus' command in Luke 6:29. Even a "little" sin is a wide open door for Satan to come into your life.

²⁰ Why would the future of her wicked grandfather's estate have anything to do with his eternal resting place?

²¹ A direct temptation to disobey Luke 6:29. Satan is succeeding at turning her away from God.

looked earnestly at me, then walked up and down and stood and looked again. This he did for half an hour, and thus he came every other night for about three weeks. All this time he seemed angry, and sometimes his look was quite horrid and furious. One night I was sitting up in bed crying, when he came and began to pull off the clothes. I strove to touch his hand, but could not; on which he shrunk back and smiled.

“16. The next night but one, about twelve, I was again sitting up and crying, when he came and stood at the bedside. As I was looking for an handkerchief, he walked to the table, took one up, brought and dropped it upon the bed. After this, he came three or four nights and pulled the clothes off, throwing them on the other side of the bed.

“17. Two nights after, he came as I was sitting on the bedside, and, after walking to and fro, snatched the handkerchief from my neck. I fell into a swoon. When I came to myself he was standing just before me. Presently he came close to me, dropped it on the bed, and went away.

“18. Having had a long illness the year before, having taken much cold by his frequent pulling off the clothes, and being worn out by these appearances, I was now mostly confined to my bed. The next night, soon after eleven, he came again: I asked, ‘In God’s name, why do you torment me thus? You know it is impossible for me to go to Durham now. But I have a fear that you are not happy, and beg to know whether you are, or not.’

He answered, after a little pause, 'That is a bold question for you to ask. So far as you knew me to do amiss in my lifetime, do you take care to do better.'

I said, 'It is a shocking affair to live and die after that manner.'

He replied, 'It is no time for reflections now: What is done cannot be undone.'

I said, 'It must be a great happiness to die in the Lord!'

He said, 'Hold your tongue! Hold your tongue! At your peril, never mention such a word before me again!'

I was frightened, and strove to lift up my heart to God. He gave a shriek, and sunk down at three times, with a loud groan at each time. Just as he disappeared, there was a large flash of fire, and I fainted away.

"19. Three days after, I went to Durham, and put the affair into Mr. Hugill the Attorney's hands.²² The next night, about one, he came in; but on my taking up the Bible, went away. A month after, he came about eleven. I said, 'Lord bless me! What has brought you here again?'

He said, 'Mr. Hugill has done nothing but write one letter: You must write or go to Durham again. It may be decided in a few days.'

I asked, 'Why do not you go to my aunts, who keep me out of it?'

He answered, 'I have no power to go to them: And

²² Satan has been successful at getting Elizabeth to sin.

they cannot bear it. If I could, I would go to them, were it only to warn them; for I doubt, where I am I shall get too many to bear me company.'

He added, 'Take care: There is mischief laid in Peggy's hands: She will strive to meet you coming from your class. I do not speak to hinder you from going to it, but that you may be cautious. Let some one go with you, and come back with you; though whether you will escape or no, I cannot tell.'

I said, 'She can do no more than God will let her.'

He answered, 'We have all too little to do with Him. Mention that word no more. As soon as this is decided, meet me at Boyldon-Hill, between twelve and one at night.'

I said, 'That is a lone place for a woman to go to at that time of night. I am willing to meet you at the Ballast-Hills, or in the churchyard.'

He said, 'That will not do. But what are you afraid of?'

I answered, 'I am not afraid of you, but of rude men.'

He said, 'I will set you safe, both thither and back again.'

I asked, 'May I not bring a Minister with me?'

He replied, 'Are you thereabouts? I will not be seen by any but you. You have plagued me sore enough

already.²³ If you bring any with you, take what follows.’

“20. From this time he appeared every night, between eleven and two. If I put out the fire and candle, in hopes I should not see him, it did not avail. For as soon as he came all the room was light, but with a dismal light, like that of flaming brimstone²⁴. But whenever I took up the Bible, or kneeled down, yea, or prayed in my heart, he was gone.

“21. On Thursday, May 12, he came about eleven, as I was sitting by the fire. I asked, ‘In God’s name, what do you want?’

He said, ‘You must either go or write to Durham. I cannot stay from you till this is decided; and I cannot stay where I am.’

When he went away, I fell into a violent passion of crying, seeing no end of my trouble. In this agony I continued till after one, and then fell into a fit. About two, I came to myself, and saw standing, at the bedside, one in a white robe, which reached down to his feet. I cried, ‘In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost —’

He said ‘The Lord is with you, I am come to comfort you. What cause have you to complain and murmur thus? Why do you mourn thus for your friends? Pray for them, and leave them to God. Arise and pray.’

²³ Notice that the demon is attempting to make Elizabeth feel guilty. Satan knows that people will react to guilt and so he frequently tries to make people feel guilt over things that they have no need to, all in an attempt to control them.

²⁴ That is, sulfur, a chemical associated with hell (*Rev 19:20*).

I said, 'I can pray none.'

He said, 'But God will help you; only keep close to God. You are backward likewise in praying with others and afraid to receive the Lord's Supper. Break through that backwardness and that fear. The Lord bless you, and be ever with you!'

As he went away, I heard many voices singing Hallelujah, with such melody as I never heard before. All my trouble was gone, and I wanted nothing but to fly away with them.

"22. Sat. 28. — About twelve, my grandfather stood at the bedside. I said, 'In God's name, what do you want?'

He said, 'You do not make an end of this thing: Get it decided as soon as possible. My coming is as uneasy to myself as it can be to you.'

Before he came, there was a strong smell of burning, and the room was full of smoke, which got into my eyes, and almost blinded me for some time after.

"23. Wed. June 21. — About sunset, I was coming up stairs, at Mrs. Knot's, and I saw him coming toward me out of the opposite room. He went close by me on the stair-head. Before I saw him, I smelt a strong smell of burning, and so did Miss Hosmer.²⁵ It got into my throat, and almost stifled me. I sat down, and fainted away.

"24. On Friday, July 3, I was sitting at dinner,

²⁵ This is proof that Elizabeth is not hallucinating--A second witness has experienced the manifestations.

when I thought I heard one come along the passage. I looked about, and saw my aunt, Margaret Scot, of Newcastle, standing at my back. On Saturday I had a letter, informing me that she died on that day." — Thus far Elizabeth Hobson.

On Sunday, JULY 10, I received the following letter from a friend, to whom I had recommended her:
Sunderland, July 6, 1768.

I WROTE you word before, that Elizabeth Hobson was put into possession of the house. The same night her old visitant, who had not troubled her for some time, came again, and said, 'You must meet me at Boyldon-Hill, on Thursday night, a little before twelve. You will see many appearances, who will call you to come to them; but do not stir, neither give them any answer. A quarter after twelve, I shall come and call you; but still do not answer, nor stir.' She said, 'It is an hardship upon me for you to desire me to meet you there. Why cannot you take your leave now?' He answered, 'It is for your good that I desire it. I can take my leave of you now; but if I do, I must take something from you, which you would not like to part with.' She said, 'May not a few friends come with me?' He said, 'They may; but they must not be present when I come.'

That night twelve of us met at Mr. Davison's, and spent some time in prayer. God was with us of a truth. Then six of us went with her to the place, leaving the rest to pray for us. We came thither a little before twelve, and then stood at a small distance from her. It being a fine

night, we kept her in our sight, and spent the time in prayer. She stood there till a few minutes after one. When we saw her move, we went to meet her. She said, 'Thank God, it is all over and done. I found everything as he told me. I saw many appearances, who called me to them; but I did not answer or stir. Then he came and called me at a distance; but I took no notice. Soon after, he came up to me, and said, 'You are come well-fortified.' He then gave her the reasons why he required her to meet him at that place, and why he could take his leave there, and not in the house, without taking something from her. But withal he charged her to tell this to no one; adding, 'If you disclose this to any creature, I shall be under a necessity of troubling you as long as you live. If you do not, I shall never trouble you, nor see you any more, either in time or eternity.' He then bid her farewell, waved his hand, and disappeared." (WJW3:15)²⁶

The Strange Case Of The Pride Demon

January 11, 1741. — I met with a surprising instance of the power of the devil. While we were at the room, Mrs. J— —s, sitting at home, took the Bible to read; but on a sudden threw it away, saying, "I am good enough; I will never read or pray more." She was in the same mind

²⁶ For Wesley's opinion on these events refer to his *An Answer To A Report*, dated September 12, 1782 (WJW11) where he states that he was "fully persuaded, that every circumstance of it is literally and punctually true."

when I came; often repeating, "I used to think I was full of sin, and that I sinned in every thing I did; but now I know better: I am a good Christian; I never did any harm in my life; I don't desire to be any better than I am." She spoke many things to the same effect, plainly showing, that the spirit of pride, and of lies²⁷, had the full dominion over her.

Monday, 12. I asked, "Do you desire to be healed?"

She said, "I am whole."

"But do you desire to be saved?"

She replied, "I am saved; I ail nothing; I am happy."

Yet it was easy to discern, she was in the most violent agony, both of body and mind; sweating exceedingly, notwithstanding the severe frost, and not continuing in the same posture a moment. Upon our beginning to pray, she raged beyond measure; but soon sunk down as dead. In a few minutes she revived, and joined in prayer. We left her for the present in peace.

Mon. 12. — In the evening our souls were so filled with the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving, that I could scarce tell how to expound, till I found where it is written, "My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord. With my mouth will I ever be showing thy truth, from one generation to another."²⁸

²⁷ Reminiscent of 1Kings 22:19-25 where a "lying spirit" went into the mouth of a false prophet.

²⁸ *Psalm 89:1*

All this day, Mrs. J— —s was in a violent agony, till, starting up in the evening, she said, “Now they have done. They have just done. C— — prayed, and Humphreys preached.” (And indeed so they did.) “And they are coming hither as fast as they can.” Quickly after they came in. She immediately cried out, “Why, what do you come for? You can’t pray. You know you can’t.” And they could not open their mouths; so that, after a short time, they were constrained to leave her as she was.²⁹

Many came to see her on Tuesday; — to every one of whom she spoke, concerning either their actual or their heart sins, and that so closely, that several of them went away in more haste than they came.³⁰ In the afternoon Mr. J— — sent to Kingswood for me. She told him, “Mr. Wesley won’t come tonight; he will come in the morning. But God has begun, and he will end the work by himself. Before six in the morning I shall be well.” And about a quarter before six the next morning, after lying quiet awhile, she broke out, “Peace be unto thee;” (her husband;) “peace be unto this house. The peace of God is come to my soul. I know that my Redeemer liveth.” And for several days her mouth was filled with His praise, and her “talk was wholly of his

²⁹ Here we see that demons can give people supernatural powers over other people.

³⁰ We know from Scripture that the power to prophesy can come from demons as well as the Holy Spirit. Consider King Saul who had an evil spirit come forcefully upon him and he began to prophesy only a few moments later to try and murder David (1Sam 18:10-11).

wondrous works." (WJW1:4)

The Shattery Demoniac

January 13, 1743. — I rode to Stratford-upon-Avon. I had scarce sat down before I was informed that Mrs. K., a middle-aged woman, of Shattery, half a mile from Stratford, had been for many weeks last past in a way which nobody could understand; that she had sent for a Minister, but almost as soon as he came, began roaring in so strange a manner, (her tongue at the same time hanging out of her mouth, and her face being distorted into the most terrible form,) that he cried out, "It is the devil, doubtless! It is the devil!" and immediately went away. I suppose this was some unphilosophical Minister; else he would have said, "Stark mad! Send her to Bedlam."

I asked, "What good do you think I can do?" One answered, "We cannot tell; but Mrs. K." (I just relate what was spoken to me, without passing any judgment upon it) "earnestly desired you might come, if you was anywhere near; saying she had seen you in a dream, and should know you immediately: But the devil said, (those were her own expressions,) 'I will tear thy throat out before he comes.' But afterwards, she said, his words were, 'If he does come, I will let thee be quiet; and thou shalt be as if nothing ailed thee, till he is gone away.'"

A very odd kind of madness this! I walked over about noon; but when we came to the house, desired all

those who came with me to stay below. One showing me the way, I went up straight to her room. As soon as I came to the bedside, she fixed her eyes, and said, "You are Mr. Wesley. I am very well now, I thank God: Nothing ails me; only I am weak." I called them up, and we began to sing,

*Jesus, thou hast bid us pray,
Pray always and not faint:
With the word a power convey
To utter our complaint.*

After singing a verse or two we kneeled down to prayer. I had but just begun, (my eyes being shut,) when I felt as if I had been plunged into cold water³¹; and immediately there was such a roar, that my voice was quite drowned, though I spoke as loud as I usually do to three or four thousand people. However, I prayed on. She was then reared up in the bed, her whole body moving at once, without bending one joint or limb, just as if it were one piece of stone. Immediately after it was writhed into all kind of postures, the same horrid yell continuing still. But we left her not till all the symptoms ceased, and she was (for the present, at least) rejoicing and praising God. (WJW1:5)

³¹ One of the reported signs of a "haunted" house is that there are unusual cold spots located on the premises.

The Case Of The Demoniac Woman And Her Brother

May 20, 1749. — I saw a melancholy sight. A gentlewoman of an unspotted character, sitting at home, on May 4, 1747, cried out that something seized her by the side. Then she said it was in her mouth. Quickly after she complained of her head. From that time she wept continually for four months, and afterwards grew outrageous; but always insisted that God had forsaken her, and that the devil possessed her, body and soul. I found it availed nothing to reason with her; she only blasphemed the more; cursing God, and vehemently desiring, yet fearing, to die. However, she suffered me to pray; only saying, it signified not, for God had given her up. Her brother gave me almost as strange an account of himself. Some years since, as he was in the full career of sin, in a moment he felt the wrath of God upon him, and was in the deepest horror and agony of soul. He had no rest, day or night, feeling he was under the full power of the devil. He was utterly incapable of any business, so that he was obliged to shut up his shop. Thus he wandered up and down, in exquisite torture, for just eighteen months: And then, in a moment, the pressure was removed: He believed God had not forsaken him: His understanding was clear as ever; he resumed his employ, and followed it in the fear of God. (WJW2:7)

The Bandon Legion

May 25, 1769. — I rode to Bandon. Since I was here before, several have gone home rejoicing; but others are come in their place. So that the society contains just as many members as when I left it; and most of the believers seem much alive; particularly the young men, maidens, and children. In the evening we were obliged to be in the House; but the next, Friday, 26, I stood in the main street, and cried to a numerous congregation, “Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man.”

Afterwards I visited one that a year or two ago was in high life, an eminent beauty, adored by her husband, admired and caressed by some of the first men in the nation. She was now without husband, without friend, without fortune, confined to her bed, in constant pain, and in black despair, believing herself forsaken of God, and possessed by a legion of devils! Yet I found great liberty in praying for her, and a strong hope that she will die in peace. (WJW3:15)

The Case Of The Spirits In The Night

July 29, 1766. — I preached at Colne. And here I found one whom I had sent for some years ago. She lives two miles from Colne, and is of an unblamable behavior. Her name is Ann A — — n. She is now in the twenty-sixth year of her age. The account she gives is as follows: — “I cannot now remember the particulars which I told Mr. Grimshaw from time to time; but I well remember, that from the time I was about four years old, after I was in

bed I used to see several persons walking up and down the room. They all used to come very near the bed, and look upon me, but say nothing. Some of them looked very sad, and some looked very cheerful; some seemed pleased, others very angry; and these frayed me sore; especially a man and a woman of our own parish, who seemed fighting, and died soon after. None of them spake to me but a lad about sixteen, who, a week before, died of the small-pox. I said to him, 'You are dead! How did you get out of the other place?' He said, 'Easily enough.' I said, 'Nay, I think if I was there, I should not get out so easily.' He looked exceeding angry. I was frightened, and began to pray, and he vanished away. If it was ever so dark when any of them appeared, there was light all round them. This continued till I was sixteen or seventeen; but it frightened me more and more; and I was troubled because people talked about me; and many told me I was a witch. This made me cry earnestly to God to take it away from me. In a week or two it was all at an end; and I have seen nothing since." (WJW3:14)³²

The Brechin Contortionists

June 1, 1764. — I rode to Brechin, where Mr. Blair received me in the most friendly manner. In the afternoon I preached on the side of an hill near the town,

³² Reminiscent of Job 4:12-21 where Job's friend Eliphaz claims a demonic spirit appeared to him and conversed one night.

where we soon forgot the cold. I trust there will be not only a knowing, but a loving, people in this place. About seven Mr. B. was occasionally mentioning what had lately occurred in the next parish. I thought it worth a farther inquiry, and therefore ordered our horses to be brought immediately. Mr. B. guided us to Mr. Ogilvie's house, the Minister of the parish; who informed us that a strange disorder had appeared in his parish, between thirty and forty years ago; but that nothing of the kind had been known there since, till some time in September last. A boy was then taken ill, and so continues still. In the end of January, or beginning of February, many other children were taken, chiefly girls, and a few grown persons. They begin with an involuntary shaking of their hands and feet. Then their lips are convulsed; next their tongue, which seems to cleave to the roof of the mouth. Then the eyes are set, staring terribly, and the whole face variously distorted. Presently they start up, and jump ten, fifteen, or twenty times together straight upward, two, three, or more feet from the ground. Then they start forward, and run with amazing swiftness, two, three, or five hundred yards. Frequently they run up, like a cat, to the top of an house, and jump on the ridge of it, as on the ground. But wherever they are, they never fall, or miss their footing at all. After they have run and jumped for some time, they drop down as dead. When they come to themselves, they usually tell when and where they shall be taken again: Frequently, how often and where they shall jump, and to what places they shall run. I asked,

“Are any of them near?” He said, “Yes, at those houses.” We walked thither without delay. One of them was four years and half old; the other about eighteen. The child, we found, had had three or four fits that day, running and jumping like the rest, and in particular leaping many times from a high table to the ground without the least hurt. The young woman was the only person of them all, who used to keep her senses during the fit. In answer to many questions, she said, “I first feel a pain in my left foot, then in my head; then my hands and feet shake, and I cannot speak; and quickly I begin to jump or run.” While we were talking, she cried out, “O, I have a pain in my foot: It is in my hand: It is here, at the bending of my arm. O, my head! my head! my head!” Immediately her arms were stretched out, and were as an iron bar: I could not bend one of her fingers; and her body was bent backward; the lower part remaining quite erect, while her back formed exactly a half circle, — her head hanging even with her hips. I was going to catch her; but one said, “Sir, you may let her alone, for they never fall.”

But I defy all mankind to account for her not falling, when the trunk of her body hung in that manner. In many circumstances this case goes far beyond the famous one mentioned by Boerhaave; particularly in that, — their telling before, when and how they should be taken again. Whoever can account for this upon natural principles, has my free leave: I cannot. I therefore believe, if this be in part a natural distemper, there is something preternatural too. Yet supposing this, I can easily

conceive, Satan will so disguise his part therein, that we cannot precisely determine, which part of the disorder is natural, and which preternatural. (WJW3:13)³³

The Michaelmas-Day Demon

October 1, 1763. — I returned to London, and found our house in ruins, great part of it being taken down, in order to a thorough repair. But as much remained as I wanted: Six foot square suffices me by day or by night. I now received a very strange account from a man of sense as well as integrity: —

“I asked M. S. many questions before she would give me any answer. At length, after much persuasion, she said, ‘On old Michaelmas-Day was three years, I was sitting by myself at my father’s, with a Bible before me; and one, whom I took to be my uncle, came into the room, and sat down by me. He talked to me some time, till, not liking his discourse, I looked more carefully at him: He was dressed like my uncle; but I observed one of his feet was just like that of an ox. Then I was much frightened, and he began torturing me sadly, and told me he would torture me ten times more, if I would not swear

³³ This case is similar to the story of Legion (Mark 5:1-20 & Luke 8:26-39) in that, like the Brechin Contortionists, he too had been given super-human ability such as the strength to break his chains apart, tear his iron foot-cuffs from his feet and overpower the guards who were caring for him. The next report even more closely parallels the abilities of the Legion.

to kill my father, which at last I did. He said he would come again, on that day four years, between half-hour past two and three o'clock. I have several times since strove to write this down; but when I did, the use of my hand was taken from me. I strove to speak it; but whenever I did, my speech was taken from me, and I am afraid I shall be tormented a deal more for what I have spoken now.'

"Presently she fell into such a fit as was dreadful to look upon. One would have thought she would be torn in pieces. Several persons could scarce hold her; till, after a time, she sunk down as dead.

"From that Michaelmas-Day she was continually tormented with the thought of killing her father, as likewise of killing herself, which she often attempted, but was as often hindered. Once she attempted to cut her own throat; once to throw herself into Rosamond's Pond; several times to strangle herself, which once or twice was with much difficulty prevented.

"Her brother, fearing lest she should at last succeed in her attempt, and finding her fits come more frequently, got a strait waistcoat made for her, such as they use at Bedlam. It was made of strong ticking, with two straps on the shoulders, to fasten her down to the bed; one across her breast, another across her middle, and another across her knees. One likewise was buckled on each leg, and fastened to the side of the bed. The arms of the waistcoat drew over her fingers, and fastened like a purse. In a few minutes after she was thus secured, her

brother, coming to the bed, found she was gone. After some time, he found she was up the chimney, so high that he could scarce touch her feet. When Mary Loftis called her, she came down, having her hands as fast as ever.

“The night after, I fastened her arms to her body with new straps, over and above the rest. She looked at me and laughed; then gave her hands a slight turn, and all the fastenings were off.

“In the morning Mr. Spark came: On our telling him this, he said, ‘But I will take upon me to fasten her so that she shall not get loose.’ Accordingly, he sent for some girth-web, with which he fastened her arms to her sides; first above her elbows, round her body; then below her elbows; then he put it round each wrist, and braced them down to each side of the bedstead: After this she was quiet a night and a day; then all this was off like the rest.

“After this we did not tie her down any more, only watched over her night and day. I asked the Physician that attended her, whether it was a natural disorder. He said, ‘Partly natural, partly diabolical.’ We then judged there was no remedy but prayer, which was made for her, or with her, continually; though while any were praying with her, she was tormented more than ever.

“The Friday before Michaelmas-Day last, Mr. W. came to see her. He asked, ‘Do you know me?’

She said, ‘No; you all appear to me like

Blackamoors.'

'But do not you know my voice?'

'No; I know no one's voice, except Molly L— —'s.'

'Do you pray God to help you?'

'No, I can't pray. God will never help me. I belong to the devil; and he will have me: He will take me, body and soul, on Monday.'

'Would you have me pray for you?'

'No indeed: For when people pray, he torments me worse than ever.'

"In her fits she was first convulsed all over, seeming in an agony of pain, and screaming terribly. Then she began cursing, swearing, and blaspheming in the most horrid manner. Then she burst into vehement fits of laughter; then sunk down as dead. All this time she was quite senseless; then she fetched a deep sigh, and recovered her sense and understanding, but was so weak that she could not speak to be heard, unless you put your ear almost close to her mouth.

"When Mr. W. began praying, she began screaming, so that a mob quickly gathered about the house. However, he prayed on, till the convulsions and screaming ceased, and she came to her senses much sooner than usual. What most surprised us was, that she continued in her senses, and soon after began to pray herself.

"On Sunday evening Mr. W. came again, asked her many questions, pressed her to call upon God for power to believe, and then prayed with her. She then

began to pray again, and continued in her senses longer than she had done for a month before; but still insisted, the devil would come the next day, between two and three, and take her away.

“She begged me to sit up with her that night, which I willingly did. About four in the morning, she burst out into a flood of tears, crying, ‘What shall I do? What shall I do? I cannot stand this day. This day I shall be lost.’ I went to prayer with her, and exhorted her to pray for faith, and her agony ceased.

“About half-hour after ten, ten of us came together, as we had agreed the day before. I said, ‘Is there any among you who does not believe that God is able and willing to deliver this soul?’ They answered with one voice, ‘We believe he both can and will deliver her this day.’³⁴ I then fastened her down to the bed on both sides, and set two on each side to hold her if need were. We began laying her case before the Lord, and claiming his promise on her behalf. Immediately Satan raged vehemently. He caused her to roar in an uncommon manner; then to shriek, so that it went through our heads; then to bark like a dog.³⁵ Then her face was distorted to an amazing degree, her mouth being drawn from ear to ear, and her eyes turned opposite ways and starting as if they would start out of her head. Presently her throat was so convulsed, that she appeared to be

³⁴ The kind of faith we need today.

³⁵ Unsettling in light of the fact that similar things have been reported to have happened under the influence of the “Holy Spirit”.

quite strangled; then the convulsions were in her bowels, and her body swelled as if ready to burst. At other times she was stiff from head to foot, as an iron bar; being at the same time wholly deprived of her senses and motion, not even breathing at all. Soon after her body was so writhed, one would have thought all her bones must be dislocated.

“We continued in prayer, one after another, till about twelve o’clock. One then said, ‘I must go; I can stay no longer.’ Another and another said the same, till we were upon the point of breaking up. I said, ‘What is this? Will you all give place to the devil? Are you still ignorant of Satan’s devices? Shall we leave this poor soul in his hands?’ Presently the cloud vanished away. We all saw the snare, and resolved to wrestle with God till we had the petition we asked of him. We began singing an hymn, and quickly found his Spirit was in the midst of us³⁶; but the more earnestly we prayed, the more violently the enemy raged. It was with great difficulty that four of us could hold her down: Frequently we thought she would have been torn out of our arms. By her looks and motions we judged she saw him in a visible shape.³⁷ She laid fast hold on Molly L—s and me, with inexpressible eagerness; and soon burst into a flood of tears, crying, ‘Lord, save, or I perish! I will believe. Lord, give me power to believe; help my unbelief!’ Afterwards she lay

³⁶ *Psalm 22:3*

³⁷ Reminiscent of Numbers 22:21-35 where Balaam’s donkey could see the angel of the Lord but Balaam could not.

quiet for almost fifteen minutes. I then asked, 'Do you now believe Christ will save you? And have you a desire to pray to him?' She answered, 'I have a little desire, but I want power to believe.' We bid her keep asking for the power, and looking unto Jesus. I then gave out an hymn, and she earnestly sung with us those words:

*O Sun of Righteousness, arise,
With healing in thy wing;
To my diseased, my fainting soul,
Life and salvation bring!*

"I now looked at my watch and told her, 'It is half-hour past two: This is the time when the devil said he would come for you.' But, blessed be God, instead of a tormentor, he sent a comforter. Jesus appeared to her soul, and rebuked the enemy, though still some fear remained; but at three it was all gone, and she mightily rejoiced in the God of her salvation. It was a glorious sight. Her fierce countenance was changed, and she looked innocent as a child: And we all partook of the blessing; for Jesus filled our souls with a love which no tongue can express. We then offered up our joint praises to God, for his unspeakable mercies, and left her full of faith, and love, and joy in God her Savior.' (WJW3:13)

An Illness From Satan

August 9, 1750. — I preached at Gwennap, and on *Friday*.

On *Saturday* noon at Bezore, near Truro; in the evening, and on *Sunday* morning, in Redruth. Mr. Collins preached an exceeding useful sermon at church, upon the General Judgment. At one I preached in the street, to thrice as many as the Room would have contained. I afterwards visited a poor old woman, a mile or two from the town: Her trials had been uncommon; inexpressible agonies of mind, joined with all sorts of bodily pain, not, it seemed, from any natural cause, but the direct operation of Satan.³⁸ Her joys were now as uncommon; she had little time to sleep; having, for several months last past, seen, as it were, the unclouded face of God, and praised him day and night. (WJW2:8)

A Vision Of Satan

April 27, 1752. — After preaching in the evening, I was desired to visit a person who had been an eminent scoffer at all religion; but was now, they said, “in a strange way.” I found her in a *strange way* indeed; either raving mad, or possessed of the devil. The woman herself affirmed that the devil had appeared to her the day before; and, after talking some time, leaped upon, and grievously tormented her ever since. We prayed with her. Her agonies ceased. She fell asleep, and awaked in the morning calm and easy. (WJW2:9)

³⁸ Reminiscent of Job 2:1-7.

The Woman Whom Satan Touched

August 13, 1746. — I preached at Lanzufried. As soon as we came out of the church, a poor woman met us, whom Satan had bound in an uncommon manner for several years. She followed us to the house where our horses were, weeping, and rejoicing, and praising God. Two Clergymen were there, besides me, and the house was full of people: But she could not refrain from declaring before them all, what God had done for her soul. And the words which came from the heart, went to the heart. I scarce ever heard such a Preacher before. All were in tears round about her, high and low; for there was no resisting the spirit by which she spoke.

The odd account she gave of herself was this: (Concerning which let every one judge as he pleases:) That near seven years since she affronted one of her neighbors, who thereupon went to Francis Morgan, (a man famous in those parts,) and gave him fourteen shillings to do his worst to her; that the next night, as soon as she was in bed, there was a sudden storm of thunder, lightning, and rain, in the midst of which she felt all her flesh shudder, and knew the devil was close to her; that at the same time a horse she had in the stable below, which used to be as quiet as a lamb, leaped to and fro, and sore in such a manner, that she was forced to rise and turn him out; that a tree which grew at the end of the house, was torn up by the roots; that from thenceforth she had no rest day or night, being not only in fear and

horror of mind, but in the utmost torment of body, feeling as if her flesh was tearing off with burning pincers; that till this day, she had never had any respite or ease; but now she knew God had delivered her, and she believed he would still deliver her body and soul, and bruise Satan under her feet. (WJW2:6)

Freedom In Jesus' Name

October 12, 1739. — Yet I could not but be under some concern, with regard to one or two persons, who were tormented in an unaccountable manner; and seemed to be indeed lunatic, as well as “sore vexed.” But while I was musing, what would be the issue of these things, the answer I received from the word of God was, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.”³⁹ Soon after I was sent for to one of those who was so strangely torn by the devil, that I almost wondered her relations did not say, “Much religion hath made thee mad.”⁴⁰ We prayed God to bruise Satan under her feet. Immediately we had the petition we asked of Him. She cried out vehemently, “He is gone, he is gone!” and was filled with the spirit of love and of a sound mind. I have seen her many times since, strong in the Lord. When I asked abruptly, “What do you desire now?” she answered, “Heaven.” I asked, “What is in your heart?”

³⁹ *Luke 2:14*

⁴⁰ *Acts 26:24*

She replied, "God." I asked, "But how is your heart when any thing provokes you?" She said, "By the grace of God, I am not provoked at any thing. All the things of this world pass by me as shadows." "Ye have seen the end of the Lord." Is he not "very pitiful and of tender mercy?"⁴¹
(WJW1:3)

And so closes our look into the role that spiritual warfare played in John Wesley's ministry. After coming across these journal entries I could not understand why I had never heard any of these stories, especially in light of the fact that I went to a school which highly emphasized the life and teachings of John Wesley. My only conclusions can be that either my professors were ignorant of these occurrences, did not believe that they were applicable to our day or they were too ashamed to mention them because they had had such little impact against the spiritual world in their own personal ministries. Whatever their reason, it is an easily recognizable fact that the church has tried to de-emphasize Satan's role and participation in our world. We often tend to forget that demonic activity is a *very real* presence. This tendency to forget is most damning to us in light of the fact that all of our battles for souls are against Satan. As Paul has said, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

⁴¹ James 5:11

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6:12)."

In an age where the church is focusing more and more on finding the right *program* to try and reach people we need to remember that it is only through the defeat of Satan that people are reached. The introduction of programs into the church was one of Satan's greatest victories because he can now get Christians to focus on using earthly means to overcome him. But earthly means will never overcome a heavenly power and programs have never defeated Satan. A heavenly enemy can only be defeated by a Heavenly Power and that Power will only be released by prayer, fasting and faith in God to be the supplier of that Power.

It would do us well to remember John Wesley's wise words when he said, "*One of the capital objections to all these accounts, which I have known urged over and over, is this, "Did you ever see an apparition yourself?" No: Nor did I ever see a murder; yet I believe there is such a thing; yea, and that in one place or another murder is committed every day. Therefore I cannot, as a reasonable man, deny the fact; although I never saw it, and perhaps never may.*"⁴² May we never forget that our old enemy, that wicked one, is alive and well today.

⁴² WJW3:15, May 25, 1768

Chapter 3

JOHN WESLEY'S ENCOUNTERS WITH MIRACULOUS HEALINGS

The Miraculous aspect of John Wesley's ministry was more than unusual. Wesley experienced manifestations of the Spirit that few today are experiencing, particularly in the area of healings.

A Man On His Deathbed Restored To Perfect Health

December 15, 1742. — I preached at Horsley-upon-Tyne, eight (computed) miles from Newcastle. It was about two in the afternoon. The house not containing the people, we stood in the open air, in spite of the frost. I preached again in the evening, and in the morning. We then chose to walk home, having each of us caught a violent cold by riding the day before. Mine gradually wore off; but Mr. Meyrick's increased, so that, on Friday, he took his bed...*Mon.* 20. — When I came home, they told me the Physician said, he did not expect Mr. Meyrick would live till the morning. I went to him, but his pulse was gone. He had been speechless and senseless for some time. A few of us immediately joined in prayer: (I relate the naked fact:) Before we had done, his sense and his speech returned. Now, he that will account for this by natural causes, has my free leave: But I choose to say, This is the power of God...*Sat.* 25. — The Physician told me he

could do no more; Mr. Meyrick could not live over the night. I went up, and found them all crying about him; his legs being cold, and (as it seemed) dead already. We all kneeled down, and called upon God with strong cries and tears. He opened his eyes, and called for me; and, from that hour, he continued to recover his strength, till he was restored to perfect health. — I wait to hear who will either disprove this fact, or philosophically account for it. (*WJW1:5*)

An Instantaneous Healing Brought About Through Prayer

October 16, 1778. — Immediately after, a strange scene occurred. I was desired to visit one who had been eminently pious, but had now been confined to her bed for several months, and was utterly unable to raise herself up. She desired us to pray, that the chain might be broken. A few of us prayed in faith. Presently she rose up, dressed herself, came down stairs, and I believe had not any farther complaint. (*WJW4:18*)

Insanity Healed Through Prayer

September 28, 1739. — I met with a fresh proof, that “whatsoever ye ask, believing, ye shall receive.”⁴³ A middle-aged woman desired me to return thanks for her

⁴³ *Matthew 21:22*

to God, who, as many witnesses then present testified, was a day or two before really distracted, and as such tied down in her bed. But upon prayer made for her, she was instantly relieved, and restored to a sound mind. (WJW1:3)

John Wesley's Touch Produces A Healing

May 31, 1785. — At eleven I preached in the avenue again. It rained all the time; yet the congregation was large and attentive. Afterwards a decent woman, whom I never saw either before or since, desired to speak with me; and said, "I met you at Caladon. I had then a violent pain in my head for four weeks; but was fully persuaded I should be well, if you would lay your hand on my cheek; which I begged you to do. From that moment I have been perfectly well." If so, give God the glory. (WJW4:20)⁴⁴

An Incurable Disease Cured

October 12, 1754. — I administered the sacrament to R— — A— —. Some years ago, he found peace with God, and was freed at once, without any human means, from a distemper naturally incurable. But after three years, on his falling back into the world, it returned more violent

⁴⁴ Reminiscent of Matthew 9:20-22 where the ill woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment thinking "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole."

than ever; and will probably now be cured no more but by the universal remedy, — death. (WJW2:9)

A Man Begins To Recover The Moment He Sees John Wesley

April 8, 1750. — I preached morning, afternoon, and evening, and then exhorted the society to stand fast in the good old Bibleway; and not move from it, to the right hand or to the left. I found Mr. Lunell in so violent a fever, that there was little hope of his life. But he revived the moment he saw me, and fell into a breathing sweat. He began to recover from that time. Perhaps for this also was I sent. (WJW2:8)⁴⁵

The Power Of Speech Restored

March 31, 1742. — My brother set out for Oxford. In the evening I called upon Ann Calcut. She had been speechless for some time; but almost as soon as we began to pray, God restored her speech: She then witnessed a good confession indeed. I expected to see her no more. But from that hour the fever left her; and in a few days she arose and walked, glorifying God. (WJW1:5)

A Mortal Illness Healed

⁴⁵ Reminiscent of Acts 5:15 where just the shadow of Peter was thought to bring healing virtue with it.

November 16, 1740. — After communicating at St. James's, our parish church, with a numerous congregation, I visited several of the sick. Most of them were ill of the spotted fever; which, they informed me, had been extremely mortal; few persons recovering from it. But God had said, "Hitherto shalt thou come."⁴⁶ I believe there was not one with whom we were, but recovered.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, I visited many more, partly of those that were sick or weak, partly of "the lame" that had been "turned out of the way;"⁴⁷ having a confidence in God, that He would yet return unto every one of these and leave a blessing behind Him. (WJW1:4)

A Cripple Walks Again

At Leonberg, in the memory of our fathers, a cripple that could hardly move with crutches, while the dean was preaching on this very text (Mark 16:17), was in a moment made whole. (*John Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Bible, note for Mark 16:17*)

⁴⁶ *Job 38:11*

⁴⁷ *Hebrews 12:13*

Pain In John Wesley's Side Instantaneously Healed

Mar 21, 1741. — I explained, in the evening, the thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel: In applying which, I was suddenly seized with such a pain in my side, that I could not speak. I knew my remedy, and immediately kneeled down. In a moment the pain was gone: And the voice of the Lord cried aloud to the sinners, “Why will ye die, O house of Israel?”⁴⁸ (WJW1:4)

John Wesley And His Horse Miraculously Healed

March 17, 1746. — I took my leave of Newcastle, and set out with Mr. Downes and Mr. Shepherd. But when we came to Smeton, Mr. Downes was so ill, that he could go no further. When Mr. Shepherd and I left Smeton, my horse was so exceeding lame that I was afraid I must have lain by too. We could not discern what it was that was amiss; and yet he would scarce set his foot to the ground. By riding thus seven miles, I was thoroughly tired, and my head ached more than it had done for some months. (What I here aver is the naked fact: Let every man account for it as he sees good.) I then thought, “Cannot God heal either man or beast, by any means, or without any?” Immediately my weariness and headache ceased, and my horse's lameness in the same instant. Nor did he halt any more either that day or the next. A very

⁴⁸ *Ezekiel 33:11*

odd accident this also! (WJW2:6)

John Wesley's Toothache Instantaneously Healed

November 12, 1746. — In the evening, at the chapel, my teeth pained me much. In coming home, Mr. Spear gave me an account of the rupture he had had for some years, which, after the most eminent Physicians had declared it incurable, was perfectly cured in a moment. I prayed with submission to the will of God. My pain ceased, and returned no more. (WJW2:6)⁴⁹

A Cripple Miraculously Healed

Bishop Hall, speaking of the good offices which angels do to God's servants, says, "Of this kind was that marvellous cure which was wrought upon a poor cripple, at St. Madern's in Cornwall; whereof, besides the attestation of many hundreds of the neighbors, I took a strict examination in my last visitation: This man, for sixteen years together, was obliged to walk upon his hands, by reason the sinews of his legs were so contracted. Upon an admonition in his dream, to wash in

⁴⁹ It is a sad commentary on our generation that we have given up on prayer. A survey showed that the average lay person only prays for three minutes a day, while the average preacher only prays for seven minutes a day. This is why the average lay person and the average preacher never make any real impact in their community for Christ. May God help us to never be *average*.

a certain well, he was suddenly so restored to his limbs that I saw him able to walk and get his own maintenance. The name of this cripple was John Trebble.”

And were “many hundreds of the neighbors,” together with Bishop Hall, deceived in so notorious a matter of fact? Or did they all join together to palm such a falsehood on the world? O incredulity! what ridiculous shifts art thou driven to! What absurdities wilt thou not believe, rather than own any extraordinary work of God! (*WJW11, An Extraordinary Cure*)⁵⁰

Breast Cancer Miraculously Healed

December 26, 1761. — I made a particular inquiry into the case of Mary Special, a young woman then in Tottenham-Court-Road. She said, “Four years since I found much pain in my breasts, and afterwards hard lumps. Four months ago my left breast broke, and kept running continually. Growing worse and worse, after some time I was recommended to St. George’s Hospital. I was let blood many times, and took hemlock thrice a day: But I was no better; the pain and the lumps were the same, and both my breasts were quite hard, and black as soot; when, yesterday se’nnight, I went to Mr. Owen’s,

⁵⁰ It is obvious from reading this that this incident did not occur as a result of one of Wesley’s ministry outreaches. However, he did view it as a genuine miracle of God and wanted it recognized as so. In our modern day and age why are we so quick to say that God never heals the cripple anymore?

where there was a meeting for prayer. Mr. Bell saw me, and asked, 'Have you faith to be healed?' I said, 'Yes.' He prayed for me, and in a moment all my pain was gone. But the next day I felt a little pain again; I clapped my hands on my breasts, and cried out, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole.'⁵¹ It was gone; and from that hour I have had no pain, no soreness, no lumps, or swelling; but both my breasts were perfectly well, and have been so ever since." Now here are plain facts: 1. She was ill: 2. She is well: 3. She became so in a moment. Which of these can with any modesty be denied? (WJW3:12)⁵²

John Wesley's Horse Healed Again

September 2, 1781. — About five in the evening I preached at Gwennap. I believe two or three and twenty thousand were present; and I believe God enabled me so to speak, that even those who stood farthest off could hear distinctly. I think this is my *ne plus ultra*⁵³. I shall scarce see a larger congregation, till we meet in the air. After preaching at Bodmin, Launceston, Tiverton, and Halberton, on *Wednesday, 5*, about noon, I preached at Taunton. I believe it my duty to relate here what some will esteem a most notable instance of enthusiasm. Be it so or not, I aver the plain fact. In an hour after we left

⁵¹ *Matthew 8:2*

⁵² Similar to the healing of Dorcas in Acts 9:36-43.

⁵³ Latin for "Surely more beyond".

Taunton, one of the chaise-horses was on a sudden so lame, that he could hardly set his foot to the ground. It being impossible to procure any human help, I knew of no remedy but prayer. Immediately the lameness was gone, and he went just as he did before. In the evening I preached at South-Brent; and the next day went on to Bristol. (WJW4:19)

John Wesley's Horse Healed A Third Time

May 23, 1783. — I set out for Derby; but the smith had so effectually lamed one of my horses, that many told me he would never be able to travel more. I thought, "Even this may be made matter of prayer;" and set out cheerfully. The horse, instead of growing worse and worse, went better and better; and in the afternoon (after I had preached at Leek by the way) brought me safe to Derby. (WJW4:20)



**John Wesley with the leader of the Moravians,
Count Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf**

Chapter 4

JOHN WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT

John Wesley's ministry also contained examples of what we would call "slain in the Spirit." It must be noted, though, that his experiences were a bit different from many of the slain in the Spirit experiences occurring today. I have attempted to enumerate the chief differences between his and most modern day accounts of slain in the Spirit in the chart at the end of this chapter. While it is impossible to say with 100% certainty that the slain in the Spirit experiences of John Wesley and his associates were real moves of the Holy Spirit, after studying them they do seem, in most, if not all cases, to be genuine.

April 4, 1764. — In the evening the Mayor and all the Gentry of the town were present; and so was our Lord in an uncommon manner. Some dropped down as dead; but, after a while, rejoiced with joy unspeakable. One was carried away in violent fits. I went to her after the service. She was strongly convulsed from head to foot, and shrieked out in a dreadful manner. The unclean spirit did tear her indeed; but his reign was not long. In the morning both her soul and body were healed, and she acknowledged both the justice and mercy of God. (WJW3:13)

July 14, 1759. — Mr. B., being ill, desired me to exhort a few people in his house, which the Lord enabled me to do with such ease and power, that I was quite amazed. The next morning, at seven, his servant, Caleb Price, spoke to about two hundred people. The Lord was wonderfully present, more than twenty persons feeling the arrows of conviction. Several fell to the ground; some of whom seemed dead; others, in the agonies of death, the violence of their bodily convulsions exceeding all description. There was also great crying and agonizing in prayer, mixed with deep and deadly groans on every side. (WJW2:11)

May 20, 1759. — The text was, 'Having the form of godliness, but denying the power of it.'⁵⁴ When the power of religion came to be spoken of, the presence of God filled the place; and while poor sinners felt the sentence of death in their souls, what sounds of distress did I hear! The greatest number of them that cried out were men; but some women, and several children, felt the power of the same almighty Spirit, and seemed just sinking into hell. This occasioned a mixture of various sounds, some shrieking, some roaring aloud: The most general was a loud breathing, like that of persons half strangled and gasping for life. And indeed most of the cries were like those of dying creatures. Great numbers

⁵⁴ 2Timothy 3:5

wept without any noise: Others fell down as dead; some sinking in silence; some with extreme pain and violent agitation. I stood on the pew-seat, as did a young man in the opposite pew, an able-bodied, healthy countryman; but in a moment, while he seemed to think of nothing less, down he dropped with a violence inconceivable; and the beating of his feet was ready to break the boards, as he lay in strong convulsions at the bottom of the pew. Among the children who felt the arrows of the Almighty, I saw a sturdy boy, about eight years old, who roared above his fellows, and seemed to struggle with the strength of a grown man. His face was red as scarlet: And almost all on whom God laid his hand turned either very red or almost black. When I returned to Mr. Berridge's house, after a little walk, I found it full of people. He was fatigued, yet said he would give them a word of exhortation. I stayed in the next room, and saw a girl lying, as dead. In a few minutes, a woman was filled with peace and joy. (*WJW13, History Of The Methodists, Sec 74*)⁵⁵

May 1, 1739. — A very late instance of this I will give you: While we were praying at a society here, on Tuesday the 1st instant, the power of God (so I call it) came so mightily among us, that one, and another, and another, fell down as thunderstruck. In that hour many that were in deep anguish of spirit, were all filled with

⁵⁵ See also *WJW2:11* under the entry for May 30, 1759.

peace and joy. Ten persons, till then in sin, doubt, and fear, found such a change, that sin had no more dominion over them; and instead of the spirit of fear, they are now filled with that of love, and joy, and a sound mind. A Quaker who stood by was very angry at them, and was biting his lips and knitting his brows, when the Spirit of God came upon him also, so that he fell down as one dead. We prayed over him, and he soon lifted up his head with joy, and joined with us in thanksgiving. (*WJW12, Letter To His Brother Samuel*, dated May 10, 1739)⁵⁶

June 22, 1739. — In the afternoon I preached at the Fish-Ponds; but had no life or spirit in me; and was much in doubt, whether God would not lay me aside, and send other laborers into his harvest. I came to the society full of this thought; and began, in much weakness, to explain, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God.”⁵⁷ I told them, they were not to judge of the spirit whereby any one spoke, either by; appearances, or by common report, or by their own inward feelings: No, nor by any dreams, visions, or revelations, supposed to be made to their souls; any more than by their tears, or any involuntary effects wrought upon their bodies. I warned them, all these were, in themselves, of a doubtful, disputable, nature; they might

⁵⁶ See also *WJW1:3* under the above date.

⁵⁷ *1John 4:1*

be from God, and they might not; and were therefore not simply to be relied on, (any more than simply to be condemned,) but to be tried by a farther rule, to be brought to the only certain test, the Law and the Testimony. While I was speaking, one before me dropped down as dead, and presently a second and a third. Five others sunk down in half an hour, most of whom were in violent agonies. “The pains” as “of hell came about them; the snares of death overtook them.”⁵⁸ In their trouble we called upon the Lord, and he gave us an answer of peace. One indeed continued an hour in strong pain; and one or two more for three days. But the rest were greatly comforted in that hour, and went away rejoicing and praising God. (WJW1:3)

June 12, 1742. — I preached on the righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of faith. While I was speaking, several dropped down as dead; and among the rest, such a cry was heard, of sinners groaning for the righteousness of faith, as almost drowned my voice. But many of these soon lifted up their heads with joy, and broke out into thanksgiving; being assured they now had the desire of their soul, — the forgiveness of their sins. (WJW1:5)

November 23, 1742. — There seemed in the evening to be a deeper work in many souls than I had observed before.

⁵⁸ *Psalm 116:3*

Many trembled exceedingly; six or seven (both men and women) dropped down as dead; some cried unto God out of the deep; others would have cried, but their voice was lost: And some have found that the Lord is “gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.”⁵⁹ (WJW1:5)

November 9, 1758. — We lodged at Mr. Hickeys’s, the Vicar, a witness of the faith which once he persecuted. The next morning I preached in his church again. In the middle of the sermon, a woman before me dropped down as dead, as one had done the night before. In a short time she came to herself, and remained deeply sensible of her want of Christ. (WJW2:11)

I grant, Thirdly, that extraordinary circumstances have attended this conviction in some instances. A particular account of these I have frequently given. While the word of God was preached, some persons have dropped down as dead; some have been, as it were, in strong convulsions; some roared aloud, though not with an articulate voice; and others spoke the anguish of their souls. (WJW8, *A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion*, 1:7:13)

July 14, 1759. — In the afternoon, Mr. B. was constrained, by the multitude of people, to come out of the church,

⁵⁹ *Exodus* 34:6-7

and preach in his own close. Some of those who were here pricked to the heart, were affected in an astonishing manner. The first man I saw wounded would have dropped, but others, catching him in their arms, did, indeed, prop him up, but were so far from keeping him still, that he caused all of them to totter and tremble. His own shaking exceeded that of a cloth in the wind. It seemed as if the Lord came upon him like a giant, taking him by the neck, and shaking all his bones in pieces. One woman tore up the ground with her hands, filling them with dust and with the hard trodden grass, on which I saw her lie, with her hands clinched, as one dead, when the multitude dispersed. Another roared and screamed in a more dreadful agony than ever I heard before. I omitted the rejoicing of believers, because of their number, and the frequency thereof, though the manner was strange; some of them being quite overpowered with divine love, and only showing enough of natural life to let us know they were overwhelmed with joy and life eternal. Some continued long as if they were dead, but with a calm sweetness in their looks. I saw one who lay two or three hours in the open air, and being then carried into the house, continued insensible another hour, as if actually dead. The first sign of life she showed was a rapture of praise intermixed with a small joyous laughter. (WJW2:11)

February 20, 1742. — I preached at Weaver's Hall: It was a glorious time. Several dropped to the ground as if

struck by lightning. Some cried out in bitterness of soul. I knew not where to end, being constrained to begin anew, again and again. In the acceptable time we begged of God to restore our brethren, who are departed from us for a season; and to teach us all, to “follow after the things that make for peace,” and the “things whereby one may edify another.”⁶⁰ (WJW1:5)

May 9, 1739. — In the evening, while I was declaring that Jesus Christ had “given himself a ransom for all,”⁶¹ three persons, almost at once, sunk down as dead, having all their sins set in array before them. But in a short time they were raised up, and knew that “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,”⁶² had taken away their sins. (WJW1:3)

July 26, 1762. — The case of Mr. Timmins is no less remarkable. He had been a notorious sinner. He was deeply wounded two months since. Ten days ago, on a Friday, God spake peace to his soul. The Sunday following, after a violent struggle, he sunk down as dead. He was cold as clay. After about ten minutes he came to himself, and cried, ‘A new heart, a new heart!’ He said he felt himself in an instant entirely emptied of sin, and filled with God. (WJW3:12:2)

⁶⁰ *Romans 14:19*

⁶¹ *1Timothy 2:6*

⁶² *John 1:29*

On Saturday I⁶³ was waked between four and five by the children, vehemently crying to God. The maids went to them at five; and first one of the boys, then another, then one and another of the maids, poured out their souls before God. They continued weeping and praying till near nine o'clock, not thinking about meat or drink: Nay, Richard Piercy took no food all the day, but remained in words and groans calling upon God. About nine Diana went into her own room, and prayed partly alone, and partly with Betty. About ten, as Betty was praying, she sunk down as dead; but after some minutes, while Betty was praying on, she started up, praising God with all her might. (*WJW13, A Short History Of The People Called Methodists, Sec. 119*)

January 1, 1739. — Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hatchins, and my brother Charles, were present at our love-feast in Fetter-Lane, with about sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing constant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, in so much that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, "We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord." (*WJW1:3*)

⁶³ That is, James Hindmarsh, one of the Masters at Kingswood School, the school John Wesley founded. See also *WJW3:16* under the entry for September 26, 1770.

May 21, 1739. — In the evening I was interrupted at Nicholas-Street, almost as soon as I had begun to speak, by the cries of one who was “pricked at the heart,” and strongly groaned for pardon and peace. Yet I went on to declare what God had already done, in proof of that important truth, that he is “not willing any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance.”⁶⁴ Another person dropped down, close to one who was a strong assertor of the contrary doctrine. While he stood astonished at the sight, a little boy near him was seized in the same manner. A young man who stood up behind fixed his eyes on him, and sunk down himself as one dead; but soon began to roar out, and beat himself against the ground, so that six men could scarcely hold him. His name was Thomas Maxfield. Except J— —n H— —n, I never saw one so torn to the evil one. (WJW1:3)

May 21, 1739. — Today, *Monday*, 21, our Lord answered for himself. For while I was enforcing these words, “Be still, and know that I am God,”⁶⁵ He began to make bare his arm, not in a close room, neither in private, but in the open air, and before more than two thousand witnesses. One, and another, and another was struck to the earth; exceedingly trembling at the presence of His power. Others cried, with a loud and bitter cry, “What must we

⁶⁴ 2Peter 3:9

⁶⁵ Psalms 46:10

do to be saved?"⁶⁶ (WJW1:3)

July 29, 1759. — We were soon after called into the garden, where Patty Jenkins (one of the same age) was so overwhelmed with the love of God, that she sunk down, and appeared as one in a pleasant sleep, only with her eyes open; yet she had often just strength to utter, with a low voice, ejaculations of joy and praise; but no words coming up to what she felt, she frequently laughed while she saw his glory...I no sooner sat down by her than the Spirit of God poured the same blessedness into my soul. Hers continued till the time we were to set out for Cockin Hatley. Then her strength was restored in a moment, and we walked together, sixteen in number, singing to the Lord as we went along. (WJW2:11)

September 14, 1755. — Soon after ten we went to Redruth church. A young gentlewoman in the next pew, who had been laughing and talking just before, while the Confession was reading, seemed very uneasy; then screamed out several times, dropped down, and was carried out of church. (WJW2:10)

⁶⁶ Acts 16:30

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JOHN
WESLEY'S AND MOST OF TODAY'S
"SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT" OCCURRENCES**

JOHN WESLEY'S ENCOUNTERS	MODERN DAY ENCOUNTERS
John Wesley was not expecting this to happen	The pastor is expecting this to happen
John Wesley was not encouraging this to happen	The pastor is encouraging this to happen
There is strong conviction associated with the occurrences	There is little or no conviction associated with the occurrences
The person(s) experiencing this were not expecting this to occur	The person(s) experiencing this are expecting this to occur
The person(s) experiencing this were not seeking for this to occur	The person(s) experiencing this are seeking for this to occur
In the majority of these instances the person(s) were not Christians	The person(s) are Christians
The person did not use any mind techniques to achieve this	The person uses clearing of the mind, etc. to achieve this experience

Chapter 5

JOHN WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH "HOLY LAUGHTER"

John Wesley did have a few encounters with what has come to be known as "holy laughter". Wesley appears to have concluded that there were two types of this laughter. The first was a response to one's heart being filled with joy through the Holy Spirit. The other was an uncontrollable, sometimes painful, experience that turned the people's attention away from the preached word and onto the struggling victim. The first type appears to be a legitimate experience of the Holy Spirit. The latter is a demonic deception.

We begin our look at this phenomena in Wesley's ministry by examining the first type.

Perhaps Genuine Cases Of Holy Laughter

July 29, 1759. — We were soon after called into the garden, where Patty Jenkins (one of the same age) was so overwhelmed with the love of God, that she sunk down, and appeared as one in a pleasant sleep, only with her eyes open; yet she had often just strength to utter, with a low voice, ejaculations of joy and praise; but no words coming up to what she felt, she frequently laughed while she saw his glory...I no sooner sat down by her than the Spirit of God poured the same blessedness into my soul.

Hers continued till the time we were to set out for Cockin Hatley. Then her strength was restored in a moment, and we walked together, sixteen in number, singing to the Lord as we went along. (WJW2:11)

July 14, 1759. — In the afternoon, Mr. B. was constrained, by the multitude of people, to come out of the church, and preach in his own close. Some of those who were here pricked to the heart, were affected in an astonishing manner...Some continued long as if they were dead, but with a calm sweetness in their looks. I saw one who lay two or three hours in the open air, and being then carried into the house, continued insensible another hour, as if actually dead. The first sign of life she showed was a rapture of praise intermixed with a small joyous laughter. (WJW2:11)

April 5, 1782. — About one I preached at Oldham; and was surprised to see all the street lined with little children; and such children as I never saw till now. Before preaching they only ran round me and before me; but after it, a whole troop, boys and girls, closed me in, and would not be content till I shook each of them by the hand. Being then asked to visit a dying woman, I no sooner entered the room, than both she and her companions were in such an emotion as I have seldom seen. Some laughed; some cried; all were so transported, that they could hardly speak. O how much better is it to go to the poor, than to the rich; and to the house of

mourning, than to the house of feasting! (WJW4:19)

In each of these instances the persons appear to have been experiencing a deep “joy in the Holy Ghost”⁶⁷. In our next cases we find the individuals who are experiencing this phenomena struggling, as if a malignant outside force has come upon their bodies. In many cases this laughter distracted people from the preaching of God’s word and was not edifying in any manner.

DEMONIC INSTANCES OF “HOLY LAUGHTER”

John And Charles Struck With An Unusual Fit Of Laughter

May 9, 1740. — I was a little surprised at some, who were buffeted of Satan in an unusual manner, by such a spirit of laughter as they could in no wise resist,⁶⁸ though it was pain and grief unto them. I could scarce have believed the account they gave me, had I not known the same

⁶⁷ *Romans 14:17*

⁶⁸ One test to determine whether a supernatural manifestation is from God or not is found in 1Corinthians 14:32, which states, “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” According to Paul, anytime a believer is given the ability to do something supernatural they ultimately have the power to refrain from doing it as well. In the above case, they could “in no wise resist” what was going on.

thing ten or eleven years ago. Part of Sunday my brother and I then used to spend in walking in the meadows and singing psalms. But one day, just as we were beginning to sing, he burst out into a loud laughter. I asked him; if he was distracted; and began to be very angry, and presently after to laugh as loud as he. Nor could we possibly refrain, though we were ready to tear ourselves in pieces, but we were forced to go home without singing another line. (WJW1:4)

Services Interrupted By Fits Of Laughter

May 21, 1740. — In the evening, such a spirit of laughter was among us, that many were much offended. But the attention of all was fixed on poor L— — a S— —, whom we all knew to be no dissembler. One so violently and variously torn of the evil one did I never see before. Sometimes she laughed till almost strangled; then broke out into cursing and blaspheming; then stamped and struggled with incredible strength, so that four or five could scarce hold her: Then cried out, “O eternity, eternity! O that I had no soul! O that I had never been born!” At last she faintly called on Christ to help her. And the violence of her pangs ceased. Most of our brethren and sisters were now fully convinced that those who were under this strange temptation could not help it. Only E— — th B— — and Anne H— — n were of another mind; being still sure, any one might help laughing if she would. This they declared to many on Thursday; but on

Friday, 23, God suffered Satan to teach them better. Both of them were suddenly seized in the same manner as the rest, and laughed whether they would or no, almost without ceasing. Thus they continued for two days, a spectacle to all; and were then, upon prayer made for them, delivered in a moment. (WJW1:4)

Distracting Laughter Hits Again

July 18, 1759. — We called at the house where Mr. B. had been preaching in the morning, and found several there rejoicing in God, and several mourning after him. While I prayed with them, many crowded into the house, some of whom burst into a strange, involuntary laughter, so that my voice could scarce be heard; and when I strove to speak louder, a sudden hoarseness seized me. Then the laughter increased. I perceived it was Satan, and resolved to pray on. Immediately the Lord rebuked him, that laughter was at an end, and so was my hoarseness. A vehement wrestling with God ran through the whole company, whether sorrowful or rejoicing, till, beside the three young women of the house, one young man, and a girl about eleven years old, who had been counted one of the wickedest in Harlston, were exceedingly blessed with the consolations of God. (WJW2:11)

May 5, 1769. — At six I preached to a large congregation in the Sessions-House. All behaved well, but one young gentlewoman, who laughed almost incessantly. She

knew there was nothing to laugh at; but she thought she laughed prettily. (WJW3:15)

April 15, 1782. — In the year 1779, I⁶⁹ saw, if I would go to heaven, I must lead a new life. But I did not know I wanted an inward change, or see the deplorable state I was in by nature, till I was at a prayer-meeting, holden at Mr. Oxley's. While they were praying, my heart began to throb within me, my eyes gushed out with tears, and I cried aloud for mercy; as did most that were in the room, about fourteen in number. One, indeed, could not hold from laughing, when we began to cry out; but it was not long before he cried as loud as any. In a few moments, it pleased God to fill Mrs. Oxley with joy unspeakable. After this, we went, almost every night, to Mr. Oxley's, to sing and pray. (WJW4:19)

Demoniacs Who Laughed Uncontrollably

October 1, 1763. — Presently she fell into such a fit as was dreadful to look upon. One would have thought she would be torn in pieces. Several persons could scarce hold her; till, after a time, she sunk down as dead...From that Michaelmas-Day she was continually tormented with the thought of...killing herself, which she often attempted, but was as often hindered. Once she attempted to cut her own throat; once to throw herself

⁶⁹ That is, William Black, Jr.

into Rosamond's Pond; several times to strangle herself, which once or twice was with much difficulty prevented...The Friday before Michaelmas-Day last, Mr. W. came to see her. He asked... 'Do you pray God to help you?' 'No, I can't pray. God will never help me. I belong to the devil; and he will have me: He will take me, body and soul, on Monday.'...In her fits she was first convulsed all over, seeming in an agony of pain, and screaming terribly. Then she began cursing, swearing, and blaspheming in the most horrid manner. Then she burst into vehement fits of laughter; then sunk down as dead. (WJW3:13)

June 5, 1753. — ELIZABETH BOOTH...fell into a fit of another kind, — being stretched out, and stiff as a dead carcass...In the afternoon she was suddenly seized with violent involuntary laughter...She frequently spoke as if she was another person, saying to her father, "This girl is not thine, but mine. I have got possession of her, and I will keep her;" with many expressions of the same kind. She often seemed to be in a trance, and said she saw many visions; sometimes of heaven or hell, or judgment; sometimes of things which she said would shortly come to pass...John Thorpe, of Rotherham, had often a desire to pray for her in the congregation...When he came to Woodseats, and began to mention what a desire he had had, the girl, being then in a raging fit, cried out, "I have made a fool of Thorpe!" and burst out into a loud laughter. (WJW2:9)

October 25, 1739. — She lay on the ground, furiously gnashing her teeth, and after a while roared aloud...In the evening...She began screaming before I came into the room; then broke out into a horrid laughter, mixed with blasphemy, grievous to hear. One who...apprehended a preternatural⁷⁰ agent to be concerned in this, asking, "How didst thou dare to enter into a Christian?" was answered, "She is not a Christian. She is mine." (WJW1:3)

October 27, 1739. — I was sent for to Kingswood again, to one of those who had been so ill before...When I was come, I was quite cold and dead, and fitter for sleep than prayer. She burst out into a horrid laughter, and said, "No power, no power; no faith, no faith. She is mine; her soul is mine. I have her, and will not let her go." (WJW1:3)

⁷⁰ Supernatural.



John Wesley being rescued from a burning house as a child, giving him the nickname “A Brand From The Burning”.

Chapter 6

JOHN WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE GIFT OF TONGUES

John Wesley's experience with the gift of tongues could best be described as a lack of experience. By his own admission he never possessed this gift. When accused of claiming to possess all of the apostolic supernatural gifts he exclaimed, "Do I lay claim to almost every one of these [supernatural gifts] 'in as full and ample a manner as they were possessed of old?' Five of them are enumerated in the former catalogue; to three of which — speaking with new tongues, taking up serpents, drinking deadly things — it is not even pretended I lay any claim at all."⁷¹

When certain passages from his journal were quoted, intimating that Wesley claimed to have the miraculous gifts of 1Corinthians 12-14 Wesley responded by laying each quote out and then showing how it did not imply that he possessed the gift of tongues or any of the other miraculous gifts.

Do I lay claim to any one of them? To prove that I do, my own words are produced, extracted from an account of the occurrences of [a span of] about

⁷¹ WJW9, *A Letter To The Lord Bishop Of Gloucester, Occasioned By His Tract "On The Office And Operations Of The Holy Spirit", Sec. 1:2*

sixteen years...I know not what these eight quotations prove, but...Certainly they do not prove that I lay claim to any of the preceding gifts. Let us see whether any more is proved by the ten next quotations...Neither do any of those quotations prove that I lay claim to any miraculous gift.⁷²

In the same letter Wesley wrote, "(as I have done many times before,) I do not pretend to any extraordinary measure of the Spirit. I pretend to no other measure of it than may be claimed by every Christian Minister."⁷³

And the only time he records an instance of persons speaking in tongues, he gives forth the opinion that they were pretending:

It has undoubtedly been pretended to, and that at no great distance either from our time or country. It has been heard of more than once, no farther off than the valleys of Dauphiny. Nor is it yet fifty years ago since the Protestant inhabitants of those valleys so loudly pretended to this and other miraculous powers, as to give much disturbance to Paris itself. And how did the King of France confute that pretense, and prevent its being heard

⁷² WJW9, *A Letter To The Lord Bishop Of Gloucester, Occasioned By His Tract "On The Office And Operations Of The Holy Spirit"*, Sec. 1:2

⁷³ WJW9, *A Letter To The Lord Bishop Of Gloucester, Occasioned By His Tract "On The Office And Operations Of The Holy Spirit"*, Sec. 1:1

any more? Not by the pen of his scholars, but by (a truly heathen way) the swords and bayonets of his dragoons.⁷⁴

That being said, I feel that it is important to note that Wesley did believe that it was possible for people in his day to speak in tongues and experience the other miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit:

In the Preceding verses, St. Paul has been speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; such as healing the sick; prophesying, in the proper sense of the word, that is, foretelling things to come; speaking with strange tongues, such as the speaker had never learned; and the miraculous interpretation of tongues. And these gifts the Apostle allows to be desirable; yea, he exhorts the Corinthians, at least the teachers among them, (to whom chiefly, if not solely, they were wont to be given in the first ages of the Church,) to *covet* them *earnestly*, that thereby they might be qualified to be more useful either to Christians or Heathens...It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal

⁷⁴ WJW10, *A Letter To The Rev. Dr. Conyers Middleton, Occasioned By His Late "Free Inquiry", Sec. 4:6:7*

period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian; and, from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby, heaped riches and power and honor upon the Christians in general, but in particular upon the Christian Clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not, (as has been vulgarly supposed,) "because there was no more occasion for them," because all the world was become Christians. This is a miserable mistake; not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christian. The real cause was, "the love of many," almost of all Christians, so called, was "waxed cold." The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other heathens the Son of Man, when he came to examine his Church, could hardly "find faith upon earth." This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left.⁷⁵

In other words, Wesley never saw a time frame for the cessation of miracles. He believed that they could occur at any time throughout the centuries since Jesus

⁷⁵ WJW7, *Sermon 89, The More Excellent Way, 1-2*, on 1Corinthians 12:31

Christ including his own day, and were only withheld by the Lord when God's people did not walk in love.

Chapter 7

JOHN WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH UNUSUAL MANIFESTATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



**John Wesley, An Unusual
Minister In A Usual World**

John Wesley's ministry was characterized by the Holy Spirit dealing with unsaved people in very unusual ways. The unsaved were sometimes hit by strong guilt, weeping, convulsions and other physical affects to their bodies. While these affects seem to have generally left the church of

the Western world they can still be witnessed from time to time in different areas of the world and have been experienced at different times throughout history,

particularly during times of great revival.⁷⁶

Whole House Overtaken By The Holy Spirit's Power

July 19, 1759. — I had left Mr. J— —gs but a little while, when I heard John Dennis loudly praising God. I no sooner kneeled by him than the consolations of God came upon me, so that I trembled and wept much. Nor was the Spirit poured out upon us alone; all in the house were partakers of it. J. D. was kneeling when his fit came. We laid him on the ground, where he soon became stiff as last night, and prayed in like manner. Afterwards his body grew flexible by degrees, but was convulsed from head to foot. When he was quite recovered, he said he was quite resigned to the will of God, who gave him such strength in the inner man, that he did not find any of these things grievous, neither could ask to be delivered from them. (WJW2:11)

Strange Events At Everton

August 28, 1759. — I rode on to Mr. Berridge's, at Everton; and in the evening went to the church, but unusually heavy, and hardly expecting to do any good

⁷⁶ See Jonathan Edwards' *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, his *An Account Of The Revival Of Religion In Northampton In 1740-1742, As Communicated In A Letter To A Minister Of Boston*, dated Dec. 12, 1743 and *The Autobiography of Peter Cartwright*, Ch. 5 for examples of these types of phenomena associated with revivals.

there. I preached on those words in the Second Lesson, "We know that we are of God." One sunk down, and another, and another. Some cried aloud in agony of prayer. I would willingly have spent some time in prayer with them; but my voice failed, so that I was obliged to conclude the service, leaving many in the church, crying and praying, but unable either to walk or stand. One young man, and one young woman, were brought with difficulty to Mr. B.'s house, and continued there in violent agonies, both of body and soul. When I came into the room, the woman lay quiet, wrestling with God in silent prayer. But even the bodily convulsions of the young man were amazing: The heavings of his breast were beyond description; I suppose, equal to the throes of a woman in travail. We called upon God, to relieve his soul and body: And both were perfectly healed. He rejoiced in God with joy unspeakable, and felt no pain, or weakness, or weariness. Presently after, the woman also was delivered, and arose, rejoicing in God her Savior. (WJW2:11)

Trances, Convulsions, Trembling, And Groaning

July 7, 1739. — I had an opportunity to talk with him of those outward signs which had so often accompanied the inward work of God. I found his objections were chiefly grounded on gross misrepresentations of matter of fact. But the next day he had an opportunity of informing himself better: For no sooner had he begun (in the

application of his sermon) to invite all sinners to believe in Christ, than four persons sunk down close to him, almost in the same moment. One of them lay without either sense or motion. A second trembled exceedingly.⁷⁷ The third had strong convulsions all over his body, but made no noise, unless by groans. The fourth, equally convulsed, called upon God, with strong cries and tears. From this time, I trust, we shall all suffer God to carry on his own work in the way that pleaseth Him. (WJW1:3)⁷⁸

Strange Events At Orwell

July 29, 1759. — I spoke this morning at Orwell, on Isaiah 55:1. One who had been before convinced of sin, fell down in a kind of fit, and broke out, in great anguish of soul, calling on the Lord Jesus for salvation. He wrought, as in the agonies of death, and was quite bathed in sweat. He beat the chair against which he kneeled, as one whose

⁷⁷ Not unlike Felix, who, after hearing Paul preach in Caesarea, “*trembled,* and answered, Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you (Acts 24:24-26).”

⁷⁸ I personally experienced this while I was ministering in Scotland. I was preaching on a Sunday night at a Nazarene church and was on the first day of a three-day fast, undertaken for the specific reason of seeking more of the Holy Spirit’s power in my ministry. A woman, whom I was told had been running from God for nearly forty years was at the service that evening, and as I preached on what it meant to be a Christian she began to get nervous, cry, get cold chills, and jerks in her body. It was not long before this woman came down to the altar to give her life to Christ.

soul drew nigh unto hell. His countenance then cleared up at once: We hoped he would be presently set at liberty; but on a sudden he was more distressed than ever, being in the sharpest conflict. Every muscle of his body was in strong agitation, as if nature was just dissolving. I never saw any convulsion fit so violent. But in a moment God dispelled the cloud. His face was again covered with smiles, and he spake as seeing the Lord near him. He cried unto Him; and the Lord hearing pronounced him freely forgiven. At that instant he clapped his hands, and cried aloud, 'Jesus is mine! He is my Savior!' His soul was in peace; neither did he find the least bodily pain or soreness. I asked, 'For what would you undergo this again?' He said, 'Not for all the world; but I would suffer more rather than be without Christ: Yea, for his sake, I would suffer all things.' 'An unwise man doth not consider this; a fool doth not understand it.' (WJW2:11)

Convulsions And Consolation In Everton

August 4, 1759. — As we took horse, the rain began, and accompanied us till we alighted in the evening. *Sunday*, 5, Between eight and nine I reached Everton, faint and weary enough. During the Prayers, as also during the sermon, and the administration of the sacrament, a few persons cried aloud; but it was not from sorrow or fear, but love and joy. The same I observed in several parts of the Afternoon Service. In the evening I preached in Mr.

Hicks' church. Two or three persons fell to the ground, and were extremely convulsed; but none cried out. One or two were filled with strong consolation. (WJW2:11)

Overcome By Convulsions At Wapping

June 15, 1739. — While I was earnestly inviting all sinners to “enter into the holiest” by this “new and living way,”⁷⁹ many of those that heard began to call upon God with strong cries and tears. Some sunk down, and there remained no strength in them; others exceedingly trembled and quaked: Some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion in every part of their bodies, and that so violently, that often four or five persons could not hold one of them. I have seen many hysterical and many epileptic fits; but none of them were like these, in many respects. I immediately prayed, that God would not suffer those who were weak to be offended. But one woman was offended greatly; being sure they might help it if they would; — no one should persuade her to the contrary; and was got three or four yards, when she also dropped down, in as violent an agony as the rest. Twenty-six of those who had been thus affected (most of whom, during the prayers which were made for them, were in a moment filled with peace and joy) promised to call upon me the next day. But only eighteen came; by talking closely with whom, I found reason to believe that

⁷⁹ *Hebrews 10:19-20*

some of them had gone home to their house justified. The rest seemed to be waiting patiently for it. (WJW1:3)

Overwhelming Power Of The Holy Spirit At Everton

May 30, 1759. — Being with Mr. B— —ll at Everton, I was much fatigued and did not rise. But Mr. B. did, and observed several fainting and crying out while Mr. B— —e was preaching. Afterward, at church, I heard many cry out, especially children, whose agonies were amazing: One of the eldest, a girl ten or twelve years old, was full in my view, in violent contortions of body, and weeping aloud, I think incessantly during the whole Service. And several much younger children were in Mr. B— —ll's view, agonizing as this did.

The church was equally crowded in the afternoon, the windows being filled within and without, and even the outside of the pulpit to the very top; so that Mr. B— —e seemed almost stifled by their breath. Yet feeble and sickly as he is, he was continually strengthened, and his voice for the most part distinguishable, in the midst of all the outcries. I believe there were present three times more men than women, a great part of whom came from far; thirty of them having set out at two in the morning, from a place thirteen miles off.

The text was, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.'⁸⁰ When the power of religion

⁸⁰ 2Timothy 3:5

began to be spoke of, the presence of God really filled the place.⁸¹ And while poor sinners felt the sentence of death in their souls, what sounds of distress did I hear! The greatest number of them who cried or fell, were men; but some women, and several children, felt the power of the same almighty Spirit, and seemed just sinking into hell.⁸² This occasioned a mixture of various sounds; some shrieking, some roaring aloud. The most general was a loud breathing, like that of people half strangled and gasping for life. And indeed almost all the cries were like those of human creatures dying in bitter anguish. Great

⁸¹ The theology behind what is happening in some of these passages is that of the “filling of the Spirit”. In the Bible there are two types of “Spirit fillings”. One is the continual “filling” or influencing of the Spirit that is mentioned in Ephesians 5:18 and Romans 8:14. This “filling” is analogous to being “filled” with wine. In other words, Paul tells us that just as we can become influenced by wine, we are to be influenced by the Holy Spirit at all times. The second type of “filling” can best be defined as a momentary or short-term empowerment for service in building up God’s kingdom. Examples of this include Bezalel (Exodus 31:1-11), Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45), Zechariah (Luke 1:67-79), the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), Peter (Acts 4:8-13), and Paul (Acts 13:9-12). As each of these references show, the “filling” always gave the recipients ability to do things they could not normally do. The “fillings” are for today as well and are obtained through prayer, fasting and obedience. It appears that John Wesley and others in his journal were frequent recipients of these fillings.

⁸² No different than what happened at Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out and men were “pricked in their heart” so that they responded “brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

numbers wept without any noise; others fell down as dead; some sinking in silence; some with extreme noise and violent agitation. I stood on the pew seat, as did a young man in the opposite pew, an able bodied, fresh, healthy countryman. But in a moment, while he seemed to think of nothing less, down he dropped, with a violence inconceivable. The adjoining pews seemed shook with his fall. I heard afterward the stamping of his feet, ready to break the boards, as he lay in strong convulsions, at the bottom of the pew. Among several that were struck down in the next pew, was a girl who was as violently seized as him. When he fell, B— —ll and I felt our souls thrilled with a momentary dread; as when one man is killed by a cannon ball, another often feels the wind of it. (WJW2:11)

A Mighty Outpouring Of God's Spirit

June 16, 1739. — We met at Fetter-Lane, to humble ourselves before God, and own he had justly withdrawn his Spirit from us, for our manifold unfaithfulness. We acknowledged our having grieved him by our divisions; “one saying, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos:”⁸³ By our leaning again to our own works, and trusting in them, instead of Christ; by our resting in those little beginnings of sanctification, which it had pleased Him to work in our souls; and, above all, by blaspheming his

⁸³ *1Corinthians 1:12*

work among us, imputing it either to nature, to the force of imagination and animal spirits, or even to the delusion of the devil. In that hour, we found God with us as at the first. Some fell prostrate upon the ground. Others burst out, as with one consent, into loud praise and thanksgiving. And many openly testified, there had been no such day as this since January the first preceding. (WJW1:3)

A Doctor Is Convinced That The Manifestations Are The Work Of God

April 30, 1739. — We understood that many were offended at the cries of those on whom the power of God came: Among whom was a physician, who was much afraid, there might be fraud or imposture in the case. Today one whom he had known many years, was the first (while I was preaching in Newgate) who broke out “into strong cries and tears.” He could hardly believe his own eyes and ears. He went and stood close to her, and observed every symptom, till great drops of sweat ran down her face, and all her bones shook. He then knew not what to think, being clearly convinced, it was not fraud, nor yet any natural disorder. But when both her soul and body were healed in a moment, he acknowledged the finger of God. (WJW1:3)

Wesley’s Word Drops A Man To His Knees In Repentance

June 5, 1772. — In the following week, I preached in many towns round Newcastle, and on *Saturday* went again to Sunderland. In the evening we mightily wrestled with God for an enlargement of his work. As we were concluding, an eminent backslider came strongly into my mind; and I broke out abruptly, “Lord, is Saul also among the Prophets? Is James Watson here? If he be, show thy power!”⁸⁴ Down dropped James Watson like a stone, and began crying aloud for mercy. (WJW3:16)

Shrieking For Help From Sin

July 29, 1759. — This morning, Ann Simpson, aged sixteen or seventeen, lay near an hour in the utmost distress, shrieking out, ‘Christ!’ ‘Christ!’ and no other word; her face all the time being violently distorted. I left her awhile, but could scarce sit down before I heard the voice of praise. I went, and found her heaviness turned into joy, even the joyful assurance that her sins were pardoned. (WJW2:11)

A Woman’s Prayer Changes The Path Of John Wesley

May 10, 1748. — Instead of going straight to Tullamore, I could not be easy without going round by Coolylough; I knew not why; for I did not know then that Mr. Handy’s

⁸⁴ *1Samuel 10:9-13*

wife, who had been brought to bed a few days, had an earnest desire to see me once more before I left the kingdom. She could not avoid praying for it, though her sister checked her again and again, telling her, it could not be. Before the debate was concluded, I came in: So they wondered, and praised God. (WJW2:7)

A Suicidal Soul Rescued By The Hand Of God

August 25, 1745. — I saw a poor man, once joined with us, who wanted nothing in this world, but the peace the world cannot give. A day or two before he had hanged himself, but was cut down before he was dead. He had been crying out ever since, God had left him, because he had left the children of God. But he now began to have some glimmering of hope, that God would not hide his face for ever. (WJW1:6)

Tears Of Repentance

January 29, 1758. — We had an uncommon blessing at West Street, and a still greater at Spitalfields. Some could not refrain from crying aloud to God; and he did not cast out their prayers. (WJW2:10)

July 30, 1758. — I began meeting the children in the afternoon...I had not spoke long on our natural state before many of them were in tears, and five or six so affected that they could not refrain from crying aloud to

God. When I began to pray, their cries increased, so that my voice was soon lost. (WJW2:11)

December 25, 1758. — Our service began in the Foundery at four; in the Tabernacle at eight. God was now especially pleased to make bare his arm. There was a great cry among the people. Stony hearts were broke; many mourners comforted; many believers strengthened. (WJW2:11)

May 30, 1759. — Being with Mr. B— —ll at Everton, I was much fatigued and did not rise. But Mr. B. did, and observed several fainting and crying out while Mr. B— —e was preaching. Afterward, at church, I heard many cry out, especially children, whose agonies were amazing...Mr. B— —e seemed almost stifled by their breath. Yet feeble and sickly as he is, he was continually strengthened, and his voice for the most part distinguishable, in the midst of all the outcries...The greatest number of them who cried or fell, were men; but some women, and several children, felt the power of the same almighty Spirit, and seemed just sinking into hell. This occasioned a mixture of various sounds; some shrieking, some roaring aloud. (WJW2:11)

July 29, 1759. — Caleb Price, spoke to about two hundred people. The Lord was wonderfully present, more than twenty persons feeling the arrows of conviction. Several fell to the ground; some of whom seemed dead; others, in

the agonies of death, the violence of their bodily convulsions exceeding all description. There was also great crying and agonizing in prayer, mixed with deep and deadly groans on every side. (WJW2:11)

August 28, 1759. — I preached on those words in the Second Lesson, “We know that we are of God.”⁸⁵ One sunk down, and another, and another. Some cried aloud in agony of prayer. I would willingly have spent some time in prayer with them; but my voice failed, so that I was obliged to conclude the service, leaving many in the church, crying and praying, but unable either to walk or stand. (WJW2:11)

February 16, 1760. — ...about thirty persons were met together at Otley, (a town about twelve miles from Leeds,) about eight o’clock in the evening, in order (as usual) to pray, sing hymns, and provoke one another to love and good works...When they had spent the usual time together, a few went to their own houses; but the rest remained upon their knees, groaning for the great and precious promises of God...At length the travail of their souls burst out into loud and ardent cries. Thus they continued for the space of two hours; some praising and magnifying God, some crying to him for pardon or purity of heart, with the greatest agony of spirit. (WJW2:11)

⁸⁵ 1John 5:19

April 27, 1739. — All Newgate rang with the cries of those whom the word of God cut to the heart. (WJW1:3)

May 1, 1739. — Many were offended again, and, indeed, much more than before. For at Baldwin-Street my voice could scarce be heard amidst the groanings of some, and the cries of others, calling aloud to Him that is “mighty to save.”⁸⁶ (WJW1:3)

June 15, 1739. — While I was earnestly inviting all sinners to “enter into the holiest” by this “new and living way,”⁸⁷ many of those that heard began to call upon God with strong cries and tears. (WJW1:3)

July 1, 1739. — At Hannam and at Rose-Green I explained the latter part of the seventh of St. Luke; that verse especially, “When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.”⁸⁸ A young woman sunk down at Rose-Green in a violent agony both of body and mind: As did five or six persons in the evening at the new-room, at whose cries many were greatly offended. (WJW1:3)

March 12, 1742. — Our Lord was gloriously present with us at the watch-night; so that my voice was lost in the

⁸⁶ *Isaiah 63:1*

⁸⁷ *Hebrews 10:19-20*

⁸⁸ *Luke 7:42*

cries of the people. (WJW1:5)

May 8, 1744. — I found a people of quite another kind at Cutherton, to whom I preached on, “Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.”⁸⁹ And many called upon God for grace so to do, even with strong cries and tears. (WJW1:6)

November 28, 1739. — We left Tiverton, and the next day reached Bristol. On Friday many of us joined in prayer, for one that was grievously tormented. She raged more and more for about two hours, and then our Lord gave her rest. Five were in the same agony in the evening. I ordered them to be removed to the door, that their cries might neither drown my voice, nor interrupt the attention of the congregation. But after sermon, they were brought into the room again, where a few of us continued in prayer to God (being determined not to go till we had an answer of peace) till nine the next morning. (WJW1:4)

July 10, 1745. — In the evening I began to expound, (at Trevonan, in Morva,) “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.”⁹⁰...After preaching, I had designed to meet the society alone. But many others also followed with such earnestness, that I could not turn them back: So I exhorted them all, to love their enemies, as Christ hath

⁸⁹ *Mark 1:15*

⁹⁰ *Isaiah 55:1*

loved us. They felt what was spoken. Cries and tears were on every side; and all could bear witness, *Even now the Lord doth pour, The blessing from above: A kindly gracious shower, Of heart-reviving love.* (WJW1:6)

July 5, 1747. — About half-hour after five I began at Gwennap. I was afraid my voice would not suffice for such an immense multitude. But my fear was groundless; as the evening was quite calm, and the people all attention. It was more difficult to be heard in meeting the society, amidst the cries of those, on the one hand, who were pierced through as with a sword, and of those, on the other, who were filled with joy unspeakable. (WJW2:7)

March 6, 1748. — In the afternoon I preached at Llanfehengel, about six miles southwest of Llangefnye. I have not seen a people so deeply affected since we came into Anglesey; their cries and tears continued a long time without any intermission. (WJW2:7)

June 17, 1749. — When I had at length pronounced the blessing, no man stirred, but each stayed in his place till I walked through them. I was soon called back by one crying out, “My God! My God! thou hast forgotten me.” Having spoken this, she sunk to the earth. We called upon God in her behalf. The cries both of her and of several others, mourning after God, redoubled. But we continued wrestling with God in prayer, till he gave us

an answer of peace. (WJW2:7)

June 4, 1750. — I rode to Newmarket, a village near the Shannon, eight miles, as they call it, from Limerick. I found the spirit of the people while I was preaching, but much more in examining the society four or five times I was stopped short, and could not go on, being not able to speak; particularly when I was talking with a child, about nine years old, whose words astonished all that heard. The same spirit we found in prayer; so that my voice was well-nigh lost among the various cries of the people. (WJW2:8)

May 30, 1759. — Mr. B——ll and I went to hear Mr. Hicks, at Wrestlingworth, four miles from Everton...While he was preaching, fifteen or sixteen persons felt the arrows of the Lord, and dropped down. A few of these cried out with the utmost violence, and little intermission, for some hours: While the rest made no great noise, but continued struggling, as in the pangs of death. I observed, besides these, one little girl, deeply convinced, and a boy, nine or ten years old. Both these, and several others, when carried into the parsonage house, either lay as dead, or struggled with all their might. But in a short time their cries increased beyond measure, so that the loudest singing could scarce be heard. (WJW2:11)

July 29, 1759. — We walked toward Harlston, near which

Mr. B. overtook us. He was greatly fatigued and dejected, and said, 'I am now so weak, I must leave off field preaching.' Nevertheless, he cast himself on the Lord, and stood up to preach, having near three thousand hearers. He was very weak at first, and scarce able to speak; but God soon performed his promise, imparting new strength to him, and causing him to speak with mighty power. A great shaking was among the dry bones. Incessant were the cries, groans, wringing of hands, and prayers of sinners, now first convinced of their deplorable state. (WJW2:11)

September 18, 1770. — About seven Mr. Hindmarsh met them all in the school, and gave an exhortation suited to the occasion. He then gave out that hymn, — *And am I born to die, To lay this body down? And must my trembling spirit fly, Into a world unknown?* This increased their concern; so that it was with great difficulty they contained themselves till he began to pray. Then Al— —r M— —r, and R— —d N— —e, cried aloud for mercy; and quickly another and another, till all but two or three were constrained to do the same; and as long as he continued to pray, they continued the same loud and bitter cry. One of the maids, Elizabeth Nutt, was as deeply convinced as any of them. After prayer, Mr. H. said, "Those of you who are resolved to serve God may go and pray together." Fifteen of them did so, and continued wrestling with God, with strong cries and tears, till about nine o'clock...September 19, 1770. — At

the morning prayer many of them cried out again, though not so violently. (WJW3:16)

September 26, 1770. — The next morning I⁹¹ spent some time with all the children, and then desired those who were resolved to save their souls, to come up stairs with me. I went up, and nine of the children followed me, who said they were determined to ‘flee from the wrath to come.’⁹² I exhorted them never to rest till they found peace with God; and then sung and prayed. The power of God came down in so wonderful a manner, that my voice was drowned by their cries. When I concluded, one of them broke out into prayer, in a manner that quite astonished me; and, during the whole day, a peculiar spirit of seriousness rested on all the children.

After spending some time in the school on Friday, I desired those I had spoke to the day before, to follow me; which they did, and one more. I pressed each of them severally, not to rest till he had a clear sense of the pardoning love of God. I then prayed, and the Lord poured out his Spirit as the day before; so that, in a few minutes, my voice could not be heard amidst their cries and groans. (WJW3:16)

May 29, 1787. — While I was explaining, “God has given unto us his Holy Spirit,”⁹³ he was indeed poured out in a

⁹¹ That is, Thomas Rankin, one of Wesley’s itinerant preachers.

⁹² *Matthew 3:7*

⁹³ *1Thessalonians 4:8*

wonderful manner. Tears of joy, and cries were heard on every side, only so far suppressed as not to drown my voice. (WJW4:21)

June 11, 1742. — I preached at Epworth about eight, on Ezekiel's vision of the resurrection of the dry bones⁹⁴. And great indeed was the shaking among them: lamentation and great mourning were heard; God bowing their hearts, so that on every side, as with one accord, they lift up their voice and wept aloud. Surely He who sent his Spirit to breathe upon them, will hear their cry, and will help them. (WJW1:5)

May 21, 1739. — In the evening I was interrupted at Nicholas-Street, almost as soon as I had begun to speak, by the cries of one who was "pricked at the heart," and strongly groaned for pardon and peace. (WJW1:3)

March 12, 1746. — I preached...at Sunderland...seeing a child there of ten or twelve years old, I asked [her mother], "Does your daughter know Christ, or know she has need of him?" She replied, with much concern, "I fear not: Nothing has ever affected her at all."...I was going to say, "Come let us call upon God to show her she has need of a Savior;" but, before the words were pronounced, the child turned away her face, and began crying as if she would break her heart. I could get no

⁹⁴ *Ezekiel 37:1-14*

word from her but, “My sins, my sins!” (WJW2:6)

January 25, 1744. — I preached at Bath, on James 2:14, “Can faith save him?” Many of the audience appeared to be deeply convinced; and one though a gentlewoman, could not conceal the emotion of her mind, but broke out into strong cries and tears. (WJW1:6)

February 17, 1750. — After preaching at Snowsfields, I went into a friend’s house. A poor sinner indeed followed me, one who was broken in pieces by the convincing Spirit, and uttered such cries as pierced the hearts of all that heard. We poured out our souls before God in prayer, and light sprung up ill her heart. (WJW2:8)

September 1, 1758. — After a busy and comfortable day, I preached once more in the Castle. The word seemed to sink deep into the hearers, though many of them were of the genteeler sort. In the society we were much refreshed. Many followed me to Thomas Gl —’s house; where two or three were cut to the heart, particularly both his daughters, and cried to God with strong cries and tears. (WJW2:11)

June 17, 1770. — At eight I preached; at nine, met the children, most of whom had known the love of God; and several of them were able still to rejoice in God their Savior. Almost as soon as I began to speak, God spoke to

their hearts, and they were ill able to contain themselves. I observed one little maid in particular, who heaved and strove for some time, till at length she was constrained to yield, and break out into strong cries and tears. (WJW3:15)

June 4, 1772. — Last summer the work of God revived [in Weardale], and gradually increased till the end of November...The convictions that seized the unawakened were generally exceeding deep; so that their cries drowned every other voice, and no other means could be used than the speaking to the distressed, one by one, and encouraging them to lay hold on Christ...Many, who to that hour appeared quite unconcerned, were thereby cut to the heart, and suddenly filled with such anguish of soul as extorted loud and bitter cries...On Sunday afternoon, December 1, as William Hunter was preaching, the power of God fell on the congregation in a wonderful manner. Many, being cut to the heart, cried aloud for mercy, and ten were added to the society...On Saturday night we met at six, and three of us sung and prayed. But before the third had done, his voice could not be heard for the cries of the people...Many hardened sinners were much affected thereby, and began to cry as loud as they had done; so that we had nothing to do, but to stand and see the wonderful work of God...All this time many were crying for mercy. Among these were four young men who remained on their knees five hours together...Near this time one was asked, what he thought

of this. He answered, 'I wish it be all *real*.' He then turned to go home; but, after taking a few steps, began to cry aloud for mercy. He cried till his strength was quite gone, and then lay as one dead till about four o'clock in the morning; then God revealed his Son in his heart. During this meeting eleven persons found peace with God.

On Sunday morning we met at the common hour, and three of us sung and prayed as usual, till our voice was drowned by the thanksgivings of the new converts, and the cries of convinced Sinners...We met again at two...We sung and prayed; and the power of God descended...Among those who came in, was one who had been remarkably profligate. He cried for mercy with all his might; several crowded about to see him: And before we parted not only he, but five more were rejoicing and praising God Together...At our meeting on Tuesday, eleven more were filled with the peace of God. Yet one young man seemed quite unconcerned. But suddenly the power of God fell upon him; he cried for two hours with all his might, and then the Lord set his soul at liberty. (WJW3:16)

Chapter 8

JOHN WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

John Wesley's experience with the gift of prophecy was a mixture of both good and bad. Wesley himself believed that God could endow men with prophetic gifts in his own day. Writing to one of his critics Wesley noted that, "I do not recollect any scripture wherein we are taught that miracles were to be confined within the limits either of the apostolic or the Cyprianic age; or of any period of time, longer or shorter, even till the restitution of all things."⁹⁵

There have always been men and women who claimed some special revelation from Heaven only to be proven deluded and false prophets. Wesley's day was no different and we will begin our look at Wesley's experience with the gift of prophecy by examining his negative experiences with it.

Prophets Who Could Not Die

In 1762 Wesley had to deal with a group of men who misunderstood a text from the book of Revelation. The following accounts are from Wesley's journal and his tract entitled *A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection*.

⁹⁵ WJW8, *The Principles Of A Methodist Farther Explained*, 5:5

February 5, 1762. — I met at noon, as usual, those who believe they are saved from sin, and warned them of the enthusiasm which was breaking in, by means of two or three weak though good men, who, from a misconstrued text in the Revelation, inferred that they should not die. They received the warning in much love. However, this gave great occasion of triumph to those who sought occasion, so that they rejoiced, as though they had found great spoil. (WJW3:12)

In the year 1762, there was a great increase of the work of God in London...And while I stayed in town, I had reason to hope they continued both humble and sober-minded. But almost as soon as I was gone enthusiasm broke in. Two or three began to take their own imaginations for impressions from God, and thence to suppose that they should never die; and these, laboring to bring others into the same opinion, occasioned much noise and confusion. Soon after, the same persons, with a few more, ran into other extravagances; fancying they could not be tempted; that they should feel no more pain; and that they had the gift of prophecy, and of discerning of spirits. At my return to London, in autumn, some of them stood reprov'd; but others were got above instruction. (WJW11, *A Plain Account Of Christian*

Perfection, Sec. 20)

The Doomsday Prophets

Later that same year Wesley again had to deal with false prophets, this time setting a date for the end of the world.

January 7, 1763. — I desired George Bell, with two or three of his friends, to meet me with one or two others. We took much pains to convince him of his mistakes; particularly that which he had lately adopted, — that the end of the world was to be on February 28th; which at first he had earnestly withstood. But we could make no impression upon him at all. He was as unmoved as a rock. (WJW3:13)

About the same time, five or six honest enthusiasts foretold the world was to end on the 28th of February. I immediately withstood them, by every possible means, both in public and private. I preached expressly upon the subject, both at West-Street and Spitalfields. I warned the society, again and again, and spoke severally to as many as I could; and I saw the fruit of my labor. They made exceeding few converts [to their deluded ideas]: I believe scarce thirty in our whole society. Nevertheless, they made abundance of noise, gave

huge occasion of offense to those who took care to improve to the uttermost every occasion against me, and greatly increased both the number and courage of those who opposed Christian perfection. (WJW11, *A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection*, Sec. 22)

In 1762, George Bell, and a few other persons, began to speak great words. In the latter end of the year, they foretold that the world would be at an end on the 28th of February. Mr. Wesley, with whom they were then connected, withstood them both in public and private. This they would not endure; so, in January and February, 1763, they separated from him. Soon after, Mr. Maxfield, one of Mr. Wesley's Preachers, and several of the people, left Mr. Wesley; but still Mr. Maxfield and his adherents go under the general name of Methodists. (WJW8, *A Short History Of Methodism*, Sec. 14)

From Prophet To Mental Patient

During a sermon on 1Corinthians 13:1-3 Wesley related the interesting story of Jonathan Pyrah, a member of the Methodist society who gave an accurate prophecy but later went insane.

A little before the conclusion of the late war in

Flanders, one who came from thence gave us a very strange relation. I knew not what judgment to form of this, but waited till John Haime should come over, of whose veracity I could no more doubt than of his understanding. The account he gave was this: — “Jonathan Pyrah was a member of our society in Flanders. I knew him some years, and knew him to be a man of an unblamable character. One day he was summoned to appear before the Board of General Officers. One of them said, “What is this which we hear of you? We hear you are turned prophet, and that you foretell the downfall of the bloody house of Bourbon, and the haughty house of Austria. We should be glad if you were a real prophet, and if your prophecies came true. But what sign do you give, to convince us you are so, and that your predictions will come to pass?” He readily answered, “Gentlemen, I give you a sign: Tomorrow, at twelve o’clock, you shall have such a storm of thunder and lightning as you never had before since you came into Flanders. I give you a second sign: As little as any of you expect any such thing, as little appearance of it as there is now, you shall have a general engagement with the French within three days. I give you a third sign: I shall be ordered to advance in the first line. If I am a false prophet, I shall be shot dead at the first discharge; but if I am a true prophet, I shall only receive a musket-ball in the calf of my

left leg.” At twelve the next day there was such thunder and lightning as they never had before in Flanders. On the third day, contrary to all expectation, was the general battle of Fontenoy. He was ordered to advance in the first line; and, at the very first discharge, he did receive a musket-ball in the calf of his left leg.”

And yet all this profited him nothing, either for temporal or eternal happiness. When the war was over, he returned to England; but the story was got before him: In consequence of which he was sent for by the Countess of St — s, and several other persons of quality, who were desirous to receive so surprising an account from his own mouth. He could not bear so much honor. It quite turned his brain. In a little time he ran stark mad. And so he continues to this day, living still, as I apprehend, on Wibsey Moorside, within a few miles of Leeds. (*WJW7, Sermon 91: On Charity, Sec. 3:3-4*)

The Case Of The French Prophets

Wesley also had encounters with a group known as the French Prophets, a charismatic sect originating in France around the end of the 17th century. Wesley himself

did not endorse the group⁹⁶.

January 28, 1739. — I went, (having been long importuned thereto,) about five in the evening, with four or five of my friends, to a house where was one of those commonly called French prophets. After a time, she came in. She seemed about four or five and twenty, of an agreeable speech and behavior. She asked, why we came. I said, “To try the spirits, whether they be of God.”⁹⁷ Presently after she leaned back in her chair, and seemed to have strong workings in her breast, with deep sighings intermixed. Her head and hands, and, by turns, every part of her body, seemed also to be in a kind of convulsive motion. This continued about ten minutes, till, at six, she began to speak (though the workings, sighings, and contortions of her body were so intermixed with her words, that she seldom spoke half a sentence together) with a clear, strong voice, “Father, thy will, thy will be done. Thus saith the Lord, If of any of you that is a father, his child ask bread, will he give him a stone? If he ask a fish, will he gives him a scorpion? Ask bread of me, my children, and I will give you bread. I will not, will

⁹⁶ WJW4:20, April 3, 1786 & WJW13, A Letter To Mr. T. H., alias Philodemas, alias Somebody, alias Stephen Church, alias R. W., Question 14.

⁹⁷ 1John 4:1

not give you a scorpion. By this judge of what ye shall now hear.”⁹⁸

She spoke much (all as in the person of God, and mostly in Scripture words) of the fulfilling of the prophecies, the coming of Christ now at hand, and the spreading of the Gospel over all the earth. Then she exhorted us not to be in haste in judging her spirit, to be or not to be of God; but to wait upon God, and he would teach us, if we conferred not with flesh and blood. She added, with many enforcements, that we must watch and pray, and take up our cross, and be still before God. Two or three of our company were much affected, and believed she spoke by the Spirit of God. But this was in no wise clear to me. The motion might be either hysterical or artificial. And the same words, any person of a good understanding and well versed in the Scriptures might have spoken. But I let the matter alone; knowing this, that “if it be not of God, it will come to naught.”⁹⁹ (WJW1:3)

The Shropshire Prophet

In 1744 Wesley had the opportunity to talk with George Newans, the famed Shropshire Prophet who had traveled to London nearly fifty times to warn the

⁹⁸ A reference to Matthew 7:9-10 and Luke 11:11-12.

⁹⁹ *Acts* 5:38-39

governmental and religious leaders of impending disasters he had foreseen in visions. These predictions included the invasion of England, the desolation of Germany, the destruction of Popery, the restoration of the Jews to their own land, the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, the Fullness of the Gentiles and the triumphant Estate of Christ's church upon the earth during a thousand years.

September 1, 1744. — I talked pretty largely with George Newans, the supposed Shropshire Prophet. I am inclined to think he believes himself; but I cannot believe, God has sent him. (WJW1:6)

Prophets Who Wanted To Be On The Level Of The Bible

Not unlike our day, Wesley had to contend with individuals who set their own "private revelations" on the same level as Scripture. The following example is a clear portrayal of just such that.

September 3, 1740. — I met with one who, having been lifted up with the abundance of joy which God had given her, had fallen into such blasphemies and vain imaginations as are not common to men. In the afternoon I found another instance, nearly, I fear, of the same kind: One who, after much of the love of God shed abroad in her

heart, was become wise far above what is written, and set her *private revelations* (so called) on the self-same foot with the written word.

She zealously maintained, **1.** That Christ had died for angels as well as men. **2.** That none of the angels kept their first estate; but all sinned, less or more. **3.** That by the death of Christ three things were effected: One part of the fallen spirits were *elected*, and immediately confirmed in holiness and happiness, who are now the holy angels; another part of them, having more deeply sinned, were *reprobated*, who are now devils; and the third part, allowed a farther trial; and in order thereto, sent down from heaven, and imprisoned in bodies of flesh and blood, who are now human *souls*. — In the evening I earnestly besought them all to keep clear of vain speculations, and seek only for the plain, practical “truth, which is after godliness.”¹⁰⁰ (WJW1:4)

In another instance of private revelation above Scripture Wesley commented, “I was with two persons, who I doubt are properly enthusiasts. For, first, they think to attain the end without the means; which is enthusiasm, properly so called. Again, they think themselves inspired by God, and are not. But false, imaginary inspiration is enthusiasm. That theirs is only

¹⁰⁰ *Titus 1:1*

imaginary inspiration appears hence, it contradicts the Law and the Testimony."¹⁰¹

The Prophet Who Would Be King

December 4, 1742. — I was both surprised and grieved at a genuine instance of enthusiasm. J— — B— —, of Tanfield-Leigh, who had received a sense of the love of God a few days before, came riding through the town, hallooing and shouting, and driving all the people before him; telling them, God had told him he should be a king, and should tread all his enemies under his feet. I sent him home immediately to his work, and advised him to cry day and night to God, that he might be lowly in heart; lest Satan should again get an advantage over him. (WJW1:5)

Prophet John Adams

In his journal entry for June 19, 1745 Wesley writes, "Here I took leave of a poor, mad, original enthusiast, who had been scattering abroad lies in every quarter."¹⁰² Later, in a letter written to defend the miracles that he had experienced Wesley elaborated more on this individual letting us know that, "It was the famous John Adams, since confined at Box, whose capital

¹⁰¹ WJW1:3, *January 17, 1739*

¹⁰² WJW1:6

lie, the source of the rest, was, that he was a prophet, greater than Moses, or any of the Apostles.”¹⁰³

Legitimate Encounters With The Gift Of Prophecy

We now turn our attention to two instances which have the clear outward markings of a legitimate experience with the gift of prophecy.

A Three Year Old Child Predicts His Own Death

June 28, 1746. — I inquired more particularly of Mrs. Nowens, concerning her little son. She said, he appeared to have a continual fear of God, and an awful sense of his presence; that he frequently went to prayers by himself, and prayed for his father, and many others by name; that he had an exceeding great tenderness of conscience, being sensible of the least sin, and crying and refusing to be comforted, when he thought he had in any thing displeased God; that a few days since, he broke out into prayer aloud, and then said, “Mamma, I shall go to heaven soon, and be with the little angels. And you will go there too, and my papa; but you will not go so soon:” That the day before, he went to a little girl in the house and said, “Polly, you and I must go to prayers. Don’t mind your doll: Kneel down now: I must go to prayers:

¹⁰³ WJW9, *A Letter To The Right Reverend, The Lord Bishop Of Gloucester: Occasioned By His Tract “On The Office And Operations Of The Holy Spirit”, Sec. 2*

God bids me." When the Holy Ghost teaches, is there any delay in learning? This child was then just three years old! A year or two after he died in peace. (WJW2:6)

A Truly Righteous Woman Is Foretold Of Her Near Death

April 4, 1781. — I went over to Wigan, and preached a funeral sermon for Betty Brown, one of the first members of this society; one of whom, John Layland, gave me the following artless account of her: — "She met with us in a class about twenty years, even to the Sunday before her death, which was on Friday, March 2. Going to market that day in good health, she returned (as she often did) without her husband, ate her supper, and went to bed. About midnight, he came, and found her body; but the spirit was fled! Her love for God, for his cause, and for her brethren and sisters, was truly remarkable. So was her pity for backsliders. At home and abroad she was continually intent on one thing. We cannot forget her tears and prayers, which we doubt not the Lord hath heard. "A little before her death, sitting with my sisters, she seemed in deep thought, and broke out, 'I will go to God!' One of them being surprised, said, 'Pray, Betty, what do you mean?' She only replied, 'I will go to God.' So that, if I think right, she was the beloved of God, the delight of his children, a dread to wicked men, and a torment to devils." (WJW4:19)

Chapter 9

JOHN WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH VISIONS AND DREAMS

Visions and dreams apparently played a somewhat significant role in John Wesley's ministry. In his own words, "I have seen...very many persons changed in a moment from the spirit of fear, horror, despair, to the spirit of love, joy, and peace; and from sinful desire, till then reigning over them, to a pure desire of doing the will of God. These are matters of fact...What I have to say touching visions or dreams, is this: I know several persons in whom this great change was wrought in a dream, or during a strong representation to the eye of their mind, of Christ either on the cross, or in glory. This is the fact."¹⁰⁴

We will now look at some of these visions and dreams.

A Vision Of Christ On The Cross Leads A Man To Repentance

December 5, 1738. — On *Whit-Sunday* I¹⁰⁵ went to receive the blessed sacrament; but with a heart as hard as a stone. Heavy-laden I was indeed, when God was pleased

¹⁰⁴ WJW1:3, *May 20, 1739*

¹⁰⁵ This is from a letter an unnamed person wrote to Wesley.

to let me see a crucified Savior. I saw there was a fountain opened in his side for me to wash in and be clean. But alas! I was afraid to venture, fearing I should be too presumptuous. And I know I at that time refused the atonement, which I might then have had. Yet I received great comfort. But in about nine days' time, my joy went out, as a lamp does for want of oil, and I fell into my old state. Yet I was not without hope; for ever after that time I could not despair of salvation: I had so clear a sight of the fountain opened in the side of our Lord. But still when I thought of death, or the day of judgment, it was a great terror to me. And yet I was afraid to venture to lay all my sins upon Christ. This was not all. But whenever I retired to prayer, I had a violent pain in my head. This only seized me when I began to pray earnestly, or to cry out aloud to Christ. But when I cried to Him against this also, He gave me ease. Well, I found God did love me, and did draw me to Christ. I hungered and thirsted after Him; but I was still afraid to go boldly to Christ, and to claim Him as my Savior. (WJW1:3)

A Child Receives A Vision Of Heaven

August 29, 1746. — I talked largely with S— — F— —, and took from her the following account: — On Saturday, July 15, 1743, S— — T— —, then about ten years and three quarters old, waked in perfect health. She had never had any fits of any kind, nor any considerable sickness. About six in the morning she was rising, and

inwardly praying to God; when, on a sudden, she was seized with a violent trembling. Quickly after she lost her speech; in a few minutes her hearing; then her sight; and, at the same time, all sense and motion.

Her mother immediately sent for Mrs. Designe, to whom she then went to school. At the same time her father sent for Mr. Smith, Apothecary, who lived near. At first he proposed bleeding her immediately, and applying a large blister; but upon examining her farther, he said, "It signifies nothing, for the child is dead."

About twelve o'clock she began to stir; then she opened her eyes, and gave the following account: —

"As soon as I lost my senses, I was in a dismal place, full of briers, and pits, and ditches; stumbling up and down, and not knowing where to turn, or which way to get either forward or backward; and it was almost quite dark, there being but a little faint twilight, so that I could scarce see before me. I was crying, ready to break my heart; and a man came to me, and said, 'Child, where are you going?'

I said, I could not tell.

He said, 'What do you want?'

I answered, 'I want Christ to be my refuge.'

He said, 'What is your name?'

And I told him: But I did not tell him S— — T— —.

I told him a name which I never heard before.

He said, 'You are the child for whom I am sent: You are to go with me.'

I saw it grew lighter as he spoke.

We walked together, till we came to a stile. He went over, and bid me stay a little. I stayed about half a quarter of an hour, and then I observed his clothes. They reached down to his feet, and were shining, and white as snow.

Then he came back, and kneeled down and prayed. You never heard such a prayer in your life.

Afterward he said, 'Come with me.'

I went over the stile, and it was quite light. He brought me through a narrow lane, into a vast broad road, and told me, 'This leads to hell; but be not afraid; you are not to stay there.'

At the end of that road a man stood, clothed like the other, in white, shining clothes, which reached down to the ground. None could pass in or out, without his knowledge; but he had not the key. The man that was with me carried the key, and unlocked the door, and we went in together.

For a little way we walked straight forward; then, turning to the left hand, we went down a very high, steep hill. I could scarce bear the stench and smoke of brimstone. I saw a vast many people, that seemed to be chained down, crying and gnashing their teeth. The man told me, the sins they delighted in once, they are tormented with now. I saw a vast number who stood up cursing and blaspheming God, and spitting at each other: And many were making balls of fire, and throwing them at one another. I saw many others who had cups of fire, out of which they were drinking down flames: And

others, who holden cards of fire in their hands, and seemed to be playing with them.

We stayed here, I thought, about half an hour. Then my guide said, 'Come; I will show you now a glorious place.'

I walked with him, till we came into a narrow road, in which we could hardly walk abreast. This brought us into a great broad place; and I saw the gate of heaven, which stood wide open; but it was so bright, I could not look at it long. We went straight in, and walked through a large place, where I saw saints and angels; and through another large place where were abundance more. They were all of one height and stature; and when one prayed, they all prayed; when one sung, they all sung. And they all sung alike, with a smooth, even voice, not one higher or lower than another.

We went through this into a third place. There I saw God sitting upon his throne. It was a throne of light, brighter than the sun. I could not fix my eyes upon it. I saw three, but all as one. Our Savior holden a pen in his hand. A great book lay at his right side; another at his left; and a third partly behind him. In the first he set down the prayers and good works of his people; in the second he set down all the curses, and all the evil works of the wicked. I saw that He discerns the whole earth at a glance; and He discerns the whole heavens. At once He beholds earth and heaven with one look.

Then our Lord took the first book in his hand, and went and said, 'Father, behold the prayers and the works

of my people.'

And He holden up his hands, and prayed, and interceded to his Father for us. I never heard any voice like that; but I cannot tell how to explain it.

And his Father said, 'Son, I forgive thy people; not for their sake, but thine.'

Then our Lord wrote it down in the third book, and returned to his throne, rejoicing with the host of heaven.

It seemed to me, as if I stayed here several months; but I never slept all the while. And there was no night: And I saw no sky or sun, but clear light every where.

Then we went back to a large door, which my guide opened; and we walked into pleasant gardens, by brooks and fountains. As we walked, I said I did not see my brother here. (Who died some time before.)

He said, 'Child, thou canst not know thy brother yet, because thy breath remains in thy body. Thy spirit is to return to the earth. Thou must watch and pray; and when thy breath leaves thy body, thou shalt come again hither, and be joined to these, and know every one as before.'

I said, 'When is that to be?'

He said, 'I know not, nor any angel in heaven; but God alone.'

Then he took me into another pleasant garden, where were all manner of fruits. He told me, 'This garden bears fruit always.'

Here I saw a glorious place, which had large gold

letters writ over the door. He bid me read; and I read, 'This is a fountain for sin and uncleanness for my people. At what time so ever they will return, they shall be cleansed from all their idols.'

The door stood open, and I looked in, and I saw, as it were, a great cistern full of water, white as milk. We seemed to walk up and down in this garden for some weeks, and he told me what every thing meant. I never wanted to eat or drink, nor felt any weariness.

While we were walking, he said, 'Sing.'

I said, 'What shall I sing?'

And he said, 'Sing praises unto the King of the place.'

I sung several verses.

Then he said, 'I must go.'

I would have fain gone with him; but he said, 'Your time is not yet: You have more work to do upon the earth.'

Immediately he was gone; and I came to myself, and began to speak."

Her mother told me farther, "As soon as ever she recovered her speech, she gave me just the same account; adding, 'I have learned the finest hymn you ever heard in your life.' She then sang three verses, the most solid, awful words which I have ever heard. She continued speaking many awful words, with many sighs and tears, till, about three in the afternoon, she fell into a slumber, which continued till seven. She then took the same things to Mrs. Designe; after which she was silent, till about five

in the morning.

She received remission of sins when she was nine years old, and was very watchful from that time. Since this trance she has continued in faith and love, but has been very sickly and weak in body." (WJW2:6)¹⁰⁶

A Vision Of Heaven And The Savior

August 29, 1748. — I preached at Davy Hulme. I had heard a surprising account concerning a young woman of Manchester, which I now received from her own mouth. She said, "On Friday, the 4th of last March, I was sitting in the house while one read the Passion Hymn. I had always before thought myself good enough, having constantly gone to church and said my prayers, nor had I ever heard any of the Methodist Preachers. On a sudden I saw our Savior on the cross, as plain as if it had been with my bodily eyes; and I felt it was my sins for which he died. I cried out, and had no strength left in me. Whether my eyes were open or shut, he was still before me hanging on the cross; and I could do nothing but weep and mourn day and night. This lasted till Monday in the afternoon. Then I saw, as it were, heaven open, and God sitting upon his throne in the midst of ten thousand of his saints; and I saw a large book in which all my sins were written; and he blotted them all out, and my heart was filled with peace, and joy, and love, which I

¹⁰⁶ Reminiscent of Isaiah's vision of Heaven in Isaiah 6:1-13.

have never lost to this hour.” (WJW2:7)

A Murder Is Prevented Through A Supernatural Dream

I was informed by a person in an eminent station, of a very uncommon incident: — He had occasion to correct, with a few stripes, a lad that lived with him at Rochester, which he resented so as to leave his place. But sometime after, he seemed to repent, humbled himself, and was received again. He now behaved in a most becoming manner, and was doubly diligent in his service. But his mistress dreamed one night, that this lad was going to cut her throat: And she had a twin sister, between whom and her there is so strange a sympathy, that if either of them is ill, or particularly affected at any time, the other is so likewise. This sister wrote to her from another part of the kingdom, that she had dreamed the very same thing. She carried this letter to her father, a gentleman that lives not far off, and was surprised to hear that he likewise, on the same night, had had a dream to the same effect.

The lad had been observed to come up, about noon, into his lady’s apartment, with a case-knife in his hand; and being asked why he did so, he said, he was going into the adjoining room, to scrape the dirt off from his master’s embroidered clothes.

His master now took the lad aside, and examined him strictly. After denying it for a considerable time, it was at length extorted from him, that he had always

remembered, with indignation, his master's severity to him, and that he was fully resolved to be revenged, but in what particular manner he would not confess. On this he was totally dismissed without delay. (*WJW11, Murder Prevented By A Three-Fold Dream*, reported to John Wesley on April 2, 1781)¹⁰⁷

A Dying Woman Sees The Curtains Of Heaven Drawn Back

August 19, 1775. — About this time I received a remarkable letter, from one of our Preachers at West-Bromwich, near Wednesbury. The substance of it is as follows:

August 16, 1775. — About three weeks since, a person came and told me, Martha Wood, of Darlaston, was dying, and had a great desire to see me. When I came into the house, which, with all that was in it, was scarce worth five pounds, I found, in that mean cottage, such a jewel as my eyes never beholden before. Her eyes even sparkled with joy, and her heart danced like David before the ark: In truth, she seemed to be in the suburbs of heaven, upon the confines of glory.

She took hold of my hand, and said, 'I am glad to see you; you are my father in Christ. It is twenty years since I heard you first. It was on that text, *Now ye have*

¹⁰⁷ Reminiscent of Joseph's warning in Matthew 2:22 given in a dream.

*sorrow: But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you.*¹⁰⁸ In that hour God broke into my soul, delivered me from all sorrow, and filled my heart with joy; and, blessed be his name, I never have lost it, from that hour to this.'

For the first ten years, she was sometimes in transports of joy, carried almost beyond herself; but for these last ten years, she has had the constant witness that God has taken up all her heart. 'He has filled me,' said she, 'with perfect love; and perfect love casts out fear. Jesus is mine; God, and heaven, and eternal glory, are mine. My heart, my very soul is lost, yea, swallowed up, in God.'

There were many of our friends standing by her bedside. She exhorted them all, as one in perfect health, to keep close to God.

'You can never,' said she, 'do too much for God: When you have done all you can, you have done too little. O, who that knows Him, can love, or do, or suffer too much for Him!'

Some worldly people came in. She called them by name, and exhorted them to repent and turn to Jesus. She looked at me, and desired I would preach her funeral sermon on those words, 'I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will

¹⁰⁸ *John 16:22*

give me at that day.’¹⁰⁹

She talked to all round about her in as scriptural and rational a manner as if she had been in her full strength, (only now and then catching a little for breath,) with all the smiles of heaven in her countenance. Indeed several times she seemed to be quite gone; but in a little while the taper lit up again, and she began to preach, with divine power, to all that stood near her. She knew every person, and if any came into the room whom she knew to be careless about religion, she directly called them by name, and charged them to seek the Lord while he might be found.

At last she cried out, ‘I see the heavens opened; I see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with numbers of the glorified throng, coming nearer and nearer. They are just come!’

At that word, her soul took its flight, to mingle with the heavenly host. We looked after her, as Elisha after Elijah; and I trust some of us have caught her mantle.” (WJW4:17)¹¹⁰

A Child Sees Visions

July 29, 1759. — When sermon was ended, one brought good tidings to Mr. B. from Grandchester, that God had

¹⁰⁹ *2Timothy 4:7-8*

¹¹⁰ Reminiscent of the last moments of D.L. Moody as he himself experienced a vision of Heaven the day he died (see *The Life Of Dwight L. Moody, Ch. 45*, by William R. Moody).

there broken down seventeen persons, last week, by the singing of hymns only; and that a child, seven years old, sees many visions, and astonishes the neighbors with her innocent, awful manner of declaring them. (WJW2:11)

A Vision Of Heaven Impacts A Man's Heart

April 28, 1756. — I rode to Tullamore; where one of the society, EDWARD WILLIS, gave me a very surprising account of himself. He said:

When I was about twenty years old, I went to Waterford for business. After a few weeks I resolved to leave it; and packed up my things, in order to set out the next morning. This was Sunday; but my landlord pressed me much not to go till the next day. In the afternoon we walked out together, and went into the river. After a while, leaving him near the shore, I struck out into the deep. I soon heard a cry, and, turning, saw him rising and sinking in the channel of the river. I swam back with all speed, and, seeing him sink again, dived down after him. When I was near the bottom, he clasped his arm round my neck, and holden me so fast that I could not rise.

Seeing death before me, all my sins came into my mind, and I faintly called for mercy. In a while my senses went away, and I thought I was in a place full of light and glory, with abundance of people. While I was thus, he who holden me died, and I floated up to the top of the water. I then immediately came to myself, and swam to

the shore, where several stood who had seen us sink, and said, they never knew such a deliverance before; for I had been under water full twenty minutes.

It made me more serious for two or three months. Then I returned to all my sins.

But in the midst of all, I had a voice following me every where, 'When an able Minister of the Gospel comes, it will be well with thee!'

Some years after I entered into the army: Our troop lay at Phillip's Town, when Mr. W. came. I was much affected by his preaching; but not so as to leave my sins. The voice followed me still; and when Mr. J. W. came, before I saw him, I had an unspeakable conviction that he was the man I looked for; and soon after I found peace with God, and it was well with me indeed. (WJW2:10)

Visions And Dreams Lead A Woman To Embrace The Lord

March 3, 1748. — Mr. Holloway, a neighboring Exciseman, invited us to breakfast with him. He once began to run well; and now resolved to set out afresh: I trust we were sent to him for good.

His wife bitterly opposed this way, till, one day, as she was sitting in her house, a flash of lightning killed a cat which sat just by her, and struck her to the earth, scorching her flesh in many parts, and yet not at all singeing her clothes. When she came to herself, she could

not but acknowledge the loud call of God: But her seriousness did not continue long; her acquaintance soon laughed her out of it.

Yet God called her again, in dreams and visions of the night. She thought she was standing in the open air, when one appeared in the clouds exceeding glorious, above the brightness of the sun: She soon after saw a second, and then a third. One had a kind of spear in his hand; the second, a besom, wherewith he was going to sweep the earth; the third, an hourglass, as though the time was short. This so deeply affected her, that she began from that time, to seek God with her whole heart. (WJW2:7)

Ann Thorn, The Woman Prone To Visions

July 29, 1759. — I¹¹¹ discoursed also with Ann Thorn, who told me of much heaviness following the visions with which she had been favored; but said she was at intervals visited still with such overpowering love and joy, especially at the Lord's Supper, that she often lay in a trance for many hours. She is twenty one years old. (WJW2:11)

August 6, 1759. — I talked largely with Ann Thorn, and two others, who had been several times in trances. What

¹¹¹ Wesley transcribed this account from another person's journal. In the next entry he records his personal observations on meeting Ann Thorn.

they all agreed in was, 1. That when they went away, as they termed it, it was always at the time they were fullest of the love of God; 2. That it came upon them in a moment, without any previous notice, and took away all their senses and strength; 3. That there were some exceptions; but in general, from that moment, they were in another world, knowing nothings of what was done or said, by all that were round about them. (WJW2:11)

Visions Of Satan And Christ

July 29, 1759. — She sprang by me to a young woman who lay in a kind of trance, and clasped her in her arms, breathing forth praise to God. I retired again, but had not been long seated ere she came in, running to me in a transport of praise. I asked her, why she cried out continually, 'Christ! Christ!'

She answered, 'I thought myself at that time on a little island, and saw Satan in a hideous form, just ready to devour me, hell all round open to receive me, and myself ready to drop in; while no help appeared, nor any way to escape. But just as I was dropping in, the Lord appeared between me and the great gulf, and would not let me fall into it. As soon as I saw him, all my trouble was gone, and still the pain I felt before; and ever since I have been light and joyful, and filled with the love of God.' (WJW2:11)

July 29, 1759. — I returned to Mr. J— —gs's, who had set

out at four in the morning, to hear Mr. B. at Grandchester. He came soon after me, but was scarce able to speak. I never saw a man sweat in such a manner; the large drops seeming fixed all over his face, just like beads of glass. The congregation at Grandchester this morning consisted of about one thousand persons, among whom the Lord was wonderfully present, convincing a far greater number now than even last night. Mr. J—gs was a mild, good natured Pharisee, who never had been awakened: But he was now thoroughly convinced of his lost estate, and stood for a time in utter despair, with his mouth wide open, his eyes staring, and full of huge dismay.

When he found power to speak, he cried out, 'I thought I had led a good life; I thought I was not so bad as others; but I am the vilest creature upon earth; I am dropping into hell! Now, now; this very moment!'

He then saw hell open to receive him, and Satan ready to cast him in; but it was not long before he saw the Lord Jesus, and knew he had accepted him. He then cried aloud in an unspeakable rapture, 'I have got Christ! I have got Christ!'

For two hours he was in the visions of God; then the joy, though not the peace, abated. (WJW2:11)

A Vision Of Christ

August 6, 1759. — About five in the afternoon I heard them singing hymns. Soon after, Mr. B. came up, and told

me, Alice Miller (fifteen years old) was fallen into a trance. I went down immediately, and found her sitting on a stool, and leaning against the wall, with her eyes open and fixed upward. I made a motion as if going to strike; but they continued immovable. Her face showed an unspeakable mixture of reverence and love, while silent tears stole down her cheeks. Her lips were a little open, and sometimes moved, but not enough to cause any sound. I do not know whether I ever saw an human face look so beautiful: Sometimes it was covered with a smile, as from joy, mixing with love and reverence; but the tears fell still) though not so fast. Her pulse was quite regular. In about half an hour I observed her countenance change into the form of fear, pity, and distress; then she burst into a flood of tears, and cried out, "Dear Lord; they will be damned! They will all be damned!" But in about five minutes her smiles returned, and only love and joy appeared in her face.

About half an hour after six I observed distress take place again; and soon after she wept bitterly, and cried out, "Dear Lord, they will go to hell! The world will go to hell!" Soon after, she said, "Cry aloud! Spare not!" And in a few moments her look was composed again, and spoke a mixture of reverence, joy, and love. Then she said aloud, "Give God the glory." About seven her senses returned.

I asked, "Where have you been?"

"I have been with my Savior."

"In heaven, or on earth?"

“I cannot tell; but I was in glory.”

“Why then did you cry?”

“Not for myself, but for the world; for I saw they were on the brink of hell.”

“Whom did you desire to give the glory to God?”

“Ministers that cry aloud to the world: Else they will be proud; and then God will leave them, and they will lose their own souls.” (WJW2:11)

A Woman Is Foretold Of Her Husband’s Death In A Dream

July 28, 1757. — On Tuesday, the 12th of this month, I told my husband in the morning, ‘I desire you will not go into the water today; at least, not into the deep water, on the far side of the town; for I dreamed I saw you there out of your depth, and only your head came up just above the water.’

He promised me he would not, and went to work. Soon after four in the afternoon, being at John Hanson’s, his partner’s house, she was on a sudden extremely sick, so that for some minutes she seemed just ready to expire. Then she was well in a moment. Just at that time, John Hanson, who was an excellent swimmer, persuaded her husband to go into the water on the far side of the town. He objected, — the water was deep, and he could not swim; and, being much importuned to go in, stood some time after he was undressed, and then kneeling down, prayed with an earnest and loud voice. When he rose

from his knees, John, who was swimming, called him again, and treading the water, said, 'See, it is only breast high.'

He stepped in, and sunk. A man who was near, cutting fern, and had observed him for some time, ran to the bank, and saw his head come up just above the water. The second or third time he rose, he clasped his hands, and cried aloud, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

Immediately he sunk, and rose no more.
(WJW2:10)

A Minister Is Forewarned Of Danger Through A Dream

August 12, 1745. — On May 31, I¹¹² went to Sykehouse, and exhorted the people at all opportunities. On Monday, June 3, about three o'clock in the morning, W. Holmes came to me, and said, 'Brother Moss, I have been just awaked by a dream, that the Constables and Churchwardens came to press you for a soldier. I would have you get up and go to Norton.'

I did so, and he walked with me about half a mile. At his return, the Constables and Churchwardens were come.

They asked him, 'Where is the Preacher?'

He said, 'I have just carried him away: But have you a warrant to press such men as these?'

They answered, 'Yes, we have; and will press him,

¹¹² That is, Richard Moss.

if we see him here again.'

He replied, 'You shall see him again in that day, when the Lord shall judge the world in righteousness.'

He came and told me, and advised me to go thence. So I went to Epworth on Tuesday. On Wednesday night I had spoke about a quarter of an hour, when the Churchwardens and Constables came.

They bade me stop. I told them, 'I will, when I have delivered my message.'

They cried, 'Bring him away! Bring him away!'

I thought, 'But they cannot, unless the Lord will.'

The Constable coming up to me, I looked him in the face, and he shrunk back, and said, 'I cannot take him.'

His companions swore, 'But we will fetch him soon.'

As they were pressing on, many of the people got between, and kept so close together, that for near half an hour they could get no further. Glory be to God, my soul all the time was rather in heaven than on earth.

They went out to consult what to do, and soon returned with great staves, wherewith they beat down several that stood in their way; but still they could not make their passage through, till Mr. Maw came, (the chief gentleman in the town,) and sent for me into the house. There we prayed and sung hymns, till about eleven o'clock. He then advised me to go out of the town. So, many of our brethren went with me to Robert Taylor's house, at Burnham; where we continued praying

and praising God, till about four o'clock in the morning. I then rode back to Norton, and from thence, by Leeds, Birstal, and Barley-Hall, to Sheffield.

On Wednesday evening, June 12, as I was privately conversing with a few of the people, the Constables and Churchwardens came up, and dragged me down stairs. But quickly one of them listened a little, and cried out, 'They are at prayers: I will have nothing to do in this matter.' The rest began to look at one another, took their hands off me, and went their way. I went from Sheffield through Derbyshire, Cheshire, and Staffordshire, to Birmingham; and so on by Evesham and Stanley. In most places I was threatened; but out of all dangers the Lord delivered me. (*WJW1:6*)¹¹³

A Woman Is Rebuked In A Dream For Rejecting The Methodists

September 11, 1746. — E— — T— — (W— — T— —'s sister) rode with me to Camborn. When she heard her brother was perverted, she went over to Sithney, on purpose to reclaim him. But finding neither fairwords, nor hard names, nor oaths, nor curses, nor blows could prevail, she went away, renouncing him and all that belonged to him, and fully resolved to see him no more.

Six weeks after she met him at Redruth, and

¹¹³ Reminiscent of Matthew 2:1-12 where the Magi were warned by God through a dream of impending danger from King Herod.

desired him to step into an house. When they were sat down, she burst into tears, and said, "Brother, follow those men, in God's name. And send me word when any of them preaches in your house, and I will come and hear him."

He asked, "How is this? How came you to be so changed?"

She replied, "A fortnight ago, I dreamed, a man stood by me, and said, 'Do not speak evil of these men; for they are the servants of God.'

I said, 'What, are you one of them? I defy you all. I will keep to my church.'

He said, 'And when you are at church, how are your thoughts employed? or even at the Lord's table?' And he went on, telling me all that was in my heart; and every word went through me; and I looked up, and saw him very bright and glorious; and I knew it was our Savior; and I fell down at his feet; and then I waked."

The week after she went to Sithney, where Mr. M— — was preaching, and saying, "Is there any of you that has shut your doors against the messengers of God? How, if our Lord shut the door of mercy against you?"

She cried out, "It is I," and dropped down.

Nor had she any rest till God made her a witness of the faith which once she persecuted. (WJW2:6)¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Reminiscent of Abimelech being warned in a dream not to touch Abraham's wife in Genesis 20:1-18.

A Woman's Dream Foretells The Visit Of A Preacher

Sunday, May 20, several fainted and cried out while Mr. Berridge was Preaching...When I returned to Mr. Berridge's house [after the sermon], after a little walk, I found it full of people. He was fatigued, yet said he would give them a word of exhortation. I stayed in the next room, and saw a girl lying, as dead. In a few minutes, a woman was filled with peace and joy. She had come thirteen miles, and had dreamed Mr. Berridge would come to her village on that very day whereon he did come, though without either knowing the place or the way to it. She was convinced at that time. (*WJW13, A Short History Of The People Called Methodists, Sec. 74*)

John Wesley's Dreams Of Departed Saints

I have heard my mother say, "I have frequently been as fully assured that my father's spirit was with me, as if I had seen him with my eyes." But she did not explain herself any further. I have myself many times found on a sudden so lively an apprehension of a deceased friend, that I have sometimes turned about to look: At the same time I have felt an uncommon affection for them. But I never had anything of this kind with regard to any but those that died in faith. In dreams, I have had exceeding lively conversations with them; and I doubt not but they were then very near. (*WJW12, Letter 339 To Lady Maxwell, dated March 3, 1769*)

A Woman Ignores A Dream Warning Her Of Danger And Dies

July 24, 1757. — As we rode over Haxey Car towards Misterton, one was relating a surprising thing that happened lately: — “A woman of Stockwith told her sister who lived with her, ‘I do not think to go to market today, for I dreamed that I was drowned in riding across one of the drains on Haxey Car.’ But she was soon laughed out of it, and went. She rode over the Car with many other market folks, and in crossing one of the drains, where the water was scarce a yard deep, slipped off her horse. Several looked on, but none once thought of pulling her out till she was past recovery.” (WJW2:10)

A Woman Is Led Into A Deeper Walk With The Lord Through A Dream

June 23, 1761. — After meeting the society, I talked with a sensible woman whose experience seemed peculiar. She said: “A few days before Easter last, I was deeply convinced of sin; and in Easter week, I knew my sins were forgiven, and was filled with ‘joy and peace in believing.’¹¹⁵ But in about eighteen days I was convinced in a dream of the necessity of a higher salvation; and I mourned day and night, in agony of desire to be

¹¹⁵ *Romans 15:13*

thoroughly sanctified; till on the twenty-third day after my justification, I found a total change, together with a clear witness that the blood of Jesus had cleansed me from all unrighteousness." (WJW3:12)

A Woman Is Told To Trust John Wesley In A Dream

March 26, 1764. — I was desired to preach at Walsal. James Jones was alarmed at the motion, apprehending there would be much disturbance. However, I determined to make the trial. Coming into the House, I met with a token for good. A woman was telling her neighbor why she came: "I had a desire," said she, "to hear this man; yet I durst not, because I heard so much ill of him; but this morning I dreamed I was praying earnestly, and I heard a voice, saying, 'See the eighth verse of the first chapter of St. John.' I waked, and got my Bible and read, 'He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light.' I got up, and came away with all my heart. (WJW3:13)

A Dream Leads To Conviction Of Sin

August 3, 1767. — In the evening I preached at seven, and again at nine. We concluded about twelve. One then came to me with an unexpected message. A gentleman in the west of Scotland was a serious, sensible man, but violently attached both to the doctrine and discipline of the Kirk. His eldest daughter dreamed, some months

since, that she was poisoned, and must die in an hour. She waked in the utmost consternation, which issued in a deep conviction of sin. Soon after she had an earnest desire to see me, though not perceiving any possibility of it. But business calling Mr. H— — to Edinburgh, he brought her with him, three days before I came. On Sunday morning he heard the preaching for the first time, and afterwards omitted no opportunity. He now sent his daughter to beg I would come, if possible, to the west; and to desire that I, or any of our Preachers, would make his house our home. (WJW3:14)

A Child's Healing Is Revealed To Him Through A Dream

May 2, 1768. — I set out early from Aberdeen, and about noon preached in Brechin. After sermon, the Provost desired to see me, and said, "Sir, my son had epileptic fits from his infancy: Dr. Ogylvie prescribed for him many times, and at length told me, he could do no more. I desired Mr. Blair last Monday to speak to you. On Tuesday morning my son said to his mother, he had just been dreaming that his fits were gone, and he was perfectly well. Soon after I gave him the drops you advised: He is perfectly well, and has not had one fit since." (WJW3:14)

A Trapped Man's Wife Appears To Him In A Dream

July 31, 1774. — The church could not contain the congregation, either morning or afternoon; but in the evening I preached to a still larger congregation at Broseley; and equally attentive. I now learned the particulars of a remarkable story, which I had heard imperfectly before: — Some time since, one of the colliers here, coming home at night, dropped into a coal-pit, twenty-four yards deep. He called aloud for help, but none heard all that night, and all the following day. The second night, being weak and faint, he fell asleep, and dreamed that his wife, who had been some time dead, came to him, and greatly comforted him. In the morning, a gentleman going a hunting, an hare started up just before the hounds, ran straight to the mouth of the pit, and was gone; no man could tell how. The hunters searched all round the pit, till they heard a voice from the bottom. They quickly procured proper help, and drew up the man unhurt. (*WJW4:17*)

A Woman Is Healed Of Blindness Through A Dream

April 12, 1784. — I found a lovely congregation at Stockport, much alive to God. So was that at Oldham the next day, which was not perceptibly lessened, though it blew a storm, and poured down with rain. Here a young woman, of unblamable character, (otherwise I should not have given her any credit,) gave me a remarkable account. She said, “I had totally lost the sight of my right eye, when I dreamed one night, that our Savior appeared

to me; that I fell at his feet, and he laid his hand upon my right eye. Immediately I waked, and from that moment have seen as well with that eye as with the other.”
(WJW4:20)

A Dream Shows A Wife How To Help Her Husband Escape Execution

April 19, 1784. — I went on to Ambleside; where, as I was sitting down to supper, I was informed, notice had been given of my preaching, and that the congregation was waiting. I would not disappoint them; but preached immediately on salvation by faith. Among them were a gentleman and his wife, who gave me a remarkable relation. She said she had often heard her mother relate, what an intimate acquaintance had told her, that her husband was concerned in the Rebellion of 1745. He was tried at Carlisle, and found guilty. The evening before he was to die, sitting and musing in her chair, she fell fast asleep. She dreamed, one came to her, and said, “Go to such a part of the wall, and among the loose stones you will find a key, which you must carry to your husband.” She waked; but, thinking it a common dream, paid no attention to it. Presently she fell asleep again, and dreamed the very same dream. She started up, put on her cloak and hat, and went to that part of the wall, and among the loose stones found a key. Having, with some difficulty, procured admission into the gaol, she gave this to her husband. It opened the door of his cell, as well as

the lock of the prison-door. So at midnight he escaped for life. (WJW4:20)

A Dream Foretells The Date Of A Man's Death

November 17, 1772. — One was relating a remarkable story, which I thought worthy to be remembered. Two years ago, a gentleman of large fortune in Kent dreamed that he was walking through the churchyard, and saw a new monument with the following inscription:

**HERE LIES THE BODY OF SAMUEL SAVAGE, ESQ.,
DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON SEPTEMBER — — . 1772;
AGED — — .**

He told his friends in the morning, and was much affected: But the impression soon wore off. But on that day he did depart; and a stone was erected with that very inscription. (WJW3:16)

A Man Ignores The Call Of God In Dreams And Suffers The Price For It

June 12, 1756. — I went to see Ann Beauchamp, who had been ill for about a week...Soon after she called her mother, desired forgiveness for any thing wherein she had ignorantly offended her, and exhorted her not to grieve...She then prayed over her, and, kissing her, took her leave. In the same manner she took leave of all about

her, exhorting, praying for, and kissing them, one by one: Afterward she called for, and took her leave of, her Servants...calling for her husband, she said, "My dear, God has given you many calls, even in dreams: And when we will not hear his call, it is often his way to make us feel his rod by removing our darling from us. I was your darling; and, seeing you refused the many calls of God, he is now taking me away from you, if, by any means, he may bring you to himself."

She then prayed for, and took her leave of him...She never once complained of her pain; but behaved from the beginning with that patience, sweetness, and love to all, that bespoke a soul which knew herself just entering into the joy of her Lord. Thus she died the next morning, August the 20th, after crying out as in ecstasy, — *Bold I approach the' eternal throne, And claim the crown through Christ my own.* (WJW2:10)

The Location Of A Treasure Is Revealed In A Dream

October 31, 1772. — A young man of good sense, and an unblamable character, gave me a strange account of what (he said) had happened to himself, and three other persons in the same house. As I knew they all feared God, I thought the matter deserved a farther examination. So in the afternoon I talked largely with them all. The sum of their account was thus: —

"Near two years ago, Martin S— — and William J— — saw, in a dream, two or three times repeated to

each of them, a person who told them there was a large treasure hid in such a spot three miles from Norwich, consisting of money and plate, buried in a chest, between six and eight feet deep. They did not much regard this, till each of them, when they were broad awake, saw an elderly man and woman standing by their bedside, who told them the same thing, and bade them go and dig it up, between eight and twelve at night. Soon after, they went; but, being afraid, took a third man with them. They began digging at eight, and after they had dug six feet, saw the top of a coffer, or chest. But presently it sunk down into the earth; and there appeared over the place a large globe of bright fire, which, after some time, rose higher and higher, till it was quite out of sight. Not long after, the man and woman appeared again, and said, 'You spoiled all by bringing that man with you.'

From this time, both they and Sarah and Mary J—, who live in the same house with them, have heard, several times in a week, delightful music, for a quarter of an hour at a time. They often hear it before those persons appear; often when they do not appear."

They asked me whether they were good or bad spirits; but I could not resolve them. (*WJW3:16*)

A Woman's Death Foretold In A Dream

May 5, 1757. — I inquired of John Johnson, concerning Miss [Judith] Berresford. The sum of his account was this:

She was always an innocent, sober young woman,

having the form of godliness, till she was convinced of sin, and soon after justified. She was a pattern both of piety and industry. Notwithstanding her fortune and her sickliness, she was never unemployed; when she had no other work, working for the poor. And the whole tenor of her conversation was such, that it is still a common saying, 'If Miss Berresford is not gone to heaven, nobody ever will.'...When her weakness confined her to her room, she rejoiced with joy unspeakable...The more her bodily strength decayed, the more she was strengthened in spirit...As soon as I came to Ashbourn, she sent for me, and broke out, 'I am just at my journey's end...My natural life is almost gone, with the brightness of his presence'...She prayed largely for all states of mankind: But particularly for the prosperity of the church; and for the society at Ashbourn, that God would continue and increase his work among them...After greatly rejoicing in God, for two days more, she said one morning, 'I dreamed last night I heard a voice, *Christ will come today for his bride*. It is for me. He will come for me today.' And a few hours after, without one struggle, or sigh, or groan, she sweetly fell asleep. (WJW2:10)

A Dream Reveals Future Danger

November 17, 1772. — Mrs. B— —, when about fourteen years of age, being at a boarding school, a mile or two from her father's, dreamed she was on the top of the church-steeple, when a man came up, and threw her

down to the roof of the church. Yet she seemed not much hurt, till he came to her again, and threw her to the bottom. She thought she looked hard at him, and said, 'Now you have hurt me sadly, but I shall hurt you worse;' and waked.

A week after, she was to go to her father's. She set out early in the morning. At the entrance of a little wood, she stopped, and doubted whether she should not go round, instead of through it. But, knowing no reason, she went straight through till she came to the other side.

Just as she was going over the style, a man pulled her back by the hair. She immediately knew it was the same man whom she had seen in her dream. She fell on her knees, and begged him, 'For God's sake, do not hurt me any more.'

He put his hands round her neck, and squeezed her so, that she instantly lost her senses. He then stripped her, carried her a little way, and threw her into a ditch.

Meantime, her father's servant coming to the school, and hearing she was gone without him, walked back. Coming to the style, he heard several groans, and looking about, saw many drops of blood. He traced them to the ditch, whence the groans came. He lifted her up, not knowing her at all, as her face was covered with blood, carried her to a neighboring house, and, running to the village, quickly brought a Surgeon. She was just alive; but her throat was much hurt, so that she could not speak at all.

Just then a young man of the village was missing.

Search being made, he was apprehended in an alehouse two miles off. He had all her clothes with him in a bag, which, he said, he found. It was three months before she was able to go abroad. He was arraigned at the Assizes. She knew him perfectly, and swore to the man. He was condemned, and soon after executed. (WJW3:16)

A Cripple Is Healed Through The Advice Of A Dream

Bishop Hall, speaking of the good offices which angels do to God's servants, says, "Of this kind was that marvelous cure which was wrought upon a poor cripple, at St. Madern's in Cornwall; whereof, besides the attestation of many hundreds of the neighbors, I took a strict examination in my last visitation: This man, for sixteen years together, was obliged to walk upon his hands, by reason the sinews of his legs were so contracted. Upon an admonition in his dream, to wash in a certain well, he was suddenly so restored to his limbs that I saw him able to walk and get his own maintenance. The name of this cripple was John Trebble." (WJW11, *An Extraordinary Cure*)

Chapter 10

JOHN WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH DIVINE RETRIBUTION AGAINST HIS ENEMIES

The genuine call of God has always brought with it tribulation. In order to see this all one has to do is look at the lives of the Apostles. Thirteen men, if we include Paul, who each suffered terrible agonies at the hands of the enemies of God. And throughout the ages we find a consistent, repeating pattern of men who chose to accept the call of God, only to find the same intense persecution waiting for them that Peter, Paul and James had to endure. God's anger has always been kindled by those wicked men who stood up against His chosen ambassadors. We remember Pharaoh's devastating loss of his firstborn son after mistreating the children of Israel¹¹⁶, Joash, who murdered Zechariah in the Temple, only to be murdered in his bed while he was suffering from battle wounds¹¹⁷, Jezebel, who murdered the Lord's prophets, and was thrown from a window, then trampled on by horses, finally to have her body eaten by dogs¹¹⁸, and Herod who refused to give God the glory and was smitten, eaten of worms¹¹⁹. It would do us well

¹¹⁶ *Exodus 12:29*

¹¹⁷ *2Chronicles 24:20-25*

¹¹⁸ *2Kings 9:30-37*

¹¹⁹ *Acts 12:21-23*

to also remember the horrible circumstances that many of the Roman emperors who persecuted the Christians had to go through. Nero, that wicked man responsible for the deaths of Peter and Paul, himself choosing to commit suicide as the authorities were coming to lead him to his execution. Decius, who slew so many of God's faithful children, himself slew on the battlefield, his body stripped naked and left for the wild animals to eat. Valerian, captured by the Persians, was forced to act as a stepping stool for the Persian king when he mounted his horse. After his death he was flayed, and his skin, stripped from the flesh, was dyed with vermilion, and placed in a temple. Aurelian, assassinated by his familiar friends. And Diocletian, struck with mental illness and forced to live to see his name defamed throughout the Roman Empire. The Bible tells us that God never changes¹²⁰ so it should come as no surprise that when God's holy servant, John Wesley, took up that charge to preach the gospel, he too suffered at the hands of wicked men, only to see them suffer in the same horrible ways that God's enemies have always suffered.

A Minister Is Struck With A Violent Illness During His Sermon Against John Wesley

August 24, 1743. — I made it my business to inquire concerning the truth of a strange relation which had been

¹²⁰ *Malachi 3:6*

given me; and I found there was no possibility of doubting it. The plain fact was this:

“The Rev. Mr. — ” (I use the words of a gentleman of Bristol, whose manuscript lies by me) “preached at two or three churches, on these words, ‘Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.’¹²¹ After showing the different sorts of Dissenters from the Church of England, who (as he said) had only the form of godliness, he inveighed very much against the novel sect, the upstart Methodists; (as he termed them;) which indeed he was accustomed to do, more or less, in almost all his sermons. ‘These are the men,’ said he, ‘whom St. Paul foretold, who have the form, the outward show of holiness, but not the power; for they are ravening wolves, full of hypocrisy within.’ He then alleged many grievous things against them; but without all color of truth; and warned his flock to turn away from them, and not to bid them God speed, lest they should be partakers of their evil deeds.

“Shortly after he was to preach at St. Nicholas church. He had named the above-mentioned text twice, when he was suddenly seized with a rattling in his throat, attended with an hideous groaning. He fell backward against the door of the pulpit, burst it open, and would have fallen down the stairs, but that some people caught him, and carried him away, as it seemed, dead, into the vestry. In two or three days he recovered

¹²¹ *2Timothy 3:5*

his senses, and the Sunday following died!" (WJW1:5)

An Enemy Struck With Paralysis

June 9, 1752. — I preached at six to abundance of people near Ewood; and with an uncommon blessing. Hence we rode to Todmorden. The Minister was slowly recovering from a violent fit of a palsy, with which he was struck immediately after he had been preaching a virulent sermon against the Methodists. (WJW2:9)

An Enemy Hangs Himself, Another Loses The Power Of Speech

April 12, 1740. — After preaching at Lanvachas in the way, in the afternoon I came to Bristol, and heard the melancholy news, that, one of the chief of those who came to make the disturbance on the 1st instant, had hanged himself. He was cut down, it seems, alive; but died in less than an hour. A second of them had been for some days in strong pain; and had many times sent to desire our prayers. A third came to me himself, and confessed, he was hired that night, and made drunk on purpose; but when he came to the door, he knew not what was the matter, he could not stir, nor open his mouth. (WJW1:4)

An Enemy Loses His Voice

July 3, 1748. — I preached in the Room at five, but at nine, on my usual stand, at the cross. The clouds came just in time (it being a warm, sunshiny morning) to shade me and the congregation: But at the same time both the light and power of the Most High were upon many of their souls. I was quite surprised when I heard Mr. R. preach. That soft, smooth, tuneful voice, which he so often employed to blaspheme the work of God, was lost, without hope of recovery: All means had been tried, but none took place. He now spoke in a manner shocking to hear, and impossible to be heard distinctly by one quarter of the congregation. (WJW2:7)

An Enemy Struck Dead Suddenly

November 14, 1748. — I rode to Windsor, and, after preaching, examined the members of the society. The same I did at Reading in the evening; at Wycombe, on *Tuesday*; and on *Wednesday*, at Brentford. In the afternoon I preached to a little company at Wandsworth, who had just begun to seek God: But they had a rough setting out; the rabble gathering from every side, whenever they met together, throwing dirt and stones, and abusing both men and women in the grossest manner. They complained of this to a neighboring Magistrate, and he promised to do them justice; but Mr. C. walked over to his house, and spoke so much in favor of the rioters, that they were all discharged. It is strange, that a mild, humane man could be persuaded, by speaking quite

contrary to the truth, (means as bad as the end,) to encourage a merciless rabble in outraging the innocent. A few days after, Mr. C., walking over the same field, dropped down, and spoke no more! Surely the mercy of God would not suffer a well meaning man to be any longer a tool to persecutors. (WJW2:7)

An Enemy Goes Insane While Preaching A Sermon Against The Wesleys

July 15, 1744. — I went to Bedlam, at the repeated request of Mr. S —, who had been confined there above two years. This was the person who, while he was speaking against my brother and me to the society at Kingswood, was in a moment struck raving mad. But it seems God is at length entreated for him, and has restored him to a sound mind. (WJW1:6)

An Enemy Struck Dead Before He Can Do More Harm

October 23, 1740. — I was informed of an awful providence. A poor wretch, who was here last week, cursing and blaspheming, and laboring with all his might to hinder the word of God, had afterwards boasted to many, that he would come again on Sunday, and no man should stop his mouth then. But on Friday God laid his hand upon him, and on Sunday he was buried. (WJW1:4)

A Minister Who Preached Against The

Methodists Is Given The Horror Of Seeing Demons

June 15, 1769. — Indeed there has not been hotter persecution of late years any where in the kingdom than here. The mob, encouraged by their superiors, beat and abused whom they pleased, broke open their houses, and did just what they listed. A wretched Clergyman confirmed them therein, and applied to the Methodist Preachers 2Timothy 3:6-7, the very text of that unhappy gentleman at Bristol, which he uttered, and dropped down in the pulpit. After he had painted them as black as devils, he added, "I have not time to finish now; next Sunday I will give you the rest." But the next morning he was struck in a strange manner. He could not bear to be a moment alone. He cried out, "Those hobgoblins; do not you see them? There, there! The room is full of them."

Having continued thus some days, he screamed out, "See that hobgoblin at the bed's feet! O that roll, that roll which he holds up to me! All my sins are written therein!" Not long after, without showing the least sign of hope, he went to his account. (*WJW3:15*)

A Doubter Of The Methodists Turned Over To Injurious Spirits

May 2, 1739. — I did not mention one J— —n H— —n, a weaver, who was at Baldwin-Street the night before. He was (I understood) a man of a regular life and conversation, one that constantly attended the public

prayers and sacrament, and was zealous for the Church, and against Dissenters of every denomination. Being informed that people fell into strange fits at the societies, he came to see and judge for himself. But he was less satisfied than before; in so much that he went about to his acquaintance, one after another, till one in the morning, and labored above measure to convince them it was a delusion of the devil. We were going home, when one met us in the street, and informed us, that J— —n H— —n was fallen raving mad. It seems he had sat down to dinner, but had a mind first to end a sermon he had borrowed on "Salvation by Faith." In reading the last page, he changed color, fell off his chair, and began screaming terribly, and beating himself against the ground. The neighbors were alarmed, and flocked together to the house. Between one and two I came in, and found him on the floor, the room being full of people, whom his wife would have kept without; but he cried aloud, "No; let them all come; let all the world see the just judgment of God."

Two or three men were holding him as well as they could. He immediately fixed his eyes upon me, and, stretching out his hand, cried, "By, this is he, who I said was a deceiver of the people. But God has overtaken me. I said, it was all a delusion; but this is no delusion."

He then roared out, "O thou devil! Thou cursed devil! Yea, thou legion of devils! Thou canst not stay. Christ will cast thee out. I know his work is begun. Tear me to pieces, if thou wilt; but thou canst not hurt me."

He then beat himself against the ground again; his breast heaving at the same time, as in the pangs of death, and great drops of sweat trickling down his face. We all betook ourselves to prayer. His pains ceased, and both his body and soul were set at liberty.

Thence I went to Baptist-Mills, and declared Him whom God “hath exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins.”

Returning to J— —n H— —n, we found his voice was lost, and his body weak as that of an infant. But his soul was in peace, full of love, and “rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.” (WJW1:3)¹²²

The Mouth's Of The Lions Shut

April 2, 1751. — I preached at Darlaston, late a den of lions: But most of the fiercest of them God has called away by a train of amazing strokes; and those that remain are now as lambs. I preached in the evening at Wednesbury; where, notwithstanding the rain, every man, woman, and child, stayed to the end. I gave them all an earnest caution not to lean on broken reeds, on opinions of any kind: And even the Predestinarians received it in love, and told me it was highly seasonable. (WJW2:8)

¹²² Reminiscent of 1Samuel 16:14-23 where King Saul was tormented by an injurious spirit.



On Wesley's second visit to Cork, Ireland, in 1750, violent riots broke out. He went to Bandon to preach, but the Cork mob followed him and hung him in effigy.

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city. Mt 23:34



John Wesley had several brushes with danger but never allowed this to keep him from preaching the Gospel.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. Php 3:8

Chapter 11

JOHN WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH ANGELS



John Wesley Being Protected By An Angel During The Wednesbury Riot

John Wesley's ministry had several encounters with Angels. This shouldn't surprise us. In chapter two we saw how very active Satan's angels were in England during Wesley's time. It would only make sense that God's angels were just as active, probably to an even greater extent.

A Man's Death Is Foretold By An Angel

March 28, 1736. — A servant of Mr. Bradley's sent to desire to speak with me. Going to him, I found a young

man ill, but perfectly sensible. He desired the rest to go out, and then said, "On Thursday night, about eleven, being in bed, but broad awake, I heard one calling aloud, 'Peter! Peter Wright!' and looking up, the room was as light as day, and I saw a man in very bright clothes stand by the bed, who said, 'Prepare yourself, for your end is nigh;' and then immediately all was dark as before." I told him, "The advice was good, whencesoever it came." In a few days he recovered from his illness; his whole temper was changed as well as his life; and so continued to be, till after three or four weeks he relapsed, and died in peace. (*WJW1:1*)

A Devout Woman Has Conversations With An Angel

June 10, 1788. — We went through one of the pleasantest countries I ever saw, to Darlington. Before I left Newcastle, I was desired to read a strange account of a young woman, late of Darlington. But I told the person who brought it, "I can form no judgment till I talk with Margaret Barlow herself."

This morning she came to me, and again in the afternoon; and I asked her abundance of questions. I was soon convinced, that she was not only sincere, but deep in grace; and therefore incapable of deceit. I was convinced, likewise, that she had frequent intercourse with a spirit that appeared in the form of an angel. I know not how to judge of the rest. Her account was: — "For above a year, I have seen this angel, whose face is

exceeding beautiful; her raiment," so she speaks, "white as snow, and glistening like silver; her voice unspeakably soft and musical. She tells me many things before they come to pass. She foretold, I should be ill at such a time, in such a manner, and well at such an hour; and it was so exactly. She has said, such a person shall die at such a time; and he did so. Above two months ago, she told me, your brother was dead; (I did not know you had a brother;) and that he was in heaven. And some time since she told me, you will die in less than a year¹²³. But what she has most earnestly and frequently told me, is, that God will in a short time be avenged of obstinate sinners, and will destroy them with fire from heaven."

Whether this will be so or no, I cannot tell; but when we were alone, there was a wonderful power in her words; and, as the Indian said to David Brainerd, "They did good to my heart."

It is above a year since this girl was first visited in this manner, being then between fourteen and fifteen years old. But she was then quite a womanish girl, and of unblamable behavior. Suppose that which appeared to her was really an angel; yet from the face, the voice, and the apparel, she might easily mistake him for a female; and this mistake is of little consequence. Much good has already resulted from this odd event; and is likely to ensue; provided those who believe, and those who disbelieve, her report, have but patience with each other.

¹²³ Wesley died *three* years later.

(WJW4:21)

An Angelic Being Leads A Man To Repentance

August 1, 1767. — Before I left Glasgow I heard so strange an account, that I desired to hear it from the person himself. He was a sexton, and yet for many years had little troubled himself about religion. I set down his words, and leave every man to form his own judgment upon them: —

“Sixteen weeks ago, I was walking, an hour before sunset, behind the high-kirk; and, looking on one side, I saw one close to me, who looked in my face, and asked me how I did.

I answered, ‘Pretty well.’

He said ‘You have had many troubles; but how have you improved them?’

He then told me all that ever I did; yea, and the thoughts that had been in my heart; adding, ‘Be ready for my second coming;’

And he was gone I knew not how. I trembled all over, and had no strength in me; but sunk down to the ground. From that time I groaned continually under the load of sin, till at the Lord’s Supper it was all taken away.” (WJW3:14)

John Wesley himself had his own supernatural encounter with angelic protection when he was attacked by a mob in Wednesbury. After hearing an account of

what happened it seemed so miraculous that his brother Charles exclaimed, “in their hands the angels bore him up” and that “Hand which struck the men of Sodom and the Syrians blind¹²⁴ withheld or turned them aside” from hurting John.¹²⁵ It is a lengthy account, however I have decided to include Wesley’s full narrative of the event in order to give a clear picture of what happened.

John Wesley Delivered From Danger By Angels

October 20, 1743. — After preaching, to a small, attentive congregation, I rode to Wednesbury. At twelve I preached in a ground near the middle of the town, to a far larger congregation than was expected, on, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.”¹²⁶ I believe every one present felt the power of God; and no creature offered to molest us, either going or coming; but the Lord fought for us, and we holden our peace.

I was writing at Francis Ward’s, in the afternoon, when the cry arose, that the mob had beset the house. We prayed that God would disperse them; and it was so: One went this way, and another that; so that, in half an hour, not a man was left. I took our brethren, “Now is the time for us to go;” but they pressed me exceedingly to stay.

So, that I might not offend them, I sat down,

¹²⁴ *Genesis 19:11, 2Kings 6:18*

¹²⁵ *The Journal Of Charles Wesley, entry for October 25, 1743*

¹²⁶ *Hebrews 13:8*

though I foresaw what would follow. Before five the mob surrounded the house again, in greater numbers than ever. The cry of one and all was, "Bring out the Minister; we will have the Minister."

I desired one to take their captain by the hand, and bring him into the house. After a few sentences interchanged between us, the lion was become a lamb. I desired him to go and bring one or two more of the most angry of his companions. He brought in two, who were ready to swallow the ground with rage; but in two minutes they were as calm as he. I then bade them make way, that I might go out among the people.

As soon as I was in the midst of them, I called for a chair; and, standing up, asked, "What do any of you want with me?"

Some said, "We want you to go with us to the Justice."

I replied, "That I will, with all my heart."

I then spoke a few words, which God applied; so that they cried out, with might and main, "The gentleman is an honest gentleman, and we will spill our blood in his defense."

I asked, "Shall we go to the Justice tonight, or in the morning?"

Most of them cried, "Tonight, tonight;" on which I went before, and two or three hundred followed; the rest returning whence they came.

The night came on before we had walked a mile, together with heavy rain. However, on we went to

Bentley-Hall, two miles from Wednesbury. One or two ran before, to tell Mr. Lane they had brought Mr. Wesley before his Worship. Mr. Lane replied, "What have I to do with Mr. Wesley? Go and carry him back again."

By this time the main body came up, and began knocking at the door. A servant told them Mr. Lane was in bed. His son followed, and asked what was the matter.

One replied, "Why, an't please you, they sing psalms all day; nay, and make folks rise at five in the morning. And what would your Worship advise us to do?"

"To go home," said Mr. Lane, "and be quiet."

Here they were at a full stop, till one advised, to go to Justice Persehouse, at Walsal. All agreed to this; so we hastened on, and about seven came to his house. But Mr. P— — likewise sent word, that he was in bed. Now they were at a stand again; but at last they all thought it the wisest course, to make the best of their way home. About fifty of them undertook to convoy me. But we had not gone a hundred yards, when the mob of Walsal came, pouring in like a flood, and bore down all before them. The Darlaston mob made what defense they could; but they were weary, as well as outnumbered: So that in a short time, many being knocked down, the rest ran away, and left me in their hands.

To attempt speaking was vain, for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea. So they dragged me along till we came to the town; where seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in; but a

man, catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the mob. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other. I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain or weariness.

At the west end of the town, seeing a door half open, I made toward it, and would have gone in; but a gentleman in the shop would not suffer me, saying, they would pull the house down to the ground. However, I stood at the door, and asked, "Are you willing to hear me speak?"

Many cried out, "No, no I knock his brains out; down with him; kill him at once."

Others said, "Nay, but we will hear him first."

I began asking, "What evil have I done? Which of you all have I wronged in word or deed?" And continued speaking for above a quarter of an hour, till my voice suddenly failed: Then the floods began to lift up their voice again; many crying out, "Bring him away! Bring him away!"

In the mean time my strength and my voice returned, and I broke out aloud into prayer. And now the man who just before headed the mob, turned, and said, "Sir, I will spend my life for you: Follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head."

Two or three of his fellows confirmed his words, all got close to me immediately. At the same time, the gentleman in the shop cried out, "For shame, for shame! Let him go."

An honest butcher, who was a little farther off, said, it was a shame they should do thus; and pulled back four or five, one after another, who were running on the most fiercely. The people then, as if it had been by common consent, fell back to the right and left; while those three or four men took me between them, and carried me through them all. But on the bridge the mob rallied again: We therefore went on one side, over the milldam, and thence through the meadows; till, a little before ten, God brought me safe to Wednesbury; having lost only one flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands.

I never saw such a chain of providences before; so many convincing proofs, that the hand of God is on every person and thing, over-ruling all as it seemeth him good. The poor woman of Darlaston, who had headed that mob, and sworn, that none should touch me, when she saw her followers give way, ran into the thickest of the throng, and knocked down three or four men, one after another. But many assaulting her at once, she was soon overpowered, and had probably been killed in a few minutes, (three men keeping her down and beating her with all their might,) had not a man called to one of them, "Hold, Tom, hold!"

"Who is there?" said Tom: "What, honest Munchin? Nay, then, let her go."

So they holden their hand, and let her get up and crawl home as well as she could.

From the beginning to the end I found the same

presence of mind, as if I had been sitting in my own study. But I took no thought for one moment before another; only once it came into my mind, that if they should throw me into the river, it would spoil the papers that were in my pocket. For myself, I did not doubt but I should swim across, having but a thin coat, and a light pair of boots.

The circumstances that follow, I thought, were particularly remarkable:

1. That many endeavored to throw me down while we were going, down-hill on a slippery path to the town; as well judging, that if I was once on the ground, I should hardly rise any more. But I made no stumble at all, nor the least slip till I was entirely out of their hands.

2. That although many strove to lay hold on my collar or clothes, to pull me down, they could not fasten at all: Only one got fast hold of the flap of my waistcoat, which was soon left in his hand; the other flap, in the pocket of which was a bank note, was torn but half off:

3. That a lusty man just behind, struck at me several times, with a large oaken stick; with which if he had struck me once on the back part of my head, it would have saved him all farther trouble. But every time the blow was turned aside, I know not how; for I could not move to the right hand or left.

4. That another came rushing through the press, and raising his arm to strike, on a sudden let it drop, and only stroked my head, saying, "What soft hair he has!"

5. That I stopped exactly at the Mayor's door, as if I had

known it, (which the mob doubtless thought I did,) and found him standing in the shop, which gave the first check to the madness of the people.

6. That the very first men whose hearts were turned were the heroes of the town, the captains of the rabble on all occasions, one of them having been a prize-fighter at the bear-garden.

7. That, from first to last, I heard none give a reviling word, or call me by any opprobrious name whatever; but the cry of one and all was, "The Preacher! The Preacher! The Parson! The Minister."

8. That no creature, at least within my hearing, laid any thing to my charge, either true or false; having in the hurry quite forgot to provide themselves with an accusation of any kind. And, Lastly, That they were as utterly at a loss, what they should do with me; none proposing any determinate thing; only, "Away with him! Kill him at once!"

By how gentle degrees does God prepare us for his will! Two years ago a piece of brick grazed my shoulders. It was a year after that the stone struck me between the eyes. Last month I received one blow, and this evening two; one before we came into the town, and one after we were gone out; but both were as nothing: For though one man struck me on the breast with all his might, and the other on the mouth with such a force that the blood gushed out immediately, I felt no more pain from either of the blows, than if they had touched me with a straw.

It ought not to be forgotten, that when the rest of the society made all haste to escape for their lives, four only would not stir, William Sitch, Edward Slater, John Griffiths, and Joan Parks; these kept with me, resolving to live or die together; and none of them received one blow, but William Sitch, who holden me by the arm, from one end of the town to the other. He was then dragged away, and knocked down; but he soon rose and got to me again. I afterwards asked him, what he expected when the mob came upon us. He said, "To die for Him who had died for us:" And he felt no hurry or fear: but calmly waited till God should require his soul of him.

I asked J. Parks, if she was not afraid, when they tore her from me. She said, "No; no more than I am now I could trust God for you, as well as for myself. From the beginning I had a full persuasion that God would deliver you. I knew not how; but I left that to him, and was as sure as if it were already done."

I asked, if the report was true, that she had fought for me. She said, "No; I knew God would fight for his children."

And shall these souls perish at the last?

When I came back to Francis Ward's, I found many of our brethren waiting upon God. Many also whom I never had seen before, came to rejoice with us. And the next morning, as I rode through the town in my way to Nottingham, every one I met expressed such a cordial affection, that I could scarce believe what I saw

and heard. (WJW1:5)

Wesley also recorded a few other instances of divine protection which he ascribed to angels.

A Man Saved From Burning By An Angel

Notwithstanding the nights he sat up, he made it a rule never to sleep as long as he could possibly keep awake. For this purpose he always took a candle and look to bed with him; but one night, being overcome with sleep before he had put out the candle, he dreamed his curtains, pillow, and cap were on fire, without doing him any harm. And so it was: In the morning, part of his curtains, pillow, and cap were burned; but not an hair of his head was singed. So did God give his angels charge over him! (WJW7, Sermon 133:3:12 on Psalm 37:37)

Caught By The Hands Of An Angel

August 13, 1779. — As I was going down a steep pair of stairs, my foot slipped, and I fell down several steps. Falling on the edge of one of them, it broke the case of an Almanack, which was in my pocket, all to pieces. The edge of another stair met my right buckle, and snapped the steel chape of it in two; but I was not hurt. So doth our good Master give his angels charge over us! (WJW4:19)

An Angelic Rescue

June 20, 1774. — About nine I set out for Horsley, with Mr. Hopper and Mr. Smith. I took Mrs. Smith and her two little girls, in the chaise with me. About two miles from the town just on the brow of the hill, on a sudden both the horses set out, without any visible cause, and flew down the hill, like an arrow out of a bow. In a minute John fell off the coach-box. The horses then went on full speed, sometimes to the edge of the ditch on the right, sometimes on the left. A cart came up against them: They avoided it as exactly as if the man had been on the box. A narrow bridge was at the foot of the hill. They went directly over the middle of it. They ran up the next hill with the same speed; many persons meeting us, but getting out of the way. Near the top of the hill was a gate, which led into a farmer's yard. It stood open. They turned short, and run through it, without touching the gate on one side, or the post on the other. I thought, "However, the gate which is on the other side of the yard, and is shut, will stop them." But they rushed through it as if it had been a cobweb, and galloped on through the corn-field.

The little girls cried out, "Grandpapa, save us!"

I told them, " Nothing will hurt you: Do not be afraid;" feeling no more fear or care, (blessed be God!) than if I had been sitting in my study. The horses ran on, till they came to the edge of a steep precipice. Just then Mr. Smith, who could not overtake us before, galloped in

between. They stopped in a moment. Had they gone on ever so little, he and we must have gone down together!

I am persuaded both evil and good angels had a large share in this transaction: How large we do not know now; but we shall know hereafter. I think some of the most remarkable circumstances were,

1. Both the horses, which were tame and quiet as could be, starting out in a moment just at the top of the hill, and running down full speed.
2. The coachman's being thrown on his head with such violence, and yet not hurt at all.
3. The chaise running again and again to the edge of each ditch, and yet not into it.
4. The avoiding the cart.
5. The keeping just the middle of the bridge.
6. The turning short through the first gate, in a manner that no coachman in England could have turned them, when in full gallop.
7. The going through the second gate as if it had been but smoke, without slackening their pace at all. This would have been impossible, had not the end of the chariotpole struck exactly on the center of the gate; whence the whole, by the sudden impetuous shock, was broke into small pieces.
8. That the little girl, who used to have fits, on my saying, "Nothing will hurt you," ceased crying, and was quite composed.

Lastly, That Mr. Smith struck in just then: In a minute more we had been down the precipice; and had

not the horses then stopped at once, they must have carried him and us down together. "Let those give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed, and delivered from the hand of the enemy!"¹²⁷ (WJW4:17)

Held In The Arms Of An Angel

January 28, 1748. — I commended them to the grace of God, and set out for Deverel Long-Bridge. About ten o'clock we were met by a loaded wagon, in a deep, hollow way. There was a narrow path between the road and the bank; I stepped into this, and John Trembath followed me. When the wagon came near, my horse began to rear, and to attempt climbing up the bank. This frightened the horse which was close behind, and made him prance and throw his head to and fro, till the bit of the bridle caught hold of the cape of my great coat, and pulled me backward off my horse. I fell as exact on the path, between the wagon and the bank, as if one had taken me in his arms and laid me down there. Both our horses stood stock still, one just behind me, the other before; so, by the blessing of God, I rose unhurt, mounted again, and rode on. (WJW2:7)

Angelic Protection From Criminals

August 28, 1748. — At one I went to the Cross in Bolton.

¹²⁷ *Psalm 107:1-2*

There was a vast number of people, but many of them utterly wild. As soon as I began speaking, they began thrusting to and fro; endeavoring to throw me down from the steps on which I stood. They did so once or twice; but I went up again, and continued my discourse. They then began to throw stones; at the same time some got upon the Cross behind me to push me down; on which I could not but observe, how God overrules even the minutest circumstances. One man was bawling just at my ear, when a stone struck him on the cheek, and he was still. A second was forcing his way down to me, till another stone hit him on the forehead: It bounded back, the blood ran down, and he came no farther. The third, being got close to me, stretched out his hand, and in the instant a sharp stone came upon the joints of his fingers. He shook his hand, and was very quiet till I concluded my discourse and went away. (WJW2:7)

December 17, 1777. — Just at this time there was a combination among many of the post-chaise drivers on the Bath road, especially those that drove in the night, to deliver their passengers into each other's hands. One driver stopped at the spot they had appointed, where another waited to attack the chaise. In consequence of this, many were robbed; but I had a good Protector still. I have traveled all roads, by day and by night, for these forty years, and never was interrupted yet. (WJW4:18)

Chapter 12

JOHN WESLEY'S EXPERIENCE WITH SUPERNATURAL ANSWERS TO PRAYER

The entire ministry of John Wesley could best be described as one of prayer, and were it not for prayer you would not have just finished reading about his many exorcisms, miraculous healings, unusual manifestations of the Holy Spirit, persons being slain in the Spirit, and supernatural angelic protection. However, there were a few miraculous answers to prayer that really didn't fit in any of the other sections. Yet, I felt that they did deserve a mention, so, I have decided to include them here in their own section.

Prayer Changes The Weather

July 23, 1750. — The wind shifting to the south, and blowing hard, in the afternoon the Captain seemed under some concern. There was all reason to expect a stormy night; and he despaired of getting into the Bristol Channel; and knew the danger of beating about, when it was pitch dark, among these rocks and sands. It was much on my mind, "They cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distress."¹²⁸ I knew not why we should not cry to Him as well as they.

¹²⁸ *Psalm 107:6*

Immediately the wind came fair, and blew so fresh, that in less than two hours we came into the Bristol Channel.

But the danger was not over. About eleven I was waked by a huge, confused noise, and found we were in a vehement squall of wind, thunder, and rain, which brought the sailors to their wit's end; they could not see across the ship, only just while the lightning was glaring in their eyes. This made them fear running foul, either of the Welsh sands on the one hand, or the rocky shore of Lundy on the other. So they took in the sails, and let us drive. The motion then was wonderful. It blew a storm; and, the wind being contrary to the tide, the sea ran mountain-high. The ship had no goods, and little ballast on board; so that it rolled as if it would overset every moment. It was intensely dark, and neither the Captain nor any man else knew where we were; only that we were tossing in a bad, narrow channel, full of shoals, and rocks, and sands. But does not God hear the prayer? Mr. Hopper and I believed it our duty to make the trial again; and in a very few moments the wind was small, the sea fell, and the clouds dispersed; so we put up a little sail, and went on quietly and slowly, till the morning dawned. About nine in the evening we reached the Pill, where I took horse, and rode on to Bristol. (WJW2:8)¹²⁹

¹²⁹ A realization of the promise in James 5:17-18: *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

Prayer Helps Put Out A Fire

November 13, 1774. — After a day of much labor, at my usual time, (half-hour past nine,) I lay down to rest. I told my servants, “I must rise at three, the Norwich coach setting out at four.” Hearing one of them knock, though sooner than I expected, I rose and dressed myself; but afterwards, looking at my watch, I found it was but half-hour past ten. While I was considering what to do, I heard a confused sound of many voices below; and looking out at the window towards the yard, I saw it was as light as day. Meantime, many large flakes of fire were continually flying about the house; all the upper part of which was built of wood, which was near as dry as tinder. A large deal-yard, at a very small distance from us, was all in a light fire; from which the northwest wind drove the flames directly upon the Foundery; and there was no probability of help, for no water could be found. Perceiving I could be of no use, I took my Diary and my papers, and retired to a friend’s house. I had no fear; committing the matter into God’s hands, and knowing He would do whatever was best. Immediately the wind turned about from northwest to southeast; and our pump supplied the engines with abundance of water; so that in a little more than two hours, all the danger was over. (WJW4:17)

Chapter 13

JOHN WESLEY'S INTERPRETATION OF THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

In order to understand Wesley's interpretation of the baptism with the Holy Spirit one needs to understand a little about Anglican theology. Wesley, his whole life, was an Anglican and Anglicans trace the point of one's salvation (i.e. the receiving of the Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins) to one's baptism¹³⁰. That being said, let us look at John Wesley's baptismal theology.

For Wesley, baptism was the outward sign of that

¹³⁰ Indeed, this is the correct interpretation of baptism. A case in point can be drawn from Colossians 2:11-12 where we read, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." The aorist tense puts the burial as contemporaneous with the circumcision. Ye were circumcised when ye were buried (*Word Studies In The New Testament, Vol. 3, note on Col. 2:12, Marvin Vincent, D.D.*). Hence, the Amplified Bible translates this passage as, "In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, but in a [spiritual] circumcision [performed by] Christ by stripping off the body of the flesh (the whole corrupt, carnal nature with its passions and lusts). [Thus you were circumcised when] you were buried with Him in [your] baptism, in which you were also raised with Him [to a new life] through [your] faith in the working of God [as displayed] when He raised Him up from the dead."

heart change which occurred at regeneration:

The terms of being *regenerated*, of being *born again*, of being *born of God*...always express an inward work of the Spirit, whereof baptism is the outward sign.¹³¹

They are two different things (baptism and regeneration) but linked together:

Baptism is a sacrament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water, to be a sign and seal of regeneration by his Spirit. Here it is manifest, baptism, the sign, is spoken of as distinct from regeneration, the thing signified.¹³²

Baptism is the *means* to receiving regeneration.

By water then, as a means, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again; whence it is also called by the Apostle, “the washing of regeneration.”¹³³...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit - Except he experience that great inward change by the Spirit, and be baptized (wherever baptism can be had) as the outward

¹³¹ WJW9, *A Letter To The Rev. Mr. Potter, Sec. 3, dated November 4-7, 1758*

¹³² WJW6, *Sermon 45 on John 3:7, The New Birth, Sec. 4:1*

¹³³ WJW10, *A Treatise On Baptism, 2:4*

sign and means of it¹³⁴...Be baptized, and wash away thy sins - Baptism administered to real penitents, is both a means and seal of pardon. Nor did God ordinarily in the primitive Church bestow this on any, unless through this means...¹³⁵

However, it is not the agent of regeneration, the grace of God through the work of the Holy Spirit is the agent.

It is the outward sign of that inward and spiritual grace; but no part of it at all. It is impossible it should be. The outward sign is no more a part of the inward grace than the body is a part of the soul.¹³⁶

Thus, "By baptism we are admitted into the Church, and consequently made members of Christ, its Head. The Jews were admitted into the Church by circumcision, so are the Christians by baptism. For "as many as are baptized into Christ," in his name, "have" thereby "put on Christ;" (Galatians 3:27;) that is, are mystically united to Christ, and made one with him. For "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body," (1Corinthians 12:13) namely, the Church, "the body of

¹³⁴ Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Bible for John 3:5

¹³⁵ Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Bible for Acts 22:16

¹³⁶ WJW9, A Letter To The Rev. Mr. Potter, Sec. 4, dated November 4-7, 1758

Christ.” (Ephesians 4:12) From which spiritual, vital union with him, proceeds the influence of his grace on those that are baptized¹³⁷ ...By baptism, we who were “by nature children of wrath” are made the children of God.¹³⁸”

It is in this sense that we read from Wesley’s journal entry on February 5, 1760, that “I baptized a gentlewoman at the Foundery; and the peace she immediately found was a fresh proof, that the outward sign, duly received, is always accompanied with the inward grace.”¹³⁹

This being said, it is now needful to point out that John Wesley equated the *baptism with the Holy Spirit* with regeneration and as occurring at baptism.

That we “must be baptized with the Holy Ghost,” implies this and no more, that we cannot be “renewed in righteousness and true holiness” any otherwise than by being overshadowed, quickened, and animated by that blessed Spirit.¹⁴⁰

For Wesley, all Christians had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. In commenting upon Acts 1:5¹⁴¹ Wesley

¹³⁷ WJW10, *A Treatise On Baptism*, 2:3

¹³⁸ WJW10, *A Treatise On Baptism*, 2:4

¹³⁹ WJW2:11

¹⁴⁰ WJW9, *An Extract of A Letter To The Reverend Mr. Law*, 2:4

¹⁴¹ For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

wrote, “*Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost — And so are all true believers to the end of the world.*”¹⁴² and in another place, he appealed to “men of reason and religion” to “believe, and be ‘baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.’ Are you still a stranger to that inward baptism wherewith all true believers are baptized?”¹⁴³

And finally on this point, when explaining 1Corinthians 12:13¹⁴⁴ Wesley had this to say about the baptism with the Holy Spirit:

For by that one Spirit, which we received in baptism, we are all united in one body. Whether Jews or gentiles...Whether slaves or freemen...¹⁴⁵

That being shown, we must now ask did Wesley expect any type of supernatural sign, particularly the gift of tongues, to accompany the baptism of the Holy Spirit? The answer is no. In commenting upon Jesus’ words in Acts 2:38¹⁴⁶, he wrote “*Repent — And hereby return to God: be baptized — Believing in the name of Jesus — And ye*

¹⁴² Wesley’s Explanatory Notes on the Bible for Acts 1:5

¹⁴³ A Farther Appeal To Men Of Reason And Religion, Part 2, Sec. 3:4

¹⁴⁴ For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

¹⁴⁵ Wesley’s Explanatory Notes on the Bible for 1Corinthians 12:13

¹⁴⁶ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

*shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost...*The gift of the Holy Ghost does not mean in this place the power of speaking with tongues. For the promise of [being able to do] this was not given to all that were afar off, in distant ages and nations."¹⁴⁷

The Scriptures mention several instances of person's being filled with the Spirit¹⁴⁸ and in one of those instances those that were filled "began to speak with other tongues"¹⁴⁹. To completely clarify Wesley's position on this issue we must ask now did Wesley teach that being "filled with the Spirit" enabled one to speak in tongues? Again, the answer is no.

But it is needful to observe this, that, even in the infancy of the Church, God divided them (miracles) with a sparing hand. Were all even then Prophets? Were all workers of miracles? Had all the gifts of healing? Did all speak with tongues? No, in no wise. Perhaps not one in a thousand. Probably none but the Teachers in the Church, and only some of them. (1Corinthians 12:28-30) It was, therefore, for a more excellent purpose than this, that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Bible for Acts 2:38

¹⁴⁸ Luke 1:15, 1:41, 1:67, Acts 4:8, 4:31, 13:9

¹⁴⁹ Acts 2:4

¹⁵⁰ WJW5, Sermon 4 on Acts 4:31: Scriptural Christianity, Preface, Sec. 3

That purpose “was, to give them...the mind which was in Christ, those holy fruits of the Spirit which whosoever hath not, is none of his...¹⁵¹”

¹⁵¹ WJW5, *Sermon 4 on Acts 4:31: Scriptural Christianity, Preface, Sec. 4*

Chapter 14

JOHN WESLEY'S OPINION ON "MIRACLES"

From the preceding chapters it is very clear that John Wesley experienced miracles during his 53 years of ministry. But the question before us now is what were his opinions on these experiences. The answers may surprise you.

We have already noted how that John Wesley was very vocal in that he did believe God worked miracles in his day. In a letter to a critic of his ministry's miracles Wesley wrote, "I do not recollect any scripture wherein we are taught that miracles were to be confined within the limits either of the apostolic or the Cyprianic age; or of any period of time, longer or shorter, even till the restitution of all things. I have not observed, either in the Old Testament or the New, any intimation at all of this kind."¹⁵² Elsewhere he noted that, "I have seen...very many persons changed in a moment from the spirit of fear, horror, despair, to the spirit of love, joy, and peace; and from sinful desire, till then reigning over them, to a pure desire of doing the will of God...I know several persons in whom this great change was wrought in a dream, or during a strong representation to the eye of their mind, of Christ either on the cross, or in glory. This is the fact...These are my living arguments for what I

¹⁵² WJW8, *The Principles Of A Methodist Farther Explained*, 5:5

assert, viz., ‘That God does now, as aforetime, give remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, even to us and to our children; yea, and that always suddenly, as far as I have known, and often in dreams or in the visions of God.’...For these things I *do*, and by his grace *will*, testify [to].”¹⁵³

For Wesley, any person possessing true saving faith could experience these miracles:

It was not one faith by which St. Paul was saved, another by which he wrought miracles. Even at this day in every believer faith has a latent miraculous power; (every effect of prayer being really miraculous;) although in many, both because of their own littleness of faith, and because the world is unworthy, that power is not exerted. Miracles, in the beginning, were helps to faith; now also they are the object of it.¹⁵⁴

And Wesley urged that we needed to be careful not to ignore or discredit them:

Perhaps the danger is, to regard them (miracles) too little, to condemn them altogether; to imagine they had nothing of God in them, and were an hindrance to his work.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ WJW1:3, May 20, 1739

¹⁵⁴ Wesley’s *Explanatory Notes on the Bible for Mark 16:17*

¹⁵⁵ WJW2:11, November 25, 1759

However, with Wesley, as with all Bible believing Christians, love always was and always will be the greatest miraculous experience that one can possess:

But, in the meantime, I bless God that there is a more excellent gift than either the knowledge of languages or philosophy. For tongues, and knowledge, and learning, will vanish away; but love never fails¹⁵⁶...Another ground of these, and a thousand mistakes, is, the not considering deeply, that love is the highest gift of God; humble, gentle, patient love; that all visions, revelations, manifestations whatever, are little things compared to love; and that all the gifts above-mentioned are either the same with, or infinitely inferior to, it."¹⁵⁷

When Wesley was pressed by his skeptics as to why God had worked so many miracles through his ministry he concluded that it was because so many people's heart's had been hardened towards the truth of an instantaneous new birth that God had to work "signs and wonders".

¹⁵⁶ WJW9, *A Letter To The Reverend Mr. Downes, Occasioned By His Late Tract Entitled "Methodism Examined And Exposed", Sec. 15, dated November 17, 1759*

¹⁵⁷ WJW11, *A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection, Question 33*

Perhaps it might be because of the hardness of our hearts, unready to receive any thing unless we see it with our eyes and hear it with our ears, that God, in tender condescension to our weakness, suffered so many outward signs of the very time when he wrought this inward change to be continually seen and heard among us. But although they saw “signs and wonders,” (for so I must term them,) yet many would not believe. They could not indeed *deny* the facts; but they could *explain* them away. Some said, “These were purely natural effects; the people fainted away only because of the heat and closeness of the rooms.” And others were “sure it was all a cheat: They might help it if they would.”¹⁵⁸

Despite experiencing all of these “signs and wonders” Wesley did not go around claiming to have supernatural, apostle-like gifts.

Do I lay claim to almost every one of these [supernatural gifts] ‘in as full and ample a manner as they were possessed of old?’ Five of them are enumerated in the former catalogue; to three of which — speaking with new tongues, taking up serpents, drinking deadly things — it is not even pretended I lay any claim at all...Do I lay claim to

¹⁵⁸ WJW1:3, May 20, 1739

any one of them? To prove that I do, my own words are produced, extracted from an account of the occurrences of [a span of] about sixteen years...I know not what these eight quotations prove, but...Certainly they do not prove that I lay claim to any of the preceding gifts. Let us see whether any more is proved by the ten next quotations...Neither do any of those quotations prove that I lay claim to any miraculous gift¹⁵⁹...I do not pretend to any extraordinary measure of the Spirit. I pretend to no other measure of it than may be claimed by every Christian Minister.¹⁶⁰

And even though it may have seemed natural for him to do so, Wesley really didn't believe that God was often making His will known via the miraculous.

I mean, by visions or dreams, by strong impressions or sudden impulses on the mind. I do not deny, that God has, of old times, manifested his will in this manner; or, that he can do so now: Nay, I believe he does, in some very rare instances.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ WJW9, *A Letter To The Lord Bishop Of Gloucester, Occasioned By His Tract "On The Office And Operations Of The Holy Spirit"*, Sec. 1:2

¹⁶⁰ WJW9, *A Letter To The Lord Bishop Of Gloucester, Occasioned By His Tract "On The Office And Operations Of The Holy Spirit"*, Sec. 1:1

¹⁶¹ WJW5, *Sermon 37 on Acts 26:24, The Nature Of Enthusiasm*, Sec. 21

Wesley was aware that, "It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries [after Jesus]. We seldom hear of them after...From this time they almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found,"¹⁶² and he gave four reasons for this.

The first was dead, love-less orthodoxy.

The cause of this was not, (as has been vulgarly supposed,) "because there was no more occasion for them," because all the world was become Christians. This is a miserable mistake; not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christian. The real cause was, "the love of many," almost of all Christians, so called, was "waxed cold." The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other heathens. The Son of Man, when he came to examine his Church, could hardly "find faith upon earth." This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left.¹⁶³

¹⁶² WJW7, Sermon 89 on 1Corinthians 12:31, *The More Excellent Way*, Preface, Sec. 2

¹⁶³ WJW7, Sermon 89 on 1Corinthians 12:31, *The More Excellent Way*, Preface, Sec. 2

And the remaining four were related to it, namely, loss of faith and holiness along with a refusal to believe in and ridiculing of these operations of the Holy Spirit.

That the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn, was not only that faith and holiness were well-nigh lost; but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture.¹⁶⁴

Despite being such an ardent supporter of the miraculous in his day, Wesley was also very discerning, realizing that the “miraculous” comes from three places: God, the human emotional system, and Satan.

On the human side religious revivals usually seem to attract emotionalism. Wesley recognized this, remarking that, “In some of these instances, after a time, [human] nature mixed with grace.”¹⁶⁵ And it was this type of fleshy emotionalism that Wesley was concerned about. “Several drop down as dead” he said “and are as stiff as a corpse; but in a while they start up, and cry, “Glory! glory!” perhaps twenty times together. Just so do the French Prophets, and very lately the Jumpers in Wales, bring the real work into contempt.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ WJW2:8, August 15, 1750

¹⁶⁵ WJW2:11, November 25, 1759

¹⁶⁶ WJW4:20, April 3, 1786

Yet, when it came to dealing with emotional people Wesley urged that we should never be harsh with them. “Whenever we reprove them” he said, “it should be in the most mild and gentle manner possible.”¹⁶⁷

However, gentleness does not mean a lack of firmness, such as the case when a Methodist congregation in London began to go extremely off track with supposed miraculous revelations and experiences.

Four or five years since, a few persons were appointed to meet weekly at the Foundery. When I left London, I left these under Mr. M.’s care, desiring them to regard him just as they did me.

Not long after I was gone, some of these had dreams, visions, or impressions, as they thought, from God. Mr. M. did not put a stop to these; rather he encouraged them.

When I returned, I opposed them with my might, and in a short time heard no more of them. Meanwhile I defended and commended Mr. M., as before; and when I left the town again, left them again under his care.

Presently visions and revelations returned: Mr. M. did not discourage them. Herewith was now joined a contempt of such as had them not, with a belief that they were proofs of the highest grace.

Some of our Preachers opposed them roughly.

¹⁶⁷ *WJW4:20, April 3, 1786*

At this they took fire, and refused to hear them preach, but crowded after Mr. M. He took no pains to quench the fire, but rather availed himself of it to disunite them from other Preachers, and attach them to himself. He likewise continually told them they were not to be taught by man, especially by those who had less grace than themselves. I was told of this likewise from time to time: But he denied it; and I would not believe evil of my friend.

When I returned in October, 1763, I found the society in an uproar, and several of Mr. M.'s most intimate friends formed into a detached body. Enthusiasm, pride, and great uncharitableness appeared in many who once had much grace. I very tenderly reprov'd them. They would not bear it; one of them, Mrs. C., cried out, 'We will not be brow-beaten any longer; we will throw off the mask.' Accordingly, a few days after, she came, and, before an hundred persons, brought me hers and her husband's tickets, and said, 'Sir, we will have no more to do with you; Mr. M. is our Teacher.' Soon after, several more left the society, (one of whom was George Bell,) saying, 'Blind John [Wesley] is not capable of teaching us; we will keep to Mr. M.'

From the time that I heard of George Bell's prophecy, I explicitly declared against it both in private, in the society, in preaching, over and over;

and, at length, in the public papers. Mr. M. made no such declaration; I have reason to think he believed it. I know many of his friends did, and several of them sat up the last of February, at the house of his most intimate friend, Mr. Biggs, in full expectation of the accomplishment.

About this time, one of our Stewards, who, at my desire, took the chapel in Snowsfields for my use, sent me word the chapel was his, and Mr. Bell should exhort there, whether I would or no. Upon this, I desired the next Preacher there to inform the congregation that while things stood thus, neither I nor our Preachers could in conscience preach there any more.

Nevertheless, Mr. M. did preach there. On this I sent him a note, desiring him not to do it; and adding, 'If you do, you thereby renounce connection with me.'

Receiving this, he said, 'I *will* preach at Snowsfields.' He did so, and thereby renounced connection. On this point and no other, we divided: By this act the knot was cut. Resolving to do this, he told Mr. Clementson, 'I am to preach at the Foundery no more.'

From this time he has spoke all manner of evil of me, his father, his friend, his greatest earthly benefactor. I cite Mr. F—r for one witness of this, and Mr. M—n for another. Did he speak evil of me to Mr. F— one day only? Nay, but

every day for six weeks together. To Mr. M— —n he said, (among a thousand other things, which he had been twenty years raking together,) ‘Mr. W. believed and countenanced all which Mr. Bell said; and the reason of my parting was this: He said to me one day, Tommy, I will tell the people you are the greatest Gospel Preacher in England; and you shall tell them I am the greatest. For refusing to do this, Mr. W. put me away!’

Now, with perfect calmness, and, I verily think, without the least touch of prejudice, I refer it to your own judgment, what connection I ought to have with Mr. M., either till I am satisfied these things are not so, or till he is thoroughly sensible of his fault.¹⁶⁸

Anyone who knows their Bible knows all too well that Satan masquerades as an “angel of light”¹⁶⁹ spreading out his hands to work “signs and lying wonders”¹⁷⁰ with the hopes that he “shall deceive the very elect”¹⁷¹. Wesley knew this too, and in his estimation one of the chief reasons that Satan did this in his day was to bring disrepute and discredit to the legitimate miracles of the Holy Spirit:

¹⁶⁸ *WJW3:13, April 23, 1763*

¹⁶⁹ *2Corinthians 11:14*

¹⁷⁰ *2Thessalonians 2:9*

¹⁷¹ *Matthew 24:24*

“Satan likewise mimicked this work of God, in order to discredit the whole work¹⁷²...Although the outward symptoms were the same, yet in [the revival at] Weardale there were none of the dreams, visions, and revelations, which abounded at [the revival in] Everton; and which, though at first they undoubtedly were from God, yet were afterwards fatally counterfeited by the devil, to the great discredit of the work of God.”¹⁷³

Yet, despite the undeniable reality that there were counterfeit and emotional “miracles” Wesley did not see this as a reason to abandon a belief in or acceptance of miracles completely.

Let us even suppose that in some few cases there was a mixture of dissimulation; that persons pretended to see or feel what they did not, and imitated the cries or convulsive motions of those who were really overpowered by the Spirit of God: Yet even this should not make us either deny or undervalue the real work of the Spirit. The shadow is no disparagement of the substance, nor the counterfeit of the real diamond. We may further suppose, that Satan will make these visions an occasion of pride: But what can be inferred

¹⁷² WJW2:11, November 25, 1759

¹⁷³ WJW3:16, June 5, 1772, in some editions this entry may be listed under June 4th.

from hence? Nothing, but that we should guard against it; that we should diligently exhort all to be little in their own eyes, knowing that nothing avails with God but humble love. But still, to slight or censure visions in general, would be both irrational and unchristian.¹⁷⁴

Ironically, people tend to fall into either one of two camps when it comes to the miraculous. They will either “regard extraordinary circumstances too much, such as outcries, convulsions, visions, trances; as if these were essential to the inward work, so that it could not go on without them.”¹⁷⁵ Or, they will “regard them too little, to condemn them altogether; to imagine they had nothing of God in them, and were an hindrance to his work.”¹⁷⁶ Persons will conclude that “none can possibly have true faith but those that have trances or visions”¹⁷⁷ or that “whoever had any thing of this kind had no faith [at all].”¹⁷⁸ For Wesley, both of these mindsets were *dangerous*.

When it came to miracles Wesley felt it best to stay on the side of caution, but not too far on that side. Too far would lead us to abandon a belief in modern day miracles completely. Not far enough would lead us into

¹⁷⁴ WJW2:11, November 25, 1759

¹⁷⁵ WJW2:11, November 25, 1759

¹⁷⁶ WJW2:11, November 25, 1759

¹⁷⁷ WJW3:12, January 3, 1762

¹⁷⁸ WJW3:12, January 3, 1762

the errors spawned by emotionalism and counterfeits. What then did Wesley prescribe in order to stay healthy and balanced when it came to miracles?

When it came to miracles Wesley was careful to caution that we are “Not to establish the power of *working miracles* as the great criterion of a divine mission; when Scripture teaches us that the agreement of doctrines with truth, as taught in those Scriptures, is the only infallible rule.”¹⁷⁹

In other words the preaching of the Bible’s truths were what was paramount. Despite countless miracles, if one did not preach truth, those miracles were of little avail.

This is seen very clearly in the sermon that Wesley preached at the Fish-Ponds on June 22, 1739.

I told them, they were not to judge of the spirit whereby any one spoke, either by; appearances, or by common report, or by their own inward feelings: No, nor by any dreams, visions, or revelations, supposed to be made to their souls; any more than by their tears, or any involuntary effects wrought upon their bodies. I warned them, all these were, in themselves, of a doubtful, disputable, nature; they might be from God, and they might not; and were therefore not simply to be relied on, (any more than simply to be

¹⁷⁹ WJW1:3, July 31, 1739

condemned,) but to be tried by a farther rule, to be brought to the only certain test, the Law and the Testimony.¹⁸⁰

In our day many think that they need to seek God's will through some sort of a sign or miracle. But Wesley rejected this because this attitude can lead to deception.

Trust not in visions or dreams; in sudden impressions, or strong impulses of any kind. Remember, it is not by these you are to know what is the will of God on any particular occasion; but by applying the plain scripture rule, with the help of experience and reason, and the ordinary assistance of the Spirit of God.¹⁸¹

For those who expected miraculous "signs and wonders" to be their earthly guides Wesley warned that these in and of themselves can be very misleading:

To this kind of enthusiasm they are peculiarly exposed, who expect to be directed of God, either in spiritual things or in common life, in what is justly called an *extraordinary* manner: I mean, by visions or dreams, by strong impressions or

¹⁸⁰ WJW1:3

¹⁸¹ WJW5, *Sermon 37 on Acts 26:24, The Nature Of Enthusiasm, Sec. 38*

sudden impulses on the mind. I do not deny, that God has, of old times, manifested his will in this manner; or, that he can do so now...But how frequently do men mistake herein! How are they misled by pride, and a warm imagination, to ascribe such impulses or impressions, dreams or visions, to God, as are utterly unworthy of him! Now this is all pure enthusiasm.¹⁸²

On August 2, 1745 John, his brother Charles and several other persons met together to go over the minutes of the last Conference. When the question was proposed, “Do we not discourage visions and dreams too much, as if we condemned them *toto genere*¹⁸³?” the representatives of Methodism agreed that, “We do not intend to do this. We neither discourage nor encourage them...we cannot deny that saving faith is often given in dreams or visions of the night; which faith we account neither better nor worse, than if it came by any other means.”¹⁸⁴

When it came to dreams Wesley again cautioned people saying that “we know the origin of dreams, and that with some degree of Certainty....some of them arise from the present constitution of the body; while others of them are probably occasioned by the passions of the mind...some are caused by the operation of good angels;

¹⁸² WJW5, *Sermon 37 on Acts 26:24, The Nature Of Enthusiasm, Sec. 21*

¹⁸³ Latin for “Completely”

¹⁸⁴ WJW8, *Minutes Of Some Late Conversations, Conversation 2, Friday, August 2, 1745, Question 16*

as others, undoubtedly, are owing to the power and malice of evil angels...on some extraordinary occasions, the great Father of spirits has manifested himself to human spirits, 'in dreams and visions of the night.' But which of all these arise from natural, which from supernatural, influence, we are many times not able to determine."¹⁸⁵

In an even simpler form he warned, "We know there are divine dreams and impressions. But how easily may you be deceived herein! How easily, where something is from God, may we mix something which is from nature! especially if we have a lively imagination, and are not aware of any danger."¹⁸⁶

And therefore, he encouraged his listeners to "not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions, or revelations to be from God. They may be from him. They may be from nature. They may be from the devil. Therefore, 'believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God.' Try all things by the written word, and let all bow down before it. You are in danger of enthusiasm every hour, if you depart ever so little from Scripture."¹⁸⁷

Wesley himself, when comparing the emotional revival at Everton with the more calm one in Weardale came to the conclusion that the maturity of the leaders played a part in controlling the emotional reactions of the

¹⁸⁵ WJW7, *Sermon 121 on Psalm 73:20, Human Life A Dream, Sec. 4*

¹⁸⁶ WJW12, *Letter Number 223 To Mrs. R., dated June 28, 1766*

¹⁸⁷ WJW11, *A Plain Account Of Christian Perfection, Question 33*

people.

Although the outward symptoms were the same, yet in [the revival at] Weardale there were none of the dreams, visions, and revelations, which abounded at [the revival in] Everton; and which, though at first they undoubtedly were from God, yet were afterwards fatally counterfeited by the devil, to the great discredit of the work of God¹⁸⁸...There was a great difference in the instruments, whom God employed in one and in the other work. Not one of those in or near Everton had my experience in the guiding of souls. None of them were more than “babes in Christ,”¹⁸⁹ if any of them so much. Whereas in Weardale, not only the three Preachers were, I believe, renewed in love, but most of the Leaders were deeply experienced in the work of God, accustomed to train up souls in his way, and not ignorant of Satan’s devices. And hence we may easily account for the grand difference between the former and the latter work; namely, that the one was so shallow, there scarce being any subjects rising above an infant state of grace; the other so deep, many, both men, women, and children, being what St. John terms “young

¹⁸⁸ WJW3:16, June 5, 1772, in some editions this entry may be listed under June 4th.

¹⁸⁹ 1Corinthians 3:1

men”¹⁹⁰ in Christ. Yea, many children here have had far deeper experience, and more constant fellowship with God, than the oldest man or woman at Everton which I have seen or heard of. So that, upon the whole, we may affirm, such a work of God as this has not been seen before in the three kingdoms.¹⁹¹

When it came to legitimate miracles Wesley maintained that there was an underlying criteria that could be used to distinguish between authentic and false miraculous occurrences. First, if “God suddenly and strongly convinced many that they were lost sinners; the natural consequence whereof were sudden outcries and strong bodily convulsions”¹⁹² then the miracle fits into the category of a genuine move of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, Wesley noticed that sometimes miracles were given “to strengthen and encourage them that believed, and to make his work more apparent.”¹⁹³ Thus, if believers were strengthened in their faith or received encouragement from the experience, this also puts it into a more trustworthy category.

For Wesley it was all about the change in a person’s life. Miracle or no miracle, the changed heart

¹⁹⁰ 1John 2:13-14

¹⁹¹ WJW3:16, June 5, 1772, in some editions this entry may be listed under June 4th.

¹⁹² WJW2:11, November 25, 1759

¹⁹³ WJW2:11, November 25, 1759

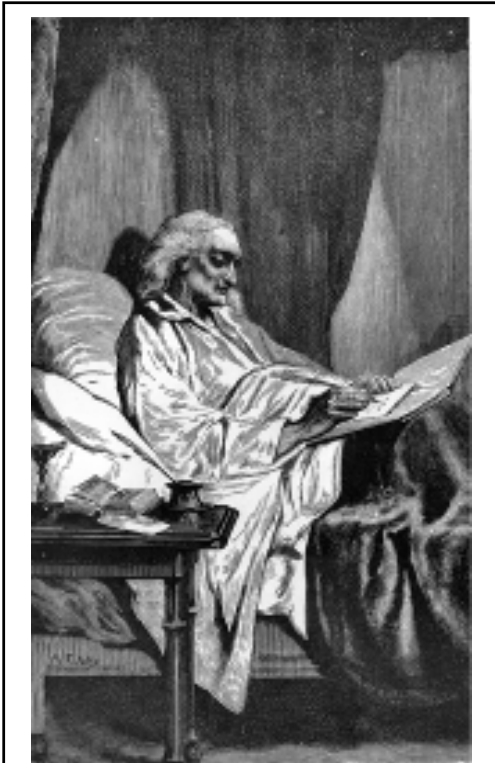
was what really mattered. And this change was evidenced, not by miracles but by a transformation from darkness to light, sin to righteousness.

And that such a change was then wrought, appears (not from their shedding tears only, or falling into fits, or crying out: These are not the fruits, as you seem to suppose, whereby I judge, but) from the whole tenor of their life, till then, many ways wicked; from that time, holy, just, and good.¹⁹⁴

This is the greatest miracle a human being can experience.

¹⁹⁴ WJW1:3, *May 20, 1739*

CONCLUSION



**John Wesley On
His Deathbed**

I compiled this book with the hopes that it would wake up many in the church who were overlooking the spiritual aspects of the ministry. Gone are the days of prayer, fasting, and faith in God for a mighty move of His Holy Spirit. While much ministry is being done the world over and much of it in the name of John Wesley, we have forgotten his ways and teachings and have begun to focus on doing ministry in our own strength. We are

very quick to explain away the operations of the devil and content to sit back with no real conviction flowing out of our ministries. We believe God *can* move in a mighty way in our services and outreach attempts but we don't *expect* Him to. And until we accept once again, that God wants to move among us, giving us power even over the devils, but that He will only move among us so much as we ask and trust that He will, we will never see real victory for God in the world.

Most of my life has been spent in churches who traced their heritage back to John Wesley. But the ministries of those churches never seemed even close to the ministry of the early Methodists. Making matters worse, as time has passed I have watched conditions deteriorate further and further within these denominations.

I once asked myself why are things so different today? What was different then than today? And I soon realized that even though we were ministering in Wesley's name, we weren't ministering in the same spirit as he. Wesley himself was a man of great prayer. Where are our prayer meetings? Wesley was a man dedicated to fasting. When was the last time we fasted?

In his advice to all Christians Wesley wrote, "We believe that not only the babes in Christ, who have newly found redemption in his blood, but those also who are grown up unto perfect men, unto 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,'¹⁹⁵ are indispensably obliged, (and that they are obliged thereto is their glory and crown of rejoicing)...by fasting, as well as temperance, to keep their bodies under, and bring them into subjection; and, above all, to pour out their souls in prayer, both secretly, and in the great congregation."¹⁹⁶

When it came to prayer Wesley said, "Pray in private or public, as much as you can"¹⁹⁷ and "Wherever

¹⁹⁵ *Ephesians 4:13*

¹⁹⁶ *WJW8, The Principles Of A Methodist, 12:2*

¹⁹⁷ *WJW12, Letter 352 To Mrs. Crosby, dated March 18, 1769*

men are, there prayer should be.”¹⁹⁸

On the matter of fasting he wrote, “Do you know the obligation of the benefit of fasting? How often do you practice it? The neglect of this is sufficient to account for our feebleness and faintness of spirit. We are continually grieving the Holy Spirit of God by the habitual neglect of plain duty! Let us amend from this hour.”¹⁹⁹ Wesley expressed that, “a Christian ought to...often abstain from food”²⁰⁰ and that when it came to “observing the fasts of the Church; the general neglect of which [by others] we can by no means apprehend to be a lawful excuse for [ourselves] neglecting them.”²⁰¹

The conditions in John Wesley’s time were similar to ours. Church attendance was not what it should be and neither were morals and faith. There was a great need for someone to come onto the scene bringing with them the power of God but, at the same time, there seemed like there was no hope of this. Ungodly men and women had succeeded in their plan to ruin society. But God had a different plan. He took a simple man who sensed this spiritual need and commissioned him to be the herald of a new age and a brighter future, of which we are benefactors.

¹⁹⁸ Wesley’s Explanatory Notes on the Bible for 1Timothy 2:8

¹⁹⁹ WJW8, Minutes Of Several Conversations Between The Rev. Mr. Wesley And Others, Question 34

²⁰⁰ WJW5, Sermon 27 on Matthew 6:16, Upon Our Lord’s Sermon On The Mount, Sec. 3:1

²⁰¹ WJW1:1, Introductory Letter dated October 18, 1732

If we are to ever see real changes in our immoral, corrupt society we must have a similar spirit to the one of that simple man who fasted and prayed. John Wesley's secret to ministry success (and yours too) was his faith in God strengthened by fasting and prayer. This fasting and prayer empowered him as an instrument of the Holy Spirit who, as I mentioned before, moved him to preach up to five times a day, despite slander and physical and verbal persecution. No matter what came his way, Wesley would not give up because he knew that without someone taking a stand there was no hope for his generation. Today, we need men and women who will take their stand for this hopeless generation. May we have that same simple spirit that John Wesley had and use it like him to move the world in a mighty way for Jesus once again.

*"I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out."*²⁰²

²⁰² WJW13, *Thoughts Upon Methodism, Sec. 1, dated August 4, 1786*