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For my parents, Margaret & Gary Koch

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Abbreviations

Archival Collections

AAS	American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts
AFSt/H	Hauptarchiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen, Halle (Saale), Germany
AFSt/M	Missionsarchiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen, Halle (Saale), Germany
HSP	The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
LAC	Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
LCP	Library Company of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Stab/F	Francke-Nachlaß der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin
VHS	Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

Publications

JMB, *Letters*	Boltzius, Johann Martin. *The Letters of Johann Martin Boltzius: Lutheran Pastor in Ebenezer, Georgia*. Edited and translated by Russell Kleckley in collaboration with Jürgen Gröschl. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009.
Urlsperger, *DR*	Urlsperger, Samuel, ed. *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants who Settled in America*, trans. and ed. George Fenwick Jones, et. al. 17 vols. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1968-1995. (Footnotes include volume number and year of publication.)

People

GAF	Gotthilf August Francke
JMB	Johann Martin Boltzius
ICG	Israel Christian Gronau

Introduction

This is a story about sickness, medicine, and benevolence in eighteenth-century America and the Atlantic world. It is about the physical realities of suffering and the ways in which Protestants attempted to interpret this suffering, both in terms of God's sovereignty—or providence—and the human responsibility and freedom to respond. And it is about the persistence of this providential thought, even at the cusp of modern medicine and in a secularizing world.

Providence can sound complicated and far removed from everyday life, but Christian individuals or communities dealing with sickness and disorder confront the question of providence on a very immediate level. Where does suffering come from and what does it mean? Was it sent by God? And, if so, what can humans do to ease pain and promote recovery? How can they live out God's plan and intention, and at what point do they risk interfering with God's plan?

These are heady questions, and in the eighteenth century they concerned the foremost philosophers of the age. They were considered and discussed in formal, published tracts. But they were also questions asked in the intimate quarters of the sickroom, and in the pastoral and private writings of individuals who suffered pain and loss and who rejoiced in efforts toward recovery.

To understand the place of providential thought in the modern world, we must linger over these personal and often tragic accounts of suffering. The view of providence forged in response to sickness shaped Protestants' actions and responses to broader social changes, including some of the most important developments of the eighteenth century: transformations in medicine, missionary enterprises, benevolence, and slavery.

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Christians have long understood providence to refer to God's oversight and governance of the created order. Providence is a doctrine that transcends Christian divisions. During the Reformation, theologians emphasized anew the role of God's grace in human salvation, and this intensified early modern Protestants' attention to God's providential direction over the details of their individual and social lives. They sought to discern God's hand in human history, in their faith, and in their suffering. To perceive God's providential direction over the chaos of human affairs is to find consolation, meaning, and purpose.[1]

By the eighteenth century, however, Protestants lived in a time of great change in understandings of providence. In the wake of the mechanistic philosophies of Isaac Newton and René Descartes, God came to be seen as more distant, human suffering was seen as a problem to be solved, and humans' ability to interact with and to alter nature and society was viewed more positively. Some people came to think of God as more hands-off—as, famously, a clockmaker who set the world in motion or as a judge who ruled at the end of time.[2]

Even in the midst of these changes, many Protestants remained committed to a God much more active and involved in the created order. This is the God of "special" or

[1] For extensive definitions and discussion of providence, see Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8-12.

[2] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*: *The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 266-272; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 248; Louis Dupré, *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 243-257; David Fergusson, "Divine Providence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*, ed. Nicholas Adams, George Pattison, and Graham Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 656-658; Richard Rosengarten, *Henry Fielding and the Narration of Providence: Divine Design and the Incursions of Evil* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 22-23.

"particular" providence. This God not only responded to sin with wrath and rewarded repentance with mercy, but also encouraged humans to witness God's providence through their faithful response to sickness, engagement in medicine, actions to alleviate suffering, and efforts to build God's kingdom through conversion and care. Providence persisted, in part, because it encouraged some of the newest, most forward-looking aspirations of the eighteenth century.

This human responsiveness, engagement, and action in response to sickness and suffering are often missed by scholars of medicine. They tend to ignore or dismiss eighteenth-century Christian men and women—and their writings on sickness and medicine—as anti-scientific, archaically reliant on the spiritual, or fatalist.[3] But these women and men lived in a world where the religious and medical were tightly interwoven. Religious devotion and the pursuit of human knowledge and improvement went hand-in-hand. Longstanding Christian conceptions of the soul affected how men and women viewed and treated the sick human body, both spiritually and medically. Medicine was a central means for Protestants to pursue missionary goals. The stories of Christian women and men are part of the history of medicine.[4]

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[3] This is especially found in the debates over John Wesley's medical work. See G.S. Rousseau, "John Wesley's *Primitive Physic* (1747)," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 16 (1968): 242-256; J. W. Haas, "John Wesley's View on Science and Christianity: An Examination of the Charge of Antiscience," *Church History* 63 (1994), 378-392; John C. English, "John Wesley and Isaac Newton's 'System of the World," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 48 (1991): 69-86; Deborah Madden, '*A Cheap, Safe, and Natural Medicine': Religion, Medicine, and Culture in John Wesley's Primitive Physic*, Clio Medica 83 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), 109-125. But it is also evident in other places as well. See, for example, Anne Hunsaker Hawkins, *Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993), 2-3, 27. Hawkins argues that eighteenth-century sources are fundamentally different from contemporary narratives of sickness, in which the "physical replaces the spiritual as the central concern."

[4] A recent study of medicine among the Cherokee in early America offers an excellent example of the importance of considering sickness and medicine alongside religious beliefs and practices. See Paul Kelton, *Cherokee Medicine, Colonial Germs: An Indigenous Nation's Fight against Smallpox, 1518-1824* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

To be clear, providence is not the same as predestination, which is a common misconception. Both relate to the governance of God over creation, but predestination is a theological doctrine focused specifically on salvation. Predestination has to do with whether God has chosen to elect a human to salvation from the moment of creation; that is, God elects—or chooses—some humans to be saved from the beginning. This election is entirely a matter of God's decree. It is unconditional: once God has decided, neither human will nor effort can affect a person's chance of salvation.[5] Predestination is a very important doctrine within Calvinism, and perhaps for that reason, providence is often mistakenly seen as a purely Calvinist worldview.

For scholars of religion and medicine of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, three additional and important misunderstandings are related to this mistaken identification of providence and Calvinist predestination.[6] First, because studies of early American religion have long been focused on New England Puritans—who were theologically Calvinist—many assume that the dominant theology of eighteenth-century America was Calvinism and, therefore, mistakenly associate any early American discussion of providence with Calvinist predestination. In contrast, Alexandra Walsham's detailed study of providentialism in early modern England shows that providential faith was quite widespread, shaping a "collective Protestant consciousness"

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[5] For more on the topic of predestination in the American context, see Peter Thuesen, *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Thuesen defines predestination and providence on pages 2-3.

[6] Particularly since Keith Thomas's influential work, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, this misconception has caused scholars to limit providentialism to early English Puritanism. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971). For an example of the enduring legacy of Thomas's work, see Andrew Wear, "Puritan perceptions of illness in seventeenth century England," in *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 55-99, particularly pages 59-60, where Wear writes: "it has to be remembered that this highly providentialist vision was relatively short-lived and limited mainly to Puritans, and many diaries were written by Puritan ministers who would naturally think in this way."

in an era and place marked by confessional and social divisions. She describes providentialism as "a set of ideological spectacles through which individuals of all social levels and from all positions on the confessional spectrum were apt to view their universe, an invisible prism which helped them to focus the refractory meanings of both petty and perplexing events."[7]

Even more than early modern England, eighteenth-century America was a religiously diverse place, with Christian communities spanning a wide spectrum of theological commitments. There were non-Christians in early America, as well, but most colonists were Christian. Focusing on providential thought is a way to highlight the unity amongst the diversity of Christians—particularly Protestants—in early America. Providence was crucial not only to New England Puritans and their successors, the Congregationalists, but also to Methodists, Presbyterians, and German-speaking Lutheran Pietists, among others. Though few historians study different eighteenth-century Protestant communities together, especially not English- and German-speaking Protestants, Protestants read common works and corresponded, and providence was a part of their conversation.

The second significant misunderstanding caused by identifying providence with predestination is that scholars often associate providential faith with fatalism or passivity. Because predestination is a doctrine of salvation in which humans have no ability to change an outcome predetermined by God, scholars mistakenly assume that faith in providence likewise meant humans were passive in their everyday lives,

[7] Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 2-3.

including in response to sickness and suffering.[8] Nineteenth-century novelists and health reformers played a significant role in creating this illusion about colonial Americans' faith in providence. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, Hester Prynne's meek paramour, responded anxiously to her plea to escape: "I have no other thought than to drag on my earthly existence in the sphere where Providence hath placed me."[9] Dimmesdale, with his helpless plea to providence, personified Hawthorne's negative assessment of the Calvinism of his Puritan forebears.

Nineteenth-century health reformers and homeopathic practitioners, meanwhile, presented their approach to health as a shift from the "fatalist" Calvinism of the past to a more active, positive Arminian faith. Arminianism—a theology most often associated with Methodism—distinguished itself from Calvinism by stressing human freedom in the pursuit of salvation.[10] Nineteenth-century health reformers suggested that this Arminian focus on human initiative in salvation paralleled the need for human effort in

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[8] This scholarly misconception is most apparent in literature concerning the eighteenth-century development of and debate over smallpox inoculation, which has been the main focus of the study of religion and medicine in this era. See, for example, Ernst B. Gilman *Plague Writing in Early Modern England*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 247; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 343; Maxine Van de Wetering, "A Reconsideration of the Inoculation Controversy," *The New England Quarterly* 58 (1985), 59, 66.

[9] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850; New York: Modern Library Edition, 2000), 181. Hawthorne's negative assessment of Calvinism was shared by other nineteenth-century authors, including Catharine Maria Sedgwick and Harriet Beecher Stowe. See Sedgwick's *A New-England Tale* (1822) or Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

[10] Arminianism takes its name from Jacobus Arminius (1559-1609), a Dutch Reformed theologian. Arminius's views on predestination and the heated debates they sparked remind us of the diversity of opinion on predestination, human freedom, and providence within the Calvinist tradition. See Carl Bangs, "Arminius, Jacobus," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillebrand (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195064933.001.0001/acref-9780195064933-e-0061.

the pursuit of physical health.[11] But this parallel relies on a false premise: Calvinist predestination does not limit human freedom outside matters of salvation. The image of early Americans resigning passively to disease and suffering is, in many ways, a product of the nineteenth century.[12]

Protestants were active in their response to suffering. In the very effort to understand God's providence in their everyday lives, Protestant men and women were engaged in the significant and active work of interpretation. They sought to comprehend their past and present experiences and actions in terms of God's will and the proper human response. Their involvement in medicine was one example of such a response. Some have suggested that medical activity represented a decline from religious orthodoxy—that it was a sign of secularization—but eighteenth-century Protestants perceived their medical efforts to be a part of God's providential plan for human history.[13]

Protestants did sometimes worry about interfering with God's providence when faced with an innovation. Smallpox inoculation, for example, was a development that

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[11] There is even a phrase for this parallel, "physical Arminianism," which was first used by James Whorton. See Heather Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860-1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 61-62.

[12] For Calvin's writing on human knowledge of science and medicine as a natural gift from God, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* the *Institutes*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 270-277. The relevant sections are in Book 2, Chapter 2, Sections 12-17.

[13] See, for example, Anita Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment: The Life and Times of George Cheyne* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 99, 105. Studies of the Boston smallpox inoculation controversy are particularly good examples of declension or secularization narratives; see Van De Wetering, "A Reconsideration of the Inoculation Controversy," 46-67; Robert Tindol, "Getting the Pox off All Their Houses: Cotton Mather and the Rhetoric of Puritan Science," *Early American Literature* 46 (2011), 1; Margot Minardi, "The Boston Inoculation Controversy of 1721-1722: An Incident in the History of Race," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61 (2004), 49; Miller, *The New England Mind*, 345-366. Miller argues that William Cooper, the author of one pro-inoculation tract, did not realize "that he had refashioned Calvinism into an activism more Pelagian than any seventeenth-century Arminianism had ever dreamed of" (ibid., 365-366).

sparked intense debate. Yet because providence was defined so much by human reflection on past experiences and outcomes, the concept was flexible enough to allow for Protestants' involvement in some of the major developments of the eighteenth century. Change need not signal decline in religious communities; religion—and the doctrine of providence is a particularly good example of this—can be dynamic, responding to changes in the broader society while maintaining its ability to orient believers in times of suffering.[14]

Protestants' interpretation of providence depended, above all, on retrospection. Retrospection was an activity that occurred, most straightforwardly, in narrative. But the habit of retrospectively reflecting on providence also shaped Protestants' actions and decisions in realms apart from writing, including medicine, benevolence, missions, and politics.

Retrospection was a crucial tool for contemplating providence. God's will and grace were beyond human reason to know, but Protestants nonetheless thought they could glimpse evidence of God's providence in their lives by reflecting on the past. Looking back on a past sickness offered some clarity about the experience. Protestants could consider their suffering, actions, and the outcome, and—although they could not fully discern God's will—they could begin to fathom God's judgment, mercy, and intent. At the same time, such reflection on the past was a way to contemplate right interpretation and action in the present and future. When faced with sickness and

[14] Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 50-52. Fergusson offers an interesting account of providence in modernity, arguing that providence's encounter with Deism did not make it disappear but rather caused its "refraction" in the secular world. He focuses on the "discourse of providence" in imperial expansion and market economies. Fergusson, "Divine Providence," 655-673.

suffering, Protestants tried to discern God's providential direction by considering how their circumstances and current actions might be perceived in retrospect.[15]

This method for contemplating providence through retrospective narrative is exemplified in a well-known tract by August Hermann Francke. Francke was the founder of a cluster of charitable institutions—including an orphanage, school, and hospital—in Halle, Germany, in the late-seventeenth century. He wrote about this work in a narrative, which was translated into English as *An Abstract of the Marvellous Footsteps of Divine Providence* in 1706. This narrative was influential among English-speaking Protestants on both sides of the Atlantic, including the New England Puritan Cotton Mather and the itinerating Anglican revivalist George Whitefield.[16]

Francke's account is a retrospective reflection on God's providence over his efforts to house, educate, and care for the orphaned and needy—to help the suffering social body. The "footsteps" of Francke's title help illuminate how retrospection worked both to confirm God's providence and to further human action on behalf of God's providence. Footsteps were, in one sense, the traces left behind. They were visible in retrospect, evidencing God's care to provide and guide in times of need and despair.

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[15] W. Clark Gilpin, preface to *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to That Which Is to Come* and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, by John Bunyan (New York: Vintage, 2004), ix-xvi; Rosengarten, *Henry Fielding and the Narration of Providence*, 2-4.

[16] August Hermann Francke, *An Abstract of the Marvellous Footsteps of Divine Providence. In the Building of a very large Hospital, or rather, a Spacious College, For Charitable and Excellent Use in the Maintaining of many Orphans and other Poor People therein.* (London: Downing, 1706); for the original German text, see August Hermann Francke, *Segens-volle Fußstapfen des noch lebenden und waltenden liebreichen und getreuen Gottes* (Halle: in Verlegung des Wäysen-Hauses, 1709). It was first published in 1701 and was likely translated into English by Anton Böhme, who was the Lutheran court chaplain in London at this time, and who translated many of the Pietist writings into English. On Böhme, see Arno Sames, *Anton Wilhelm Böhme (1673-1722): Studien zum Ökumenischen Denken und Handeln eines Halleschen Pietisten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 19-22. On his translation work and the transmission of Halle Pietist texts into English, see Peter James Yoder, "Rendered 'Odious' as Pietists: Anton Wilhelm Böhme's Conception of Pietism and the Possibilities of Prototype Theory," in *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, ed. Christian T. Collins-Winn, Christopher Gehrz, G. William Carlson and Eric Holst (Cambridge: James Clark & Co., 2011), 17-28.

Even if such care was not immediately obvious in the midst of distress, by looking back and reflecting, Christians found evidence of God's constant superintendence over human affairs. But footsteps could also be followed, pointing to a future direction and course in life. The practice of enumerating God's providences in past events served to foster and strengthen faith moving forward. In his preface to Francke's account, the minister Josiah Woodward argued that the narrative revealed "*such a Glorious* Train *of surprizing* Providences" that it was "*enough to* strengthen *a very* weak Faith*, and to* enliven *a Heart almost* dead *in Despondency*." As Francke's account went on to detail, hearts were enlivened to work in the world, to educate, to provide medicine, and to convert sinners.[17]

If we are to understand how eighteenth-century Christians conceived of human freedom in response to suffering and in relation to God, we must avoid nineteenth-century caricatures and return to the voices of eighteenth-century people themselves. They testify that fervent faith in providence did not demand the rejection of medical treatment or resignation to suffering—at either the individual or social level—but, rather, providence prompted Christians' engagement and response.

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Christian activity and providential faith were joined in the eighteenth century. Those who believed in providence were not passive; they responded to sickness and suffering by reflecting, writing, engaging medicine, volunteering, and evangelizing. Some of these activities were shaped by developments in science, economics, and political thought, but that does not mean they were telltale signs of secularization.

[17] Francke refers to such providential occurrences throughout the account. Francke, *An Abstract of the Marvellous Footsteps of Divine Providence*, see especially 4-5, 24-25, 27, 32-36; Woodward's words appear on pages 2 and 3 of the preface, which is not paginated.

Secularization has been defined in relation to several shifts in the early modern and modern world. One shift is described as "institutional differentiation," that is, the separation of social institutions—including government and economics—from the religious sphere. This kind of secularization occurred in early America, when, for example, individual colonies and, later, states developed governments that not only promoted religious toleration but also eventually disestablished religion and repealed religious oaths for holding office. Another shift associated with secularization is "deinstitutionalization," which refers to declining membership and participation in religious communities. Deinstitutionalization is a contested aspect of secularization theses. Membership in religious communities is not always easy to gauge, and, furthermore, even as some religious communities show declines in membership, other forms of religion and spirituality have been and are flourishing in the United States.[18]

It is "disenchantment," the final component of secularization theses, that is of central concern for arguments about providence. Disenchantment refers to a process of "rationalization," in which "religious categories and interpretations are replaced by scientific ones," and in which religious practice is no longer focused on religious categories but on ethics.[19]

Scholars have relied on a story of disenchantment when narrating the shifts in religion, medicine, and benevolence in the eighteenth century. Modernity brought with it a seismic rift, the story goes, and the fault line ran through providence. Rather than focus on the otherworldly significance of their experiences, humans began to focus on

[18] I am following the discussion of secularization theses offered in Martin Riesebrodt, *Promise of Salvation: A Theory of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 175-178.

[19] Riesebrodt, *Promise of Salvation*, 178.

this world. They turned to science and reason instead of seeking an answer in God's direction. They turned to medical practitioners instead of pastors. They turned to private charities and reform societies instead of churches. They sought to work actively to improve human life—to find "happiness"—instead of to try passively to understand and please God.[20]

The transformation of providential thought in the eighteenth century has been crucial to this tale of disenchantment and of the transition to our modern, secular world. Scholars have shown how in the age of Enlightenment, particularly among Deists, God's providence ceased to be the center around which humans oriented their actions and became, instead, a more general providence of creation or final judgment. But there is a problem with this tale, and this problem becomes evident when we reach beyond elite sources—to the narratives of sickness, medicine, and benevolence that were shared and shaped by society more broadly. Throughout the eighteenth century, the majority of Americans continued to write with constant and central appeals to God's providential direction and the ability of faithful humans to witness this providence in their lives and actions.

These sources challenge our existing narratives of religion, medicine, and benevolence in the eighteenth century and force us to reconsider how early Americans held together new optimism about human reason, medicine, and benevolence with longstanding Christian commitments to repentance, faith, and salvation. This reassessment is critical as we try to understand better the processes of secularization in our modern world. Few scholars question the ways in which secularization has occurred

[20] See, for example, Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 219-225; Dupré, *The Enlightenment*, 243-257; Fergusson, "Divine Providence," 655-673.

in the sense of institutional differentiation. The idea of "disenchantment," however, has proven increasingly problematic, as scholars observe people who have maintained—and are maintaining—religious beliefs and practices alongside modern medicine and religious institutions that are focused on and engaging ethical questions of public life. To comprehend these contemporary manifestations of religious life, some scholars have pointed to a "re-enchantment" in contemporary society.[21]

Instead of positing a re-enchantment, however, it is time to reexamine disenchantment, to question its long-supposed roots in the eighteenth century, and to recognize significant outliers in this narrative. Many early Americans and their descendants were simply able to accept the new promises and insights of modern medicine, science, politics, and economies within their providential worldview.

Such reconsideration sheds light on our own time, as we increasingly realize the failure of modernity's promises to control, alleviate, and end human suffering. Although most of us would never trade our contemporary world for that of the eighteenth century, it is true that, despite all our progress, humans continue to suffer from incurable diseases, ingrained prejudices, and structural inequalities, among many other problems. This persistent suffering, even as we still hear of the progress of our modern world, is why we increasingly see in medical schools and nursing programs, for example, a renewed interest in holistic care and curricula that introduce students to ethics, the humanities, and the history of medicine.

The sociologist Martin Riesebrodt saw in the continued reality of suffering an explanation for the universality and persistent relevance of religion, which has an ability

[21] See Riesebrodt, *Promise of Salvation*, 178, 181.

to explain, deter, and overcome crises: "We cannot surmount the vulnerability and mortality of our bodies; nor will we be able, at any time in the foreseeable future, to exert full control over our natural environment; nor will we succeed in erasing the fact and problematic consequences of differences in power, privileges, and unjust domination." Religions survive, Riesebrodt argued, because they support people in situations of misery and stress and promise a better outcome, either in this life or in salvation.[22]

Riesebrodt's observations suggest a postmodern, retrospective cynicism about the failures of modernity—a cynicism that results in a rather reductionist interpretation of religion. This view is challenged by eighteenth-century American Protestants' responses to sickness and suffering. They give us a different perspective on religion and its responsiveness to stress and suffering in the midst of the changes, promises, and failures of modernity. Living through the transition to the modern world, eighteenth-century Protestants turned to longstanding resources of tradition, narrative, and community while engaging modern shifts in medicine, politics, and economics. Their voices allow us to see how religion remained a central resource not only for those who

[22] Although I am sympathetic to Riesebrodt's argument, I think much remains to be explored. Riesebrodt acknowledges the benefits of religion in this sense: it "not only makes it possible for the inexplicable to be explained; it also maintains people's ability to act in situations in which they run up against their own limits." But he also points to problems when "the institutionalization and internalization of religious ideas…prevent people from rationally coping with their fate themselves when they are capable of doing so." The question of the role of the institution and its relation to the individual in such situations deserves further study. It seems problematic to me that while critically assessing the failures of modernity—an age characterized by its faith in reason and rationality—Riesebrodt at the same time criticizes religious ideas and institutions for preventing people from "*rationally* coping." Riesebrodt, *Promise of Salvation*, 169-174. See also Riesbrodt's critique of Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*: "Taylor's perspective on religion seems to favor the more intellectualist versions of the search for meaning, whereas the pragmatic dimensions of religion, in terms of the aversion of misfortune, the coping with crises, and the search for blessings and salvation are underemphasized." William Schweiker, et. al., "Grappling with Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*," *The Journal of Religion* 90 (2010), 399-400. To borrow Riesebrodt's words, in this dissertation I seek to combine an "intellectualist" and "pragmatic" approach to religion.

suffered but also for those actively pursuing the challenges, insights, and transformations of the modern world.

There are many ways in which the themes of sickness, medicine, benevolence, and—above all—providence remain relevant in our contemporary situation. Many interlocutors have asked about claims of providential direction today, particularly when people have debilitating disease or injury, or when people die. Are these references to God's providence the same as in the eighteenth century? Are they simply empty rhetoric—the things people say in response to grief? Do they have the same scriptural and spiritual resonance as in times past? And yet, at the same time, we recognize how deeply personal these questions are and how the answers are shaped by both individual beliefs and contexts that include: religious communities, scriptures, ideas, and practices; current medical research; and familial traditions. If we are to answer these questions about an earlier era, we must likewise consider deeply personal sources from the past and their contexts.

By expanding our narrative of religion and medicine in the eighteenth century and consulting a wider range of sources, a different story of religion in the modern world emerges—a narrative that reminds us that religion and medicine are not necessarily at odds and that humans are not bound to an unchanging way of seeing or knowing. Faith in providence was a central consolation for those who suffered. It was also an important force behind the often active engagement of Christians determined to interpret, respond to, and change their world.

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In order to clarify how providence was understood and invoked in the eighteenth century, the first chapter of this dissertation analyzes two pastoral tracts on sickness.

The Puritan minister Cotton Mather and the Pietist pastor Samuel Urlsperger both wrote detailed accounts describing how Christians should interpret and react to sickness. By advocating retrospective reflection on the stories of biblical forbears and on the sufferer's own life, these men urged repentance in response to sickness, contemplation of the role sickness could play in the Christian's journey toward salvation, and the consolation that could be found in God's providential oversight.

Chapter Two, then, reads personal—mostly manuscript—accounts of sickness in relationship to this advice. Individual sufferers and their witnesses adopted the themes of repentance and consolation found in pastoral manuals and conceived of a providential meaning to their suffering. Those silenced by pain found an opportunity to voice their experiences through the theme of providence and the voice of retrospection, and they connected to a wider Protestant community through the shared Christian narrative of redemption and salvation. Observers also left accounts of sickness, offering detailed testimonies of both the physical and spiritual condition of the sufferers. These details served to witness God's providential grace in even the most mundane of earthly suffering. While some Christians who faced sickness wrestled with doubt and with the theological changes that emerged in the eighteenth century, they nonetheless also relied, in the end, on retrospective language and emphasized providence.

The focus of the third chapter is three religious communities and their debates over medical intervention—debates that highlight anxieties about medicine and treatment in colonial America as well as reactions to the medical materialism and dualism that emerged after Descartes. Within medicine, the body was increasingly viewed as a machine that could be observed, evaluated, and treated based on its physical functions and symptoms. Christians participated in contemporary conversations and

debates about medicine, integrating new ideas and treatments within longstanding Christian views of the human body, soul, and knowledge. The Puritan Cotton Mather and the Pietist physician Christian Thilo, for example, insisted on the role of the soul in bodily health, even when contemporary medical theory no longer perceived the soul's importance to the mechanical body. The Methodist John Wesley, meanwhile, considered medicine a special providence of God in the natural world, and therefore reacted strongly to the increasingly theoretical medicine that developed after Descartes, which limited the widespread participation in medicine that God had designed. Nonetheless, Wesley, along with Mather and the Pietists, engaged contemporary medical thought and innovation. They understood the vital importance of medical treatment and education for Christian evangelization.

The fourth chapter examines benevolence during the 1793 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia. Scholars have argued that the late-eighteenth century saw the rise of privatized charity and secular social reform. In many ways, the response to the epidemic confirms such an interpretation: Philadelphians visited, nursed, counseled, and cared for the sick, buried the dead, established committees for the relief of the sick and poor, and created institutions such as hospitals and orphanages. On the one hand, responders—ranging from clergy to volunteering citizens—described their work with recourse to Enlightenment-era language of innate human sympathy, but, on the other hand, they also imagined the epidemic in terms of providence. God had sent sickness, but God also motivated and provided the means for alleviation and care. When the language and activity of human compassion failed in the most intense suffering, Christians relied on God's direction and mercy.

Throughout the eighteenth century, providence had proven an expansive doctrine that interacted with new medicine and with Enlightenment ideas about human sympathy and compassion. In the fifth chapter, we will see that God's providence bore the test of helping humans to interpret and act in yet another domain: the economics of slavery. Slavery was introduced into colonial Georgia only after heated debates throughout the 1730s and 1740s. German Pietist ministers, who oversaw a community in Ebenezer, and one of their benefactors, the Anglican revivalist George Whitefield, contested the meaning of missionary work and benevolence and whether Christians could, in good faith, own slaves. The letters between these men and Pietist leaders in both London and Halle offer heretofore unstudied information on how Pietists and Anglicans grappled with slavery and providence, and how a strong conviction of providential direction eventually informed, for some, an acceptance of slavery.

The use of providence to defend slavery points to a difficult but important aspect of providential thought. Providential thought has a tremendous power to console and motivate humans in times of sickness, suffering, and social upheaval, but this same power can also, unfortunately, be used toward tragic ends. This does not mean that there is an inherent evil within providential thought. The example of the introduction of slavery reminds us that providence is, ultimately, a human doctrine—a human attempt to understand God and to interpret both the intimate and major events of life in terms of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. While providential language has, unsurprisingly, been used to secure or defend self-serving human actions and institutions, what is interesting is how often humans have appealed to providence in matters where their own self-interest is not at stake, or is, at the least, more ambiguous.

From sickness to slavery, faith in God's providence prompted human activity in eighteenth-century America and the Atlantic world. Protestants responded and adapted to Enlightenment-era challenges to traditional Christian conceptions of God, creation, and human agency. A strong belief in providence remained, always, an enduring feature of early American life at the cusp of modernity. It was an essential resource for interpreting and formulating responses to suffering and change.

Chapter 1

Wholesome Words:
Narratives of Sickness in Protestant Pastoral Manuals

In 1702, the Puritan divine Cotton Mather published *Wholesome Words*, a book on sickness. As the title suggests, Mather perceived a nourishing function of narrative in times of illness; writing could console both authors and readers. Among eighteenth-century Protestants, such narrative nourishment relied on the most important characteristic of sickness writings: appeal to providential order.[1]

Pastoral manuals like *Wholesome Words* were written and distributed during periods of epidemics and contributed to the development of an archetypal narrative of sickness during the eighteenth century. These manuals, which were in no way divorced from personal experiences of suffering, modeled a way for individuals to apply theologically difficult ideas about sin, judgment, and redemption to the raw realities of sickness and death. In this individual application, the manuals remained committed to the narrative emphases of a larger Protestant community: repentance, salvation, and consolation. These emphases pointed to an overarching framework that confirmed God's providence over human life.

Through the narrative device of retrospection, authors ensured both the consoling effect of their narratives and their pedagogical function. Retrospection allowed the narratives to reflect and address the immediate human concerns of suffering, anxiety, and grief while also confirming God's providence. From the present sickness, sufferers were encouraged to look back to their earlier spiritual life or to past

[1] Cotton Mather, *Wholesome Words*: *A visit of advice, given unto families that are visited with sickness* (Boston: Henchman, 1713).

examples from scriptures. They were also taught to look back to the present sickness from an imagined future perspective of health or salvation. Through such exercises, retrospection illustrated that the current sickness was part of God's plan, which could be glimpsed when reflecting on past difficulties and which could be fathomed when confronting new ones.

The study of early modern disease narratives has been dominated by scholars of English literature and the medical humanities. These studies generally focus on popular published epidemic accounts and, influenced by the work of Michel Foucault, Mary Douglas, and Sander Gilman, they explore the ways in which such accounts sought to control and impose a meaning on disease that reflected larger political and social concerns.[2] Pastoral manuals written for use during sickness rarely make an appearance

[2] Foucault's influence on literary criticism and the history of medicine is immense. On power and the body, see particularly *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995); for a helpful discussion of Foucault's effect on the history of medicine, see Roger Cooter, "After Death/After-'Life': The Social History of Medicine in Post-Postmodernity," *Social History of Medicine* 20 (2007), 448-453. The influence of both Douglas and Gilman stems from their writings on order and control. According to Douglas, "culture, in the sense of the public, standardized values of a community, mediates the experience of individuals. It provides in advance some basic categories, a positive pattern in which ideas and values are tidily ordered. And above all, it has authority, since each is induced to assent because of the assent of others." Douglas argues that cultures must have "various provisions for dealing with ambiguous or anomalous events," for example, "by settling for one or other interpretation, ambiguity is often reduced." Gilman argues that "the image of all disease, the very face of the patient, is a continuous one, and through a study of its continuities comes a sense of the interrelationship of all our projected fears of collapse. This continuity, however, reflects changing functions that the image of disease has within an age's or an individual's overall sense of control. . . How we see the diseased, the mad, the polluting, is a reflex of our own sense of control and the limits inherent in that sense of control." See Mary Douglas *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1966), 52, and Sander Gilman, *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 3. For a useful discussion of the development of work on epidemic narratives in cultural and literary studies, see David Shuttleton, *Smallpox and the Literary Imagination, 1660-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3-12. For examples of literary scholarship on epidemics interested in issues of social or political control see: Ann Carmichael, "The Last Past Plague: The Uses of Memory in Renaissance Epidemics," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 53 (1998), 133-134, 141-142, 158-159; Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plague, and Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 16; Cristobal Silva, *Miraculous Plagues: An Epidemiology of Early New England Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17-18; Priscilla Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 53; cf. Priscilla Wald, "Imagined Immunities," in *Cultural Studies & Political Theory*, ed. Jodi Dean, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 189-208.

in this scholarship. Yet religious ideas and practices profoundly shaped not only epidemic accounts but also individual experience and individual illness writings.

Like letter-writing manuals of the same era, pastoral writings on sickness offered a framework, or a set of guidelines, for responding to and interpreting sickness. They had a pedagogical function, but this does not necessarily mean that they were simply controlling or disciplinary. By describing immediate experiences of sickness within the context of Christian scriptures and theology, the manuals "nourished a social knowhow and a social imaginary." The manuals both reflected and promoted a larger "Protestant vernacular tradition," which encouraged "writers to make sense to everyday people and to do so using simple language." Sickness was a critical opportunity for Protestant writers and readers; narrative had long been seen as an empowering means for the faithful to record—for both themselves and others—their spiritual journey and experiences of God's grace and providence.[3]

The present chapter reads two pastoral tracts on the management of sickness—one Puritan and one Pietist[4]—that were available in the first half of the eighteenth-century in the American colonies. It attends carefully to the role of providence in these narratives. The analysis below does not deny the political and social power scholars have attributed to disease narratives, but it does insist that these narratives served an essential religious function as consolation for both the individuals and communities in which they were written and read. This consolation was not merely offered to a passive

[3] Roger Chartier, Alain Boureau, and Cécile Dauphin, *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Christopher Woodall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 2-7; David D. Hall, *Ways of Writing: The Practice and Politics of Text-Making in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 9-10.

[4] Cotton Mather, *Wholesome Words* (1713); Samuel Urlsperger, *Der Kranken Gesundheit und der Sterbenden Leben* (Stuttgart: Müller, 1723). Each work appeared in multiple editions. The latter tract has never been analyzed in English-language scholarship.

reader; the use of retrospection required readers' active engagement as they were asked to reflect on biblical exemplars, to repent, to interpret their own suffering and spiritual journey, and to discern God's providence.

"Every Syllable is a Cordial": A Puritan Sickness Manual

Cotton Mather published his pastoral manual, *Wholesome Words*, three times. Each edition appeared during an epidemic that affected him personally and professionally. When he wrote and published the first edition, in June of 1702, a smallpox epidemic was spreading through Boston. Mather's own home did not escape the contagion, and several of his children became sick. His first wife, Abigail, was at the same time in the final stages of an unknown illness, possibly breast cancer. Mather wrote the initial edition of *Wholesome Words* from the context of intense familial suffering and pastoral obligations to the sick in the wider community. Eleven years later, in the winter of 1713, he published the second edition during a measles epidemic. Mather's pastoral responsibilities to his community were affected by personal tragedies: to measles he lost his second wife, Elizabeth, their newborn twins, a two-year-old daughter, and a maidservant. After another eight years, in 1721, a third edition of the work appeared during a smallpox epidemic, which, again, threatened both Boston and Mather's family.[5]

Mather's immediate and personal encounters with illness and sense of pastoral duty shaped the intent of *Wholesome Words*, which he outlined in the introduction. The

[5] Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1724* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1911), 446. Mather mentions the 1703 edition in his diary, but it is not available. I use the 1713 edition. Although the content is the same, the 1721 edition was published under a different title: Cotton Mather, *A Pastoral Letter, to Families Visited with Sickness* (Boston: Green, 1721). For context, see Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 179-184, 269-275.

tract promised instruction for families both in the present "Epidemical Sickness*, when our* Pastors, *who would fain* Visit all the Sick, *have not Strength*," and in future incidences of disease, for "[the sick] we shall have always with us."[6] Mather's outlined task spoke to the immediate circumstances of epidemic in Boston, the concomitant, overwhelming personal suffering and pastoral obligations, and the fallen human condition of susceptibility to sickness. In pursuing his task, he structured *Wholesome Words* along two lines: repentance and consolation.

During the 1721 epidemic in which the third edition of *Wholesome Words* appeared, Mather was involved in a controversy over smallpox inoculation, and most scholarship on Mather, sickness, and medicine has focused on his role in this debate. Mather's promotion of inoculation and the public resistance he encountered have led scholars to argue about the decline of Puritan orthodoxy in early-eighteenth-century New England, the rising influence of physicians as a profession separate from ministers, and the attempts of Puritan clergy to re-assert their power and ministerial authority. This scholarship has affected readings of Mather's writings on sickness beyond the 1721 episode, including his work on *Wholesome Words*.[7]

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[6] Mather, *Wholesome Words* (1713), prefatory comments. These comments are not included in the 1721 edition, which instead begins with this introduction: "From several MINISTERS of BOSTON, At a time of *Epidemical Sickness* Distressing of the Town." Cotton Mather, *A Pastoral Letter* (1721), 1.

[7] Maxine Van De Wetering, "A Reconsideration of the Inoculation Controversy," *The New England Quarterly* 58 (1985): 46-67; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 345-366; Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 354-367. It should be noted that some scholars have looked at inoculation as the first serious contribution to American medicine. See Otho T. Beall, Jr. and Richard H. Shryock, *Cotton Mather, First Significant Figure in American Medicine* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1954), and I. Bernard Cohen, ed., *Cotton Mather and American Science and Medicine: With Studies and Documents Concerning the Introduction of Inoculation or Variolation* (New York: Arno, 1980). There are multiple problems with the reigning characterization of the inoculation controversy, not least that it incorrectly presumes that Calvinist theology prohibits science and benevolence; that is not the topic here, but for John Calvin's discussion on science and medicine, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* the *Institutes*, ed. John T.

Repentance is a central and early theme of *Wholesome Words*, and, without a sufficient understanding of Puritans' theology and context, it is easy for a modern reader to find the call for repentance in times of sickness off-putting—an authoritarian move that seems to take advantage of the sick and vulnerable. One scholar has argued that Mather's demand for repentance was a sign of his harsh pastoral power and orthodoxy.[8] Mather certainly cared about his clerical authority in the community, but such an account overlooks both the way in which he situated himself within his community and the scriptural resources, theological language, and conceptions of power represented within the text itself.[9] Mather considered himself and all humans to suffer from original sin and to be at the mercy of one ultimate power—God. He found immense comfort in this power as well as in the human work of repentance that responded to it. By focusing on repentance, he showcased the human experience of God's power over humanity throughout history, not just in Mather's own time, but also in the time of biblical forbears and in the future, anticipated salvation.

Through this retrospective perspective on God's power throughout human history, Mather explained and encouraged repentance while also offering consolation. In pursuing these ends, he relied on abundant scriptural references to diseases and

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McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 270-277. The relevant sections are in Book 2, Chapter 2, Sections 12-17.

[8] Van De Wetering, "A Reconsideration of the Inoculation Controversy," 60-62. Van De Wetering's use of *Wholesome Words* is problematic in several ways. She uses the tract to exemplify Mather's unstinting orthodoxy in the early eighteenth century before his shift to become what she sees as a kinder, Enlightenment figure by the 1720s. She overlooks that *Wholesome Words* was republished in the 1720s.

[9] I am influenced here by Ludmilla Jordanova's historiographical essay on social constructionist approaches to the history of medicine, in which she writes: "Exponents of a medicalization approach tend to see medical power as gained with relative ease or even simply appropriated. A social constructionist will more likely look for the points of tension, for negotiations and conflicts through which particular kinds of authority may or may not be gained, and specify rather precisely the social groupings involved." Ludmilla Jordanova, "The Social Construction of Medical Knowledge," *Social History of Medicine* 8 (1995), 367-368.

diseased bodies. The first part of *Wholesome Words* focuses on how sickness should prompt the repentance of the entire community by reflecting retrospectively on the suffering and repentance of biblical forbears. Consolation was not, however, absent from the first part of the tract: readers knew, from the Bible and sermons, that these biblical forebears were ultimately saved. Within the second part of the tract, Mather turned to scriptures that directed readers to see God's providence and promise in the faith of biblical exemplars. These promises commanded repentance, patience, and trust in God's providence while also offering consolation in the hope of future salvation.

Mather emphasized community, including the community of biblical forbears. This emphasis reflected a key attribute of eighteenth-century Protestant writing; even when focused on a single individual, narratives of sickness took place within a community. This was also the case in eighteenth-century conversion narratives, which have received more sustained scholarly attention. In the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, Protestants' relationship to writing fundamentally shifted, due in large part to the new communities created by their expanded exposure to the world of print. With greater access to a variety of writings that included scientific news, seafaring accounts, and spiritual autobiographies, Protestants became increasingly attuned to novel, first-hand experiences, including their own. This shift "reflected an appeal to experience and a new confidence about discerning the hand of God in history."[10]

[10] Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 43-46, 51-61, 67-80, 94-95, 131. Hindmarsh is influenced by Jürgen Habermas's understanding of the "bourgeois public sphere" in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991). Hindmarsh argues, however, that although the social transformations of the eighteenth century contributed to revivalism, "the international Protestant awakening of the eighteenth century was constituted chiefly by the repeated experience of evangelical conversion, and that there was an irreducibly religious element in this experience that was in continuity with seventeenth-century Puritanism and related traditions" (80). See also Bruce Hindmarsh, "Religious Conversion as Narrative and

While reflecting personal experiences of God, individuals nonetheless shared their narratives within their communities. They recorded unique details of their stories but also reflected established narrative patterns that had emerged within the larger Protestant community of the Atlantic world. These narrative patterns included a retrospective voice that looked back on not only the individual life but also on past narratives of the entire community. Individual accounts affirmed anew the experiences and truths of the past and the continuing extent of God's particular providence in both the life of individuals and the wider Christian community.[11]

The way Mather used scriptural citations within *Wholesome Words* modeled this providential and retrospective interpretation of disease within a community. Mather's biblical figures and stories should not be read as mere examples for his Puritan audience. For Calvinists, the church of the elect in the Bible was part of the single unified church that spanned history.[12] The sins, repentance, and faith of their Christian forbears could be understood retrospectively as part of the universal and suprahistorical salvation narrative of the true church. Thus, when Puritans were urged to look back on their sins and the sins of their community and to think forward to their salvation, these exercises engaged retrospective reflection on the entirety of Christian history.

Mather began *Wholesome Words* by paralleling his community's present suffering and need for repentance with biblical narratives. He focused on how an entire

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Autobiography," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 343-368.

[11] W. Clark Gilpin, preface to *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to That Which Is to Come* and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, by John Bunyan (New York: Vintage, 2004), ix-xvi; Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 91. Cf. Hall, *Ways of Writing*, 9-10.

[12] On Calvin's understanding of the church, see Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1012-1014. See Book 4, Chapter 1, Section 2.

family should respond even if only a single member became ill: he admonished families to "acknowledge, that the *Sickness* of any one in the Family" was caused by providence and that it represented both a reminder of the base condition of all humanity and a spur to humility and repentance for the whole community. Mather illustrated this attitude by meditating on the scarred human face: "the Pale, the Swollen, the Wasted, & perhaps the Spotted Faces of the *Sick* in the Family, are such as our Heavenly Father has been *Spitting* upon: Shall *He Spit in our Faces, and shall we not be Ashamed?*"[13] Though one scholar has viewed this passage as a chief example of Mather's lack of compassion for his suffering community, the image has profound biblical resonance.[14] Mather referred to Numbers 12, a passage about the leprosy of Miriam. God had struck Miriam with leprosy, because she and Aaron had criticized their brother Moses's choice of a wife and challenged his leadership. Aaron repented their sin, and Moses appealed to God to heal Miriam. God replied, "If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?" Miriam had to remove from the Israelites for seven days. The whole community waited for her recovery before they could, together, continue their journey to Canaan.

By opening his account of proper Christian repentance with a biblical image that would remind his well-versed audience of Miriam's body, "leprous, white as snow," Mather effectively mapped the New England encounters with measles and smallpox—which, like leprosy, had highly visible symptoms—onto the biblical narrative of Exodus. Exodus was a story of the perseverance and hope of a chosen people with whom New

[13] Mather, *Wholesome Words* (1713), 1-5.

[14] Van De Wetering, "A Reconsideration of the Inoculation Controversy," 60.

England Puritans had long identified.[15] The story of Miriam's illness reminded readers that, first, the suffering of one individual did not mean that she alone was guilty and worthy of punishment. Second, the suffering of even a single person affected an entire community in its journey toward salvation. Third, whatever the fate of any given individual, the issue of paramount concern was the perseverance of the community as a whole. Mather felt for his community and their losses in epidemics; his own household suffered greatly. Rather than despair, however, Mather reminded his audience that epidemics and death were but part of a longer history of the entire church in its movement through time toward the kingdom of God. Repentance and humility were retrospectively visible in the stories of biblical exemplars. They were the first and most important responses.

The theme of repentance was further highlighted in the first half of *Wholesome Words* by Mather's continued retrospective allusions to biblical stories in which God sent sickness, plague, and death as punishment for human faithlessness and pride. The tract referred to the plague begun after the punishment of Korah—when the people murmured against Moses—which was relieved upon atonement, although only after 14,000 died (Num. 16:46). The tract cited another biblical plague that killed 70,000, this occasioned by David's ambition and pride in conducting a census of Israel (1 Chron. 21:16). God's punishments could also be more limited and directed at a single individual or family. Mather highlighted the story of the Lord striking the son of David and the widow of Uriah the Hittite, in response to David's unjust killing of Uriah (2 Sam. 12:15).

[15] See, for example, Harry Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 54, 166-67.

The tract also cited the well-known example of Job, an upstanding, faithful man, who lost his entire family and was finally reduced to a terrible sickness of his own.[16]

With Job, Mather highlighted two themes: first, the proper role of the witness to suffering, and, second, the proper understanding of sickness and Christian suffering within the larger framework of Christian salvation history. Mather referred to the section of Job in which Job's friend Elihu questioned him, his claim to innocence, and his bewilderment at his suffering. This section also served as *Wholesome Words*' epigraph. Elihu was the fourth of Job's friends to speak, and his questions are the most pressing. He pointed out that God punished human pride in ways of God's choosing, including through physical pain and suffering: "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat" (Job 33:19-20). Mather used this passage from Elihu's speech because it demonstrated how best to witness physical sickness. This was a common task in his community, and he wanted his readers to experience the suffering and to recognize it as a testimony to the universal reality of human sin and worthlessness. A witness must "see thy *Sick* Friend Sweating, Hear thy *Sick* Friend Sighing," and consider his own health and be grateful for it, because, as Mather wrote, health was an "an *Unmerited* Favour." Health was a blessing, Mather argued, because all humans were innately sinful, and therefore "*we all deserve to be Sick*."[17]

Unlike today, when the majority of Americans expect to be healthy—or at least to "feel good"—most of the time, for eighteenth-century Americans health was the aberration and physical suffering an almost constant presence. Suffering in early

[16] Mather, *Wholesome Words* (1713), title page, 2, 6, 8, 10.

[17] Ibid., 10, 5.

America was a "defining force" for human existence. Studies have argued that the persistent presence of pain influenced society in myriad ways, affecting economic activity, buttressing gender roles, shaping parenting and child care, and directing religious teachings. In a study of pain in early America, Elaine Forman Crane focused on the prescriptive and disciplinary element of clerical writings on sickness. Anxious about how such writings might have affected individual sufferers, she argued that the fixation on resignation and submission left individuals passive, emotional, and frustrated in their inability to live up to prescribed Christian standards. Such an argument overlooks how clerical writings emphasized the communal nature of suffering and the consolation and creativity this emphasis allowed.[18]

Pastoral writings found a pedagogical opportunity in sickness and suffering; far from demanding submission, sickness was an opportunity to reflect and repent. It required individual sufferers and witnesses to participate actively in their community's narrative of sickness, which mirrored the broader Christian narrative of sin and redemption. Sickness was a reminder of the guilt, dependence, and inferiority of not just the individual sufferer but of all humanity. "*We all deserve to be sick*," Mather had written. Eighteenth-century Protestants understood sickness as a product of humanity's Fall in the garden of Eden; as soon as Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit, humans became susceptible to sickness. All of human history was shaped by this act, and there was no way of comprehending or describing sickness that could avoid reflection on its long historical association with sin and God's judgment. No

[18] Elaine Forman Crane, "'I Have Suffer'd Much Today': The Defining Force of Pain in Early America," in *Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America*, ed. Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel, and Fredrika J. Teute (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997): 370-403; cf. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage, 1980), 158.

one escaped the Fall and its consequences, including sin and sickness. The human task was not to fixate passively on an individual sufferer's moral depravity, but rather to ponder what individual sickness meant for the larger Christian story and God's providence.[19]

This retrospective and providential connection of sickness to original sin transcended the denominational, temporal, and geographical categories that are often applied to early American religious history.[20] In Mather's early eighteenth-century book on medicine, *Angel of Bethesda,* for example, he wrote: *"Sin, Sin*, was that which opened the Floodgates for a Flood of *Wretchedness* to rush in upon the world; and *Sickness* is one Instance of *Wretchedness*."[21] The Anglican John Wesley, who was instrumental in the development of Methodism in the mid-eighteenth century and an important advocate for Arminianism, also found the origins of human sickness in original sin. He wrote so in his own medical manual, the incredibly popular *Primitive Physic*, which he first published in 1745. Wesley's preface, which remained unchanged through each

[19] Cotton Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda,* ed. Gordon W. Jones (Barre, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1972), 6. For a basic introduction and outline of Calvinist understandings of original sin, see Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 241-254. The relevant portion is in Book 2, Chapter 1. Crane points out that contemporary Americans still connect sickness to "moral deficiency" on page 402.

[20] Unlike other Protestants, the Quakers do not believe that infants are born with original sin, but rather think humans are born with a tendency to sin due to the fall of Adam and Eve. Even so, Quakers appear to have agreed that sickness was a condition associated with the fallenness of human creation, a condition which would be relieved only upon salvation. See, for example, the letter of the Quaker Sarah Rhoads to Samuel W. Fisher during the 1793 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia, in which she wrote: "May a Gratefull Sense of Divine Goodness ever live in my Heart, not only During this Awful Dispensation, but may the few remaining Days of my Pilgrimage be spent in a Preparation, for that Habitation, the Inhabitants of which *never* say I am Sick. Sarah Rhoads to Samuel W. Fisher, 19 September 1793, Samuel W. Fisher Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; cf. Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity: Being an Explanation and vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the People Called Quakers* (New York: Samuel Wood and Sons, 1827), 94-98.

[21] Mather, *Angel of Bethesda* (1972), 6. Note that while the *Angel of Bethesda,* in its entirety, remained unpublished until the twentieth century, part of it did appear in Mather's lifetime: Cotton Mather, *The angel of Bethesda, visiting the invalids of a miserable world* (New London, CT: Timothy Green, 1722).

edition into the nineteenth century, included a comprehensive view of the origins of illness in original sin:

> When man came first out of the hands of the great Creator, clothed in body as well as in soul, with immortality and incorruption, . . . he knew no sin, so he knew no pain, no sickness, weakness, or bodily disorder. . . . And there was nothing without to injure it: Heaven and earth, and all the hosts of them, were mild, benign and friendly to human nature . . . . But since Man rebell'd against the Sovereign of heaven and earth, how entirely is the scene changed! The incorruptible frame hath put on corruption, the immortal has put on mortality. The seeds of weakness and pain, of sickness and death, are now lodged in our inmost substance: whence a thousand disorders continually spring, even without the aid of external violence . . . . The heavens, the earth, and all things contained therein, conspire to punish the rebels against their Creator.[22]

Wesley described a condition in which sickness had become an inherent corruption within the human body *and* a result of the unease with which fallen humans lived in God's creation. Humans' very environment was prepared to crush them, poison them, and sap their strength. German Pietist theologians and pastors, such as Samuel Urlsperger and Gotthilf August Francke, also connected sickness to sin. They argued that sickness was a just punishment for all humans, who suffered equally from the

[22] John Wesley, *Primative Physic; or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*, 16th ed. (Trenton, NJ: Quequelle and Wilson, 1788), iii-iv. This book went through 23 editions before Wesley's death in 1791, and 37 editions total before 1859. Deborah Madden, '*A Cheap, Safe, and Natural Medicine': Religion, Medicine, and Culture in John Wesley's Primitive Physic*, Clio Medica 83 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), 11-12.

consequences of the Fall. Sickness was a symptom of humans' unbelief and a demonstration of their distance from God.[23]

For John Calvin, the theological forbear of Mather and the Puritans, understanding this fundamental association between human guilt and suffering represented an opportunity to think about history and providence. As historian Susan Schreiner has shown, this was a way to "recommend the works of God in history as well as the study of history as a means for perceiving divine providence." A retrospective look at not only the individual's sins but at all humanity's sins provided abundant evidence that all humans deserved to suffer for their pride and corruption. Even if God's actions in history were sometimes inscrutable and ambiguous to humans, the "glimpse" and "taste" of God's providence perceived in history and in nature promised that "the same God who brought the order of creation into existence is powerful and wise enough to govern human events and, on the last day, to bring order out of the present confusion." The past suffering and faith of scriptural paragons like Job offered the contemporary sufferer "grounds for hope in the present."[24]

Mather crowded his tract with biblical exemplars like Job, David, Miriam, and Moses, who grappled with their sinfulness and distance from God, recognized their dependence on God, repented of pride and disobedience, and turned to God with faith. These figures demonstrated the crucial steps a human could take in reacting to sickness and brought readers to the second half of Mather's tract. After repentance came grace

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[23] Katharina Ernst, *Krankheit und Heiligung: Die medikale Kultur württembergischer Pietisten im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2003), 71-72; Jürgen Helm, *Krankheit, Bekehrung und Reform. Medizin und Krankenfürsorge im Halleschen Pietismus*, Hallesche Forschungen 21 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2006), 16-22.

[24] Susan Schreiner, "'Why do the Wicked Live?': Job and David in Calvin's Sermons on Job," in *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*, ed. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 136-143.

and hope, which were the central consolations of the Christian's spiritual journey. Although these consoling themes were the focus of the tract's second half, Mather did not omit them from the verses he selected for his work's epigraph. His readers were reminded—even before beginning—that the sufferer would in the end be delivered "from going down to the pit," and "his flesh shall be fresher than a child's" and he "shall see [God's] face with joy" (Job 33:24-26).[25]

This pivot to deliverance and joy is a crucial part of Mather's writings on sickness, and it foregrounds the entire tract. Even if the first part of the tract emphasizes original sin and repentance, the first part must be read with an eye to the Puritans' theology of faith and salvation. With their retrospective gaze on the biblical sufferers who went before, readers also had a peripheral view of the benefits of trusting in God's providence. Persevering through trials with faith, biblical exemplars ultimately achieved deliverance.

In writing on sickness, Mather proffered a type of spiritual discipline. He invited his readers to retrospect on their lives in the hope that they might be consoled by faith in their experience of suffering and repentance. As the historian W. Clark Gilpin has argued, they were to "discern a plot and coherence to life" that "was not a look backward merely from the present situation. It was a look backward over the whole journey of life from an imagined end point." [26] Mather used well-known biblical examplars, who suffered and ruminated on their past, but whose ends ultimately reflected God's providential guidance and care. This is why the second part of Mather's tract is so essential and important to read; the entire narrative of sin and repentance that made up

[25] Mather, *Wholesome Words* (1713), title page.

[26] W. Clark Gilpin, preface to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ix-xvi.

the first part of the tract led to the promise and consolation readers anticipated finding in the end.

In the second part of *Wholesome Words*, Mather turned increasingly to passages from the Psalms and the New Testament in order to focus on faith and the promise of salvation and resurrection. Citing the Psalms and the Epistle of James, Mather described the spiritual rewards given to those Christians who worked faithfully on behalf of the sick. This work involved exhorting, praying, and providing charity, regardless of fears of physical harm and contagion. Faithfully-pursued charity was a Christian duty and those who followed this mandate were scripturally promised God's transcendent care and protection in their own sickness. Mather exclaimed that "*The Prayer of Faith shall save the Sick*" (James 5:16). He reminded his readers of the ancient Christians in Alexandria, who remained and cared for those suffering from the "Pestilence" when all "the *Heathens* ran away from their dearest Relations, under the dread of the Infection." Mather urged readers to extend their charity not only locally but also abroad and to reflect on the "Wonderful Encouragement" found in Psalm 41:1-3: "*Blessed is he that Considers the Poor, the Lord will Deliver him in time of Trouble; the Lord will Preserve him, and Keep him Alive, and he shall be Blessed upon the earth; The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of Languishing; Thou wilt make all his Bed in his Sickness.*" Mather lingered on the transcendent medicinal power of this scriptural promise: "Every Syllable is a Cordial, beyond the Richest *Elixir* in the World!" He elaborated by referring his readers to Psalm 91, which proclaimed trust in God's promise

to serve as a "refuge" to the faithful: "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (Ps. 91:9-10).[27]

In order to demonstrate what a "Cordial" this promise was, Mather returned briefly to the theme of repentance that dominated the first part of the tract. He reminded the reader that true repentance was preceded by reflection on the "*Moral Cause*" of sickness and followed by faith in the "*Blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, which Cleanseth from all Sin*." The sick must "*Know the Plague of thy own Heart*" (1 Kings 8:38) and mourn and lament the time lost in this sin. In the second half of the tract, however, Mather emphasized reflection and faith. The promise of salvation and resurrection offered in the words of scripture would succeed this period of trial with a consolation beyond all earthly medicines or elixirs.[28]

The physical experiences of suffering and death were central moments in the Christian path to faith and resurrection, and Mather compellingly mingled language of healing, movement, suffering, and the senses with spiritual ideas of salvation. "*Fly*" unto the refuge of Christ, Mather encouraged his readers; "*Look*" to God "and *be saved*!" (Ps. 142:5; Isa. 45:22). To die in faith, he wrote, "will be *the Salvation of the Soul*." For Mather, the New Testament epistles reflected on Old Testament exemplars like Abel, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah who had "*Dy'd in Faith*." Although they had not yet "received the promises," they were "persuaded of them, and embraced them" (Heb.

[27] Mather, *Wholesome Words* (1713), 12-14. See the scriptural gloss and commentary accompanying the Geneva version of Psalm 91.

[28] Mather, *Wholesome Words* (1713), 15-16. Note the medicinal meaning of the word "cordial" in early modern English: "A medicine, food, or beverage which invigorates the heart and stimulates the circulation." See "cordial, adj. and n.," in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), http://www.oed.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/41449?redirectedFrom=cordial.

11:13). Mather seamlessly joined a physical verb like "embrace" with the spiritual promise of salvation.[29]

Mather then included a speech, which he recommended could be read aloud to sufferers as a final consolation. It further stressed the promise of resurrection by addressing the deepest human fears concerning the body, soul, and time after death. The words bridged earthly and heavenly time. They turned to time past, through biblical exemplars, in order to connect suffering and faith as the illuminating manifestations of God's providence and grace. Mather cited Christ's sacrifice for humankind and encouraged the sick and dying to die with the trusting and Christ-like faith of the martyrs, especially the first Christian martyr Stephen. The speech concluded with a rhythmic series of injunctions to be read to the dying:

> *Dy,* Perswaded, that thy *Soul* shall never *Dy*. Fully Believe, the *Immortality of the Soul*; *Departing hence*, think, *I am going to the Immortals*. *Dy,* Perswaded that thy *Body* shall after *Death* return to *Life*. Strongly Believe, *The Resurrection of the Body*, when thy *Mind* is taking a Farewel of thy Weakned *Body*. *Dy*, Perwaded of the Heavenly Blessedness, which is *Reserved in the Heavens* for the Righteous.

If the faith of the sick person was not strong enough to confront this encroaching breach from the earthly body and time, Mather cautioned, the speaker should urge him or her to look to the past and to believe in the future. The dying should have faith in Christ who had triumphed over death and believe that God will watch over the orphans left behind. In the end, the goal was "*Peace*."[30]

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[29] Ibid., 17-22.

[30] Ibid., 17-22.

With faith in the promise of resurrection and salvation, Mather brought his tract to the culminating consolation of Christian theology: the salvation, resurrection, and reunion of the entire Christian community, including children. He urged his audience to reflect on the paragons of Old Testament trust, who had faith in "a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb. 11:16), even without knowing the life and death of Christ and the Christian martyrs. Unlike the Old Testament figures, Mather's community knew the story of the resurrection and of the martyrs who faithfully followed, and this knowledge was a paramount advantage for his parishioners in their own suffering and in their witness of the suffering of others. What followed death, after all—and which Mather knew so well—was the grief of the family and community, and such was particularly the case in the death of children. Mather counseled "the *Profoundest Resignation*" in this instance. He cited the scriptural examples of Abraham, who was ready to give up his son Isaac according to God's command, and Rachel and David, who refused comfort on the death of their children (Gen. 22:12, Jer. 31:15, 2 Sam. 18:33). "*Lamentations* are not *Amiss*," Mather wrote, "We must not be Stocks and Stones." But the parent must "*not Sorrow as others, that have no Hope*" (1 Thess. 4:13).[31]

In the end, as above, Mather began another rhythmic repetition of consolation: "*Why make ye this Ado?*" which he wrote and repeated four times as he brought his tract to a close. The question came from Mark 5:39, a passage in which Jesus, after healing one woman from the plague, also brought the synagogue ruler's daughter back to life. Mather elaborated on the question: "Are not the Dead gone only a Little before, and shall not you Quickly follow them?"[32] With a long retrospective glance—through the

[31] Ibid., 22-24.

[32] Ibid., 22-24.

Old and New Testaments, the martyrs and the plague victims, the despairing and the trusting—Mather wrote a Christian story of sickness and made a case for repentance and faith in God. It was a story that relied on the providential promise of the ultimate consolations of future salvation and resurrection.

*"Bußе und Glaube eine **Gabe** Gottes seye"[33]: A Pietist Sickness Manual*

The connection between sickness and sin and the call for repentance and faith were not themes limited to English-language writings on sickness in early America. In 1751, after over a decade of struggles with sickness and epidemics, a community of German-speaking Pietists in Ebenezer, Georgia, received a shipment of one hundred books titled *Der Kranken Gesundheit und der Sterbenden Leben; oder schrifftmässiger Unterricht für Kranke und Sterbende nach göttlicher Heilsordnung (The Health of the Sick and the Life of the Dying; or scriptural Instruction for the sick and dying, according to the divine Order of Salvation*).[34] The tract was first published in 1723 by Samuel Urlsperger, a Pietist Lutheran minister in Augsburg who was well-connected with the Francke Foundations in Halle, a member of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and a key promoter and benefactor of the community of Salzburg refugees that had settled in Ebenezer with Halle-educated pastors. Urlsperger borrowed heavily

[33] "Repentance and Belief are a **Gift** of God." Note that bold typescript was frequently used in the original document, and I have preserved it here. Urlsperger, *Der Kranken Gesundheit* (1723), 3-5.

[34]Ibid. The 1750 edition, which was sent to the colony in Ebenezer, Georgia, was published under a similar title: *Der Kranken Gesundheit und der Sterbenden Leben; oder Schrifftmässiger Unterricht für Kranke und Sterbende nach göttlicher Heilsordnung* (Augsburg: Brinhaußer, 1750). I consulted the 1750 edition at the Archiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen, but it is also available digitally through the website of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek - Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden. On the reception of Urlsperger's books in Georgia in 1751, see Johann Martin Boltzius's journal entry from the end of August 1751 in Samuel Urlsperger, ed., *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants who Settled in America,* trans. and ed. George Fenwick Jones, et al. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 15:122 (hereafter Urlsperger, *DR*). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

from other Pietists and Pietist-influenced Lutherans in creating his book. Portions of the book were lifted from the Nürnberger pastor Bernhard Walter Marperger's *Getreue Anleitung zur wahren Seelen-Cur bei Krancken und Sterbenden* (*Faithful Instruction on the true Soul-Cure for the Sick and the Dying*) (1717) and a posthumous work of Johann Reinhard Hedinger (d. 1704), the court preacher in Stuttgart. Urlsperger also referred readers to *Paradisgärtlein* (*Little Garden of Paradise*), a popular seventeenth-century prayer book by Johann Arndt.[35] The final text was thus deeply shaped by the larger Pietist movement and its understandings of sickness. The book is read here as a single text, although shaped by different authors, because that is how eighteenth-century readers would have encountered it.

In his preface to the 1723 edition, Urlsperger described that he had been asked to write this book of instruction for the sick and dying as a pastoral guide; previously, "within the households in our duchy such a book was hitherto lacking, which scarcity I wanted dearly to help." Urlsperger saw the book as a call to reflection and diligent preparation for sickness and death. Such preparation was crucial, because "humans unfailingly carry with them **the certain Order that they must die**." Urlsperger reminded his parishioners that they could not avoid death. They had witnessed "the corpses lying in the death biers, even if they are covered with many clothes" and had recognized "that the procession will also come to them." The present, physical reminder of inevitable mortality brought "penetrating, indeed heavy, reflections," which spurred preparation for death.[36] Urlsperger, like Mather, had witnessed suffering and death

[35] Urlsperger, *Der Kranken Gesundheit* (1750), 149. See Ernst, *Krankheit und Heiligung*.

[36] Urlsperger, *Der Kranken Gesundheit* (1723), pages 2-3 of preface. "daß theils in denen Hauß-haltungen in unserm Herzogthum ein solches Buch bißhero abgegangen / welchem Mangel ich gern zu Hülff kommen wolte / theils aber /daß ich dadurch eine neue Gelegenheit erlanget / mich / da ich andere lehre

many times. He was convinced that such witnessing should motivate immediate reflection on the universal condition of human sickness and the concomitant need for repentance.

For Pietists, experiences of sickness were opportunities to reflect and to prepare spiritually for future sickness, death, and salvation. Sickness invited them to retrospect or imagine their present physical trials and their spiritual progress in terms of the order of repentance and belief. Urlsperger corresponded regularly with Gotthilf August Francke, the director of the Francke Foundations in Halle from 1727-1769, who modeled this reflection by interpreting his physical sickness as God's intervention in his spiritual life.[37] Urlsperger promoted a similar attitude. He urged the sick to imagine how their story would be told or seen from a point "after death." Urlsperger urged his readers to think in terms of a "**history**." He wanted sufferers to reflect on the hope that, after death, "one could say of you and me, because so much of our repentance was done and our belief and good conscience were preserved to our end: '**They have blessedly passed away in the Lord**.'"[38] Urlsperger and the Pietists offered a reading of sickness that paralleled the Puritans' interpretation. They likewise stressed the role sickness played in encouraging repentance to Christians on the path to salvation.

/ auff mein eigenes Ende desto sorgfältiger zu bereiten. Massen es doch wahr bleibet / daß die Menschen / ohnerachtet sie alle die verschlossene Ordre, daß sie sterben müssen / stets bey sich tragen / und an denen in den Todten=Bahren liegenden Leichnamen / wären sie noch mit so viel Tüchern bedecket /mercken können / es werde die Reihe auch an sie kommen / dennoch zu gründlichen Todes=Betrachtungen gar schwer zu bringen sind; Und man deßwegen keine Zeit / die GOtt gibt / zu versäumen hat / diß einig nothwendige vor allem zu besorgen." The 1750 edition has slight changes in the wording.

[37] Helm, *Krankheit, Bekehrung und Reform,* 16-22.

[38] Urlsperger *Der Kranken Gesundheit* (1723), preface pages 3-5. "gleichwie ich auch nur auf **eine Historie** gedrungen; die diese ist / daß man von dir und mir / so viel unser Buse gethan / und Glauben und gut Gewissen werden bewahret haben / nach unserm Ende sagen könne / **Diese sind in dem HErrn selig entschlafen."**

Both Mather and Urlsperger promoted retrospection during sickness in order to draw attention to salvation and the repentance and faith it required, but they organized their tracts and evidence differently. Both pivoted between repentance and God's promise to the faithful in times of sickness and trial, even citing similar scripture (particularly Psalm 91) in evidence of this promise.[39] Unlike the Puritans, however, the Pietists did not emphasize a retrospective understanding of sickness as suffered by the wider community of the church throughout Christian history, but rather a retrospective interpretation that stressed the individual sinner and his or her progress in the "divine order of salvation," as stated in Urlsperger's subtitle.

These different emphases can be seen particularly in a comparison of the biblical passages on repentance cited in the two tracts. Mather pointed to passages filled with biblical exemplars of suffering, sickness, and redemption—figures like Miriam and Job—who for Calvinists shared in the full and unified Christian *salvation history*. Urlsperger, meanwhile, highlighted the prophets and the exhortations that directed individual sinners in the proper *order of salvation*, that is, repentance then belief. The "entire book," Urlsperger wrote, was focused on spiritual steadfastness in the time of trial. It was "a divine trumpet call of repentance and faith."[40] The goal was to wake up individual sinners and direct them to the right path.

Although Urlsperger focused on the individual, exploring his text's structure reveals an underlying theological commitment or practice of reading that illuminates a larger Protestant community of readers and witnesses. The account specifies an order of

[39] Mather, *Wholesome Words* (1713), 12-14; Urlsperger *Der Kranken Gesundheit* (1750), 147.

[40] Urlsperger, *Der Kranken Gesundheit* (1723), preface pages 3-5. "Das ganze Buch ist nichts anders als ein göttlicher Bus=und Glaubensposaunenschall."

salvation, but the manner in which Urlsperger chose to explain this order did not in fact follow the order sequentially in the way a modern reader might expect. Eighteenth-century Protestant readers—like readers today—expected texts to have a beginning, middle, and end, but that does not mean that their narratives progressed in a sequential fashion. In fact, when eighteenth-century Protestants read conversion narratives, they anticipated moving "with a narrator back and forth along the storyline." Readers knew the theological story of sin, redemption, and salvation. They also knew the struggles and setbacks that constantly affected the Christian faithful. John Bunyan's text, *Pilgrim's Progress,* was a classic model of constant forward movement and repeated falling back. Overall, the pilgrim Christian is on a journey of progress toward the promise of salvation, but he faces numerous challenges, he loses his way, he must re-learn lessons he already knew, and he is willing, always, to do this because of his hope for the future, his recognition of past failings, and his faith in God's providence. In this way, Protestants wrote narratives that constantly linked "memory and expectation."[41] Narrative is not just about organizing time into a plot; rather, narrative "can allow us to think about continuity and discontinuity using the resources of the past to affect the future in the present."[42]

In its use of time, Urlsperger's sickness narrative closely parallels conversion narratives. Sickness was tightly bound to Protestant notions of sin; disease, epidemic,

[41] Hindmarsh, "Religious Conversion as Narrative," 347-350, 360; John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

[42] Richard A. Rosengarten, "The Recalcitrant *Distentio* of Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*," *Literature & Theology* 27 (2013), 174-175. See also Jackie Stacey, *Teratologies*: *A Cultural Study of Cancer* (London: Routledge, 1997). The author, a sociologist, argues about the challenges of rewriting the narrative of her body and sickness as she progressed through cancer, describing how: "The usual temporal sequencing is both disrupted and reimposed in the search for order, reason and predictability. The past must now be reimagined and rescripted….In the light of the diagnosis, the recent past must be reexamined for clues of this newly revealed deception" (4-5).

and pain were ever-present and repeatable realities for all Christians. Urlsperger stressed this and required his reader's intense engagement. His text asked individuals to reflect on the meaning of their sickness for their salvation journey—to link "memory and expectation." This reflection relied, in turn, on a wider practice of writing and reading within the Protestant community. In reflecting on sickness, Protestant writers and readers were supposed to focus on the order of salvation, remembering that it did not reflect an accurate representation of chronological time but was, rather, bound to the simultaneous and cyclical sensations of assurance and anxiety expected by an individual working toward salvation. These sensations are often identified within Puritan piety but can also be found within Pietism, and they could be heightened by physical suffering.[43] Urlsperger's narrative required readers to move back and forth between, on the one hand, the "memory" of past sins, sicknesses, and evidences of God's promise and providence and, on the other, the "expectation"—or hope—for salvation and for clarity over the meaning and significance of suffering. In this way, Urlsperger structured his narrative for an individual sufferer but always with the spiritual emphases and practices of his community in mind.

Relying on these emphases and practices of reading, Urlsperger simultaneously used the Old Testament prophets' demands for repentance alongside the New Testament promise of salvation to encourage readers' actions in the present. He defined the order of salvation by introducing a central biblical text, "Repent and believe in the Gospel!" (Mark 1:15), which is a command from Jesus in the New Testament. In his exegesis of this command, however, Urlsperger turned to the Old Testament prophets

[43] Michael McGiffert, ed., *God's Plot: The Paradoxes of Puritan Piety; Being the Autobiography and Journal of Thomas Shepard* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), 20, 24-26.

and repentance. For him, Jesus's command to repent and then believe was the central reminder to Christians that the promise of salvation was "not enough": "it was not enough to say: the door to heaven is opened; it was not enough to proclaim the kingdom of God comes nigh." Christians could not focus solely on God's offer of salvation; they must still repent past sins. The order of salvation "had to be followed." Only by following the order of salvation could the faithful Christian "come through the opened door into heaven and enter into the kingdom of God." The spiritual and physical trials of repentance could not be avoided by anyone "who wants to have part in God and his kingdom here and there."[44]

Before he turned to the theme of repentance and the Old Testament prophets, however, Urlsperger offered his readers the opportunity to see the significance of repentance with retrospective clarity. He first established the promise of salvation. Without that promise, Christians—and not only those suffering from disease and epidemics—could be weighed down by the immensity of the task of repentance. Christians found knowledge and strength to continue in their present struggle when they knew that their repentance was ordained by God's providence and grace, and when they recognized the significance of repentance for their future salvation. Urlsperger followed his central text in doing this. Jesus's message—"Repent and believe in the Gospel!"—demanded repentance but simultaneously assumed knowledge of the promise of the Gospel.

For Urlsperger, the New Testament promised the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the coming of the kingdom of God. While it would be

[44] Urlsperger, *Der Kranken Gesundheit* (1723), 1-2 "Diese Ordnung kann und darf niemand vorbey gehen / der an GOTT und seinem Reiche hier und dorten Theile zu haben verlanget."

appealing simply to believe the promise and avoid the difficult work of repentance, God had ordained otherwise. Urlsperger emphasized this by focusing on repentance first, after his brief acknowledgment of God's promise. Christ wanted you to "change and transform your sin," he wrote, and then believe in him "who is offered to you in the Gospel."[45] This change and transformation demanded reflection on the Old Testament prophets. Urlsperger selected passages from Joel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, which made clear the need for Christians' full commitment to repentance from their past sins: "turn yourselves to me with your entire heart" (Joel 2:12), "'turn again, you backsliding Israel!' says the Lord, 'so I will not distort my countenance against you'" (Jer. 3:12), and "wash, purify yourselves, put your evil essence from my eyes" (Isa. 1:16).[46]

Urlsperger set Christians to the arduous and constant tasks of turning, washing, and purifying themselves. It might seem counter to Lutheran theological understandings of the bondage of the will to place so much emphasis on individual effort in repentance and transformation. Martin Luther had taught that humans, corrupted by original sin, could do nothing to earn their salvation; it ultimately rested in God's power: "God has taken my salvation out of my hands and into his, making it depend on his choice and not mine, and has promised to save me, not by my own work

[45] Ibid., 1-2. "Thut Busse / und glaubet an das Evangelium! Das ist der Anfang der Predigt von Reiche GOttes / nicht nur Johannis des Täufers / sondern auch unsers Heilandes JESU Christi selbsten / gewsen; Marc. 1 / 15. Nicht genug war es zu sagen / die Thür zum Himmel seye eröffnet; nicht genug war es zu verkündigen / das Reich GOttes seye nahe herbey kommen: sondern die Ordnung musste dabey seyn / in und nach welcher man durch die eröffnete Thür in Himmel kommen / und in das Reich GOttes eingehen könne. Das ist die Ursache / daß / als unser Heiland kaum gemeldet / daß das Reich GOttes herbey kommen seye / er so gleich hinzu gethan: Thut Buse und glaube an das Evangelium / verändert und verwandelt euren Sinn / und glaubet an das Evangelium; oder, welches eines ist / glaubet an mich / der ich euch im Evangelio angebothen werde."

[46] Ibid., 3-5. "Ingleichem aus den Worten des Propheten Joels: Bekehret euch zu mir von ganzem Herzen; Cap. 2 / 12. wiederum aus der Ermahnung Jeremiä: Kehre wieder / du abtrünnige Israel! spricht der HErr / so will ich mein Antlitz nicht gegen euch verstellen; Cap. 3/ 12. und dann aus dem Propheten Jesaia: Waschet / reiniget euch / thut euer böses WEsen von meinen Augen; Cap. 1/ 16."

or exertion but by his grace and mercy."[47] In their everyday practice of teaching and comforting parishioners, however, Lutheran pastors had long "preached, exhorted, instructed, and consoled as if Christians had some necessary role to play in remaining on the road to heaven, though certainly not in entering upon this road in the first place." Protestant consolation literature encouraged humans' effort, the historian Ronald Rittgers has argued, even if the literature also showed "them how they could not possibly fulfill these expectations on their own; God had to do so in them via the Word and the Spirit."[48] Urlsperger's tract developed within this tradition. It focused early and repeatedly on the human effort of repentance, but the future promise of God's grace was always there, always assumed. Fulfilling the prophets' past calls to repent depended ultimately on a Christian's belief in God's future mercy: "surrender," Urlsperger wrote, "to God through his grace."[49]

As in Mather's writing, retrospection was essential for Urlsperger's emphasis on God's overarching providence. Instead of speaking in terms of exemplars offered by the larger community of faithful, however, here retrospection focused almost entirely on the circumstances and turmoil of the individual's sickness and what it might mean in the larger scheme of the individual's repentance and faith vis-à-vis salvation. God's providence was found in recognizing that the order of salvation was a "**gift of God**" and

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[47] Martin Luther, "On the Bondage of the Will," in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, ed. and trans. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 329.

[48] Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 198-199.

[49] Urlsperger, *Der Kranken Gesundheit* (1723), 3-5. "so uns in keinem andern Verstande zugeschrieben wird / als daß wir uns nur GOTT durch seine Gnade überlassen sollen / dem heil. Geiste nicht muthwillig widerstreben / die Gnade und Gabe nicht verachten." It should be noted that Urlsperger skirted close to a language of works-righteousness here—a heresy the Pietists were often accused of—and he also appealed to a mystical notion of surrender.

that this was true even when facing the most difficult, repentance-inducing sickness. For Urlsperger, the order of salvation was to be seen as "an **encouragement**;" indeed, "the entire book rests on such order as its **cornerstone**."[50] With proper preparation and attention to this divinely-ordained order, humans could "overcome" with faith in Christ "and, with the last and general trumpet sound, may arise to eternal life."[51] The order of salvation was a "gift." Although it came with great requirements and difficulties, it also gave Christians a clear and essential roadmap for their journey in faith.

Perceiving that the order of salvation involved both repentance and salvation allowed readers to move both backward and forward with Urlsperger as he explained physical suffering. In the tract's section on pestilential epidemics (*pestilenzialischen Seuchen*), Urlsperger again prefaced repentance with God's promise and, this time, dwelt on it more extensively. On the surface, this might seem contrary to the order of salvation Urlsperger had outlined, but trust in God's providential promise girded faith and offered necessary consolation, particularly in the height of an epidemic. With this trust, sufferers could reflect on the meaning of that promise, on the depth of their sins, and on the effective and purposeful use of the opportunity sickness provided for repentance. Mather, alternatively, had moved from repentance to faith and consolation in his tract on epidemics. His narrative structure was possible, however, because he emphasized biblical exemplars who the audience already knew would ultimately be saved. Using examples from the larger community of faithful allowed Mather to explain

[50] Ibid., preface page 5. "Hat man eine **Aufmunterung** zu Annehmung der Heils=Ordnung / und zwar vornehmlich aus dem Grunde / daß Busse und Glaube eine **Gabe GOttes** seye / vorhergehen lassen; weilen das ganze Buch auf solcher Ordnung / als seinem **Ecksteine**, ruhet."

[51] Ibid., preface pages 3-5. "daß sie / und ich mit ihnen / hier in der Zeit zu einer solchen heiligen Bereitschaft auf unser Ende dadurch erwecket werden / damit wir an demselben in dem Glaube an den Namen des Sohns GOttes überwinden / und bey dem letzten und allgemeinen Posaunenschalle zum ewigen Freudenleben auferstehen mögen."

repentance with retrospective glasses tinged with faith and salvation. While Urlsperger focused on the individual sufferer and his or her salvation, his narrative was also structured with his community's theology and reading practices in mind. Like Mather, further, he assumed that repentance would only find its fruition with trust in God's promise and the retrospective perspective and reflection made possible by this promise.

Urlsperger argued for God's central promise of salvation in the midst of sickness by urging readers to remember God's providential power over humans and sickness. The tract described this providence on three fronts. First, sickness was a mark of chosenness and provided spiritual fruits. Urlsperger described "difficult plagues"—implicitly referring to past plagues, likely including the many plagues of the Old Testament. Alluding to passages in the New Testament (Heb. 12: 6-7; 1 Cor. 13:13), he wrote that these plagues "were not sent as punishment to the faithful, but rather as chastisement and testing." In the "crucible" of sickness, the "children of God" were taught to trust more in "faith, love, and hope."[52] Second, the tract emphasized that Christ was more powerful than Satan, and that Christ's love and mercy were constant, even in the worst physical sickness. "When the eye sees no more help," Urlsperger wrote, "see Christ the physician yet remaining, who on the stump of the cross was exalted." If Christ's mercy could protect "God's children" from harm by Satan's "fiery arrows" (Eph. 6:16), it could certainly protect them from the much-less dangerous, "corporeal, although painful, illness." For Urlsperger, "God remains, even in the fiercest, angriest plague, father to his

[52] Urlsperger, *Der Kranken Gesundheit* (1750), 142. "Diesen soll man nach der Schrift zeigen, 1. Daß diese an sich schwere Plage den Frommen nicht zur Strafe, sondern zu ihrer Züchtigung und Prüfung, zugesandt werde. 2. Daß auch in dieser Feuerprobe der Kinder GOttes Glaube, Liebe, und Hoffnung bewährter werden solle." Cf. Hebrews 12:6-7; 1 Corinthians 13:13.

children and turns all to the best."[53] Third, the tract reminded readers that they were "not the first among the pious whom God has afflicted with plague boils." Here, Urlsperger finally cited a few specific biblical examples: the story of David choosing the plague as "the least" of "three evils"; the story of God healing Hezekiah; and the story of God staying the angel's hand after smiting Jerusalem with the plague (2 Sam. 24; 2 Kings 20).[54]

From the perspective afforded by God's providential promise to the chosen, the section on epidemics turned next to the theme of consolation. Organized as a hypothetical dialogue, this section anticipated the questions, doubts, and anxieties of the sick, and offered responses with compelling and comforting references to God's faithfulness and strength. To the objection of being "entirely helpless and forsaken," Urlsperger retorted: "is one abandoned, then, who sits under the umbrella of the highest and remains under the shade of the all-powerful?"[55] To the common and unnerving concern of insanity or delirium in final illness, Urlsperger wrote: "God beholds the

[53] Ibid., 143. "4. Wann das Auge keine Hülfe mehr sehe: so sehe Christus der Arzt noch übrig; der an dem Stamme des Kreuzes erhöhet worden, daß er allen Heilsbedürftigen ein Retter sehe. 5. Wenn Satanas nicht mächtig seye, durch seine feurigen Pfeile den Kindern GOttes ihr Recht an die Gnade in Christo und an den Himmel zu nehmen: so könne es vielweniger eine leibliche, ob wol peinliche, Krankheit thun.6. GOtt bleibe, auch in der auf das grimmigste wütenden Pest, seiner Kinder Vater, der alles zum besten wende: Er bleibe der Seele höchstes Gut; ob schon der Leib durch die Pest in den Todestaub falle." Cf. Ephesians 6:16.

[54] Ibid., 143-44. "8. Man seye nicht der Erste unter den Frommen, den GOtt mit Pestdrüsen heimgesucht. 9. David habe von drey Uebeln, unter welchen er eine Strafe wegen seiner Sünde wählen durfte, doch die Pest, als das geringste, erwählet. . . . 14. Der GOtt so den Hiskiam aud des Todes Rachen gerissen; und zum Engel, der Israel mit der Pestschlug, sagte, Es ist genug, laß nun deine Hand ab! Lebet noch: Und zwar lebet er so, daß, wenn wir in ihm an der Pest auch sterben müssen, wir doch um seinet willen in Ewigkeit leben werden."

[55] Ibid., 144. "2. Wenn man zu solcher Zeit nur nicht so gar hülflos und verlassen seyn müsste. Antw. Ist denn der verlassen, der unter dem Schirm des Höchsten sitzet, und under dem Schatten des Allmächtigen bleibet?

heart, not the external senses."[56] When the sufferer objected, "Oh! if only it didn't go so quickly," Urlsperger exhorted that, with proper preparation, a quick ending meant only that "you are so much earlier in heaven."[57]

Then Urlsperger turned to the most troublesome objections, concerning the community left behind and the final condition of the individual, physical body. He again pointed his readers to God's providence. In responding to concerns over dependent family and children who survived, he wrote that they would be cared for "according to the will of God . . . he cares for all." Humans were not in command, Urlsperger reminded readers. Rather "God sits in the regiment, and leads everything well."[58] One difficult objection focused on the individual body and resurrection: "What will happen with my poor corpse?" This was particularly worrisome to those who feared they would not be properly buried during the mass deaths of a plague and the corresponding social breakdown. God did not care, Urlsperger wrote, "whether or not your body was under the Earth, as long as it happened according to God's will. . . Why do you worry about the future? Care for your soul. The external house is already watched over by the universal architect."[59] The consolations offered by God's promise were numerous and extended to

[56] Ibid., 145. "4. Wenn ich doch nur bey meinem Verstande bliebe, und nicht unsinnig würde! Antw. Harre auf GOtt; befihls dem HErrn! GOtt sihet das Hertze an, nicht die äusserlichen Sinne: jenes kann in Christo ruhig seyn, wann bey diesen alles seltsam und fürchterlich scheinet. Ueberdieß rechnet GOtt keinem etwas zu, was wider seinen Willen in Werken, Worten, oder Geberden geschihet."

[57] Ibid., 145. "6. Ach! wenn es doch nur nicht so geschwinde gienge.Antw. Darum vorher bereitet: so ists nicht zu geschwind. Ists hernach eine schnelle Post, auf welcher du fort must: so bist du nur desto eher im Himmel."

[58] Ibid., 145-146. "7. Wie wirds aber denen gehen, die mir angehören; und für die ich gleichwol zu sorgen habe. Antw. Wie dir: das ist, nach dem Willen GOttes. Auf den wirf alle deine Sorgen: denn er sorget für alle. Bist du doch nicht Regente, der alles führen soll: GOtt sitzt im Regimente, und führet alles wohl."

[59] Ibid., 146. "8. Wie wirds aber mit meinem armen Leibe ablaufen? den, sorge ich, wird man unbegraben und zur Schande da ligen lassen. Andw. Das ist dem Glaubigen kein Schimpf, weder vor GOttes noch seiner Kinder Augen. Stirbst du in der Pest als ein Kind des Höchsten: so ist dein Tod, unerachtet deines unbegrabenen Leibes, doch werth geachtet vor dem HErrn. Wird denn desswegen dein Leib, gesetzt, er

the physical, created world. They were concrete reminders not only of the rewards of individual preparation and repentance, but also of God's providential care over the entire Christian community.

After convincing readers of the worthiness of God's promise and its consolation, the tract's section on epidemics finally turned to repentance, the first step in the order of salvation. As in Mather's tract, repentance involved retrospective reflection on the sins and worthlessness of both the individual and the larger community, and this reflection was compounded by consideration of the greatness of God's promise. The sick must see and repent the depths of human corruption, while admitting the righteousness of God's law and judgment:

> You should in heartfelt repentance humbly recognize, sincerely confess, faithfully apologize, and entirely leave your own sins and the sins of the land—so general are hypocrisy, contempt of the word of God, pride, fornication, heresy, avarice, mercilessness for and affliction of the poor, impenitence, and mockery. And regard them always as more than an abomination, by which God was provoked to send such a law.[60]

würde nicht begraben, nicht auferstehen? Ist dirs nicht, ob dein Leib unter ode rob der Erden seye: wenns nur geschiht nach GOttes Willen. Und mein! was bekümmerst du dich aufs Zukünftige? Sorge für deine Seele: die äusserliche Hütte wird von dem allgemeinen Baumester schon beobachtet werden. Und wie? Solltest du dich besser dünken, als so viele Zeugen GOttes, die um der Wahrheit willen ertödet worden; von denen es heisset, daß ihre Leiber auf der Gassen unbegraben ligen werden?"

[60] Ibid., 146. "1. Sollen in herzlicher Buse ihre eigenen und des Landes Sünden, so gemeiniglich sind Häucheley, Verachtung des Worts GOttes, Hohfahrt, Unzucht, Gottslästerung, Geiz, Unbarmherzigkeit und Bedrängniss der Armen, Unbusfertigkeit und Spötterey, demüthig erkennen/ herzlich bekennen, glaubig abbitten, gänzlich lassen; und sie immer mehrers als einen Gräuel achten: indem GOtt durch dieselben ein solches Gericht zu senden gereizet worden."

Through such reflection on the widespread sinfulness that affected all of humanity, generation after generation, Urlsperger counseled humility and "Christian patience" in sickness.[61]

In the end, sickness—and the order of salvation that it brought into clarity—was a gift. If used correctly, it focused sufferers not only on the general sins of humankind but also on their individual redemption. Urlsperger found an explicit scriptural example that evocatively illustrated both the order of salvation and the proper Christian response to the worst disease and suffering. Referring to 1 Samuel 3, Urlsperger wrote that, if it was decreed that "you and everyone in your house would have to die, answer '**He is the Lord; He does what pleases him!**'"[62] In these words of faith, Urlsperger found a model of the Christian practice of repentance and faith in the face of prophesied mortality. This practice was essential for Christians to overcome the natural fears and questions that accompanied sickness and to find in sickness an opportunity to focus on their salvation. When praying for community and neighbors, readers should not think first of their physical survival, "of the avoidance or lifting of the plague, but rather of the gift of repentance."[63] The sick should be exhorted "to murmur not against the Lord and his laws, but rather against their own sins."[64]

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[61] Ibid., 147.

[62] Ibid., 147. "7. Sollen ihre Seelen in christlicher Gedult fassen; und, wann ihnen auch zuvor gesagt würde, daß sie und alle in dem Hause sterben müssten, antworten: **Er ist der HErr; Er thue, was ihm gefället!**"

[63] Ibid., 148. "15. Sollen, in ihrer Fürbitte für andere, zu erst nicht der Abwendung oder Hinwegnehmung der Plagen, sondern der Gebung der Buse, gedenken."

[64] Ibid., 148. "16. Sollen andere ermahnen, nicht wider den HErrn und seine Gerichte, sondern wider ihre eigenen Sünden, zu murren."

Urlsperger encouraged his readers to reflect constantly on their individual sins as well as on the general human condition of sin and the impossibility of fully repenting without complete trust in God's providence and grace. The section on epidemics ended with a reminder to those presently suffering to have faith in God's mercy and providence, attributes which Urlsperger had made abundantly clear throughout his earlier discussions of promise and consolation. He urged his readers to think of this providence and, in so doing, to look to the past for evidence that would buttress their faith and perseverance in sickness. "You should believe," Urlsperger wrote, "that God, in the middle of his wrath, thinks to his mercy; and that he proves such with many words and examples."[65] The section on plagues did not list any specific biblical examples of consolation in the midst of loss, as Mather had done with his repeated reference to Mark 5:39 ("Why make ye this ado?").[66] Rather, the section left readers to reflect individually and retrospectively on "words and examples" through which God had shown providential care and signs of past, present, and future mercy—be it in biblical forbears or in their own lives.

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In their writings on disease and epidemics, both Mather and Urlsperger stressed God's providence and the importance of human reflection. Both men wrote pastoral manuals on sickness because they could not personally attend to the many suffering and dying in their communities. Their tracts differed slightly in how they spoke of and imagined community; Mather emphasized a church community that extended through

[65] Ibid., 148."18. Sollen glaube, daß GOtt, mitten in seinem Zorn, an seine Barmherzigkeit gedenke; und daß er solches mit vielen Worten und Exempeln bewiesen."

[66] Mather, *Wholesome Words* (1713), 22-24.

time to biblical exemplars, while Urlsperger stressed the individual and his or her participation in God's order of salvation as perceived and taught by the larger community. They both, nonetheless, depended on and assumed a community of readers that, when faced with sickness, would share their tracts' central concerns of repentance, faith, and consolation. Both authors relied on retrospection in order to address these concerns.

Repentance formed a major component of eighteenth-century Protestant sickness narratives, but this does not mean that pastors like Mather and Urlsperger sought passivity among their communities and readers. Repentance required intense retrospection and reflection on human sin, God's providence, and the hope of salvation. Through this process, the sick could grow in faith and find consolation. Retrospection and reflection thus indelibly shaped sickness narratives, creating a practice of reading and narrating disease and epidemics that became widespread among Protestants throughout the Atlantic world.

In responding to sickness, Protestants found significant spiritual resources in both the past and the future as they tried to plot a course for themselves in the present—in repentance, in writing, or in medical or charitable interventions. Each of these plots involved a level of individual agency that scholars sometimes overlook. Repentance, as Ronald Rittgers has argued, "accorded to the Christian a measure of spiritual agency that it denied to the sinful human being."[67] Repentance provided the sick with a purpose, even while they accepted that their success depended ultimately on God's will and grace. Likewise, reading and writing represented an opportunity for action.

[67] Rittgers, *The Reformation of Suffering,* 198.

Perceiving the uncertainty of the future, Protestants always stressed God's providence. They could do this by turning to biblical exemplars or by reflecting on their individual redemption story within the theology outlined by their community. These paths were not mutually exclusive and do not break down to a simple Calvinist or Pietist position. Rather, these paths—as illustrated by Mather's and Urlsperger's writings—highlight two of the different ways in which Protestants interpreted their pain and suffering within a larger, communal narrative that endowed individuals' experiences with spiritual significance.

The theology and language of sickness articulated in Mather's and Urlsperger's manuals were appropriated in personal illness narratives of the eighteenth century. Understandings of disease can be socially created and, as some scholars have argued, can ostracize those who are sick and suffering. But the work of applying or finding meaning in sickness can also reflect the agency of individuals struggling to interpret suffering.[68] It can be "therapeutic."[69] The central theme of providence and the use of

[68] Illness narratives, according to the medical humanist Anne Hunsaker Hawkins, provide sufferers with guideposts as they attempt "to orient themselves in the world of sickness." These narratives are powerful; they—along with their structure, language, themes and meaning—are often re-used and borrowed widely. Those in power have used them to stigmatize illness and the sufferer or to force a specific order and meaning on an epidemic. But narratives also give voice to individual authors. They allow sufferers "not only to describe [the] disordering process [of sickness] but also to restore to reality its lost coherence and to discover, or create, a meaning that can bind it together again." Those seeking to exert social control might take advantage of the vivid narratives sickness can provide, but these practices are also symptomatic of how sickness narratives speak to common and long-lasting religious questions of meaning and human experience. Anne Hunsaker Hawkins, *Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography* (West Lafayette, IN.: Purdue University Press, 1993), 2-3, 27. For other works on modern pathography, see Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), and Arthur Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

[69] The growing interest in modern pathography represents in part a response to Susan Sontag's work on illness and metaphor and in part a growing interest in the patient within the history of medicine, which has accompanied a criticism of the "dehumanized character of modern medical treatment." Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2. Cf. Jürgen Helm, who opens his work with the comment: "Not seldom do patients complain about the coldness and anonymity of modern therapy, which sees the individual sick person as a "case," which reduces him to an abstract disorder, and which seems to lose from sight his individual life destiny"

retrospection would be borrowed and adapted widely among Protestants throughout the eighteenth century.

In closing, it is worthwhile to consider an example of how and in what ways such transmission occurred. In the fall of 1750, Johann Martin Boltzius, a Pietist pastor in Ebenezer, Georgia, recorded a parishioner's interpretation of a recent epidemic of "Rothe Friesel,"[70] which in two months killed more than a dozen children in the small community. Boltzius himself lost two children. After the funeral of the second, a parishioner named Brandner told Boltzius that he "considers it significant that God began his chastisements" in the pastors' houses. Brandner then connected the present 1750 epidemic and Boltzius's loss of children with an event from seven years previously, when an epidemic killed many of the cattle in the community, striking first the house of another Ebenezer pastor, Israel Christian Gronau. When the previous epidemic began in

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(translation mine). Helm, *Krankheit, Bekehrung und Reform,* 1. Sontag sought to divest the discourse surrounding disease of its metaphorical language, arguing that "nothing is more punitive than to give a disease a meaning—that meaning being invariably a moralistic one. Any important disease whose causality is murky, and for which treatment is ineffectual, tends to be awash in significance." For Sontag, applying meaning to disease—that is, discourse about disease removed from the purely scientific realm—opened possibilities for stigmatizing disease and the diseased. Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1978), 58. Although thought-provoking and influential, Sontag's account has been met with concern from a number of scholars, who argue that the effort to give meaning to disease has cultural significance and can be empowering for individual patients who suffer. Roy Porter and G.S. Rousseau, for example, write that "people and cultures always have given meaning to disease. And that is partly because disease categories have helped to articulate the experience of the body itself, and hence the project of the individual person." Porter and Rousseau emphasize this "post-Foucaldian point," asking "Why should the language of sickness *not* be available for staking out claims about the self? Might *not* there be a therapeutic value and possibly even virtual healthiness in owning one's own disorders?" Roy Porter and G. S. Rousseau, *Gout: The Patrician's Malady* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 284-285. Studies of pathography likewise offer a helpful lens. See Hawkins, *Reconstructing Illness*; Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller*, and Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*. A more recent, thought-provoking work on pathography is Jackie Stacey's *Teratologies*. Stacey recognizes the importance of narrative for many cancer patients but cautions against the masculine-tinged heroic narrative of progress and triumph that often emerges (13-15).

[70] It is not entirely clear what this disease was; some scholars have translated it as "the purples." See George F. Jones, *The Georgia Dutch: From the Rhine and Danube to the Savannah, 1733-1783* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press), 235. There were, in the same time period, epidemics of measles and scarlet fever in Ebenezer. See the journal entries in Urlsperger, *DR* (1989), 13: 161-207. For Jones' explanation of the Rothe Friesel, see ibid., v-vi, and 226n24.

a pastor's home, the community was astonished and had questioned what such a beginning meant in terms of God's providence. On that occasion, the pastor Gronau responded by reading to the community from 1 Peter 4: 17-19:

> For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Brandner's recognition of a "parallel" between the two epidemics saddened the grief-stricken Boltzius. Yet he was also deeply moved by the parishioner's recollection of Gronau's impromptu lesson. He wrote: "from it I see how our dear parishioners profit in a Christian way from the things that occur among us."[71] The parishioner encountered disease, looked back to a previous moment of suffering and its lesson, and reflected anew on a scriptural passage that highlighted the universal corruption of original sin, warned unrepentant sinners, and encouraged faith in God's providence.

Reminded of the past and hopeful in the future, Boltzius found comfort in Brandner's narrative of the present epidemic. His journal entry recorded a moment of transmission—it evidences that the practice of retrospection and the appeal to God's providence were important components of sickness narratives, shared among both clergy and laity. It is difficult to know with certainty how Urlsperger's and Mather's tracts were read and interpreted in the Puritan and Pietist communities of eighteenth-century New England and Georgia, or the specific ways in which they shaped deeply

[71] On the epidemic among the cattle, see Johann Martin Boltzius and Israel Christian Gronau to Gotthilf August Francke, August 1743, Missionsarchiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen, A 11: 3. The story is from Jones' translation of Boltzius's published journal, see Urlsperger, *DR* (1990), 14:186. The scriptural quotation is from the King James Version.

personal narratives of disease. Evidence like Boltzius's 1750 journal entry, however, suggests that the themes that appeared in pastoral manuals also infused more personal descriptions of disease.

When confronted with pain, eighteenth-century Protestants employed the language with which they and their audience were familiar. They wrote stories that explained their individual difficulties and circumstances and that addressed their most fervent theological questions and spiritual concerns. But, always, they used the tool of retrospection and appealed to God's providence. Providence suffused writings on illness at this time, appearing not only in published pastoral tracts, but also in the published and unpublished letters, journals, and memoirs of men and women around the Atlantic world.

Chapter 2

Writing Sickness, Witnessing Providence: Letters and Journals of the Atlantic World

In two letters from January and March of 1776, Eli Forbes described his wife Molly's final sickness and death to her father, Ebenezer Parkman in Westborough, Massachusetts. The previous December, shortly after moving to Gloucester, Molly Forbes had developed a cough, a burning sensation in her stomach, and pain in her breast. She found a hard spot under her nipple. Treatment with a plaster uncovered an ulcer, but she was convinced that it was not as bad as a previous ulcer she had suffered. Eli Forbes did his own examination and saw worrisome signs of spreading hardness in the back of her breast and the glands under her arm. He decided not to tell Molly his worst suspicions. The doctors treated the ulcer with plasters until a discharge appeared, offering some relief; but the case became dangerous, and Molly Forbes realized she would die.

Thereafter, Eli Forbes's account alternated between a passionate description of his own despair, and a beautiful narrative of his wife's "free" conversation and prayers for sanctification, her gradual assurance of God's care, and her final transformation from a mortal to a spiritual state—a narrative which, in the end, transformed Eli's despair as well. According to Eli, Molly requested no further prayers for her life, but asked, rather, "tht I may be enabld to honour God by my dying behavor (*sic*)." She "continued in a most Heavenly Frame and when she saw me dissolved in Tears and my Heart ready to bust she said, Dont weep so, you have more Reason to Rejoyce I shall leave you but have still in God." In her final moments, Eli wrote: "I went to put my Face

to hers . . . but she put me from her as having done with all Mortals without a Sigh without a groan or a struggle she breathd out her Soul before nine." Distraught, Eli Forbes nonetheless was eventually able to write that Molly's "Death was in short as comfortable as Death can be- and She dyed as [I] wish to Dye."[1]

Eli Forbes recorded his wife's sickness and death with painstaking detail. His account served as a detailed testimony to his wife's physical experiences and salvation story—and to his own. As Protestant pastoral manuals had urged, he used the experience of corporeal pain and loss to reflect on his wife's and his own spiritual state and to find consolation in God's direction. Through narration, Forbes offered an account for those absent. He served as a witness to his wife's suffering, to his own experience, and to God's providence.

In witnessing Molly Forbes's sickness and death, Eli Forbes told a common if generally overlooked story in the history of medicine and religion. Historians of early modern medicine often focus on epidemics, which offer plentiful and evocative sources of past diseases, medical interventions, and social divisions. Yet, like Molly Forbes, most early Americans' experience of pain and suffering was defined by non-epidemic disease.[2] Sickness was nonetheless still a communal experience, meant to be witnessed and shared both immediately and in writing, and, as Eli Forbes's account attests, this witnessing and narrating was a deeply religious act. Scholars in the medical humanities have highlighted the important role narrative can play by allowing sufferers to connect the often isolating, individual experience of disease to broader communal paradigms.

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[1] Eli Forbes to Ebenezer Parkman, 17 January and 2 March 1776, Parkman Family Papers, Box 3, Folder 3, American Antiquarian Society (hereafter AAS).

[2] Cf. Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 64-65.

But this scholarship discounts early modern sickness narratives and focuses on our contemporary culture, relying on an old-fashioned yet still persistent dichotomy between the "religious" views of the past and the "scientific" world of now. Pathography, one scholar argues, is a modern genre, "appropriate to a more materialistic culture where the physical replaces the spiritual as a central concern, where the physician replaces the clergyman as the agent in the healing process."[3] Such a claim is problematic. As Eli Forbes's account demonstrates, religious and medical language coexisted in the eighteenth century. Spiritual concerns were significant for eighteenth-century sufferers, but so were the material and physical realities of suffering and healing. Eighteenth-century Americans wrote about sickness in spiritual *and* physical terms; and their language, fears, and hopes were rooted in the dual experiences of spiritual forsakenness and physical pain.

Early Americans understood sickness and medicine through the lens of providence. This does not mean that they were passive in their response to disease; rather, they worked actively to witness disease to their community. Forbes's letters contained everything his contemporaries would expect: the direct, precise observation of the physical and spiritual state of the sufferer, the ordering of events into a familiar narrative, and, finally, a confirmation of God's mercy even in the midst of suffering and doubt.

To write about sickness was a way to witness God's providence in the individual life while inhabiting a narrative form familiar to the wider Protestant community. Sickness writings followed a pattern. As encouraged by pastoral writings on sickness,

[3] Anne Hunsaker Hawkins, *Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993), 2-3, 27.

Protestants used retrospection to reflect on past sins, to ponder the meaning of their physical suffering for their future salvation, and to find hope and consolation in God's direction. While reflecting a conscientious engagement in narrative patterns familiar to the wider community, sickness writings also highlighted unique, personal experiences as a point of substantiation of the main Christian story.[4] These personal experiences often included detailed descriptions of physical pain and medical treatments. Although rarely included in studies of the history of medicine, these writings are a crucial component of our history of medicine. The authors relied on religious belief to make sense of physical pain, and they described their corporeal suffering to confirm steadfast faith.

The sections that follow address a wide range of personal accounts of sickness from different religious and language communities in the Atlantic world and from different periods of the eighteenth century. First addressed are the detailed accounts of sickness and its silencing effects. Some of these accounts were written by the sufferer and some were finished or written by an observer or acquaintance. The authors dwelt on individual, physical details of pain and they persisted in writing even when hindered or silenced by pain. This persistence demonstrates the immense importance of sickness narratives, which confirmed God's providence in the life of the individual sufferer and the community. The second group of sources is made up of sickness accounts written by observers, who shared details of suffering and death with those not present. Writing was an opportunity to describe, organize, and interpret the physical and spiritual details of

[4] Archetypal narratives, as the historian Bruce Hindmarsh has described in the case of early modern Protestant conversion narrative, offered a pattern for individual writers, but could also be "exploited as a creative means of literary self-discovery." Bruce Hindmarsh, , "Religious Conversion as Narrative and Autobiography," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 348; cf. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 131.

sufferers' experiences, and, correspondingly, their hope for salvation. Sickness narratives served—like martyr accounts before them—to witness God's providential mercy over human life and to inspire faith in this mercy. The final group of sources point to the persistence of providence in personal sickness narratives even in the late-eighteenth century. Despite changing ideas about heaven, God, and predestination, sickness accounts remained fundamentally organized by a narrative of human suffering and redemption as a witness to God's grace.

Detailing Sickness, Overcoming Silence

When confronted with physical suffering, eighteenth-century Protestants placed immense importance on the act of writing as a means to interpret and comprehend their pain. Writing was a central part of their identity and their relationships and through writing, those who suffered were able to enunciate the apprehension they felt when faced with increasing silence. Sickness narratives testify to the reality of somatic distress. They demonstrate how narrative could articulate and ease both physical and spiritual anxieties by connecting writers to their community. And they highlight how, through retrospection, authors sought and interpreted God's providential direction and care in their sickness and life.

Writing was an opportunity for eighteenth-century Protestants to find some order in the wake of the disruption of sickness. Writing connected sufferers not only to the wider Protestant community but also to God. When they attempted to write despite sickness and pain, the act allowed them to find some voice and control in suffering and to remain attached to their community and steadfast in their faith. Narrative provided sufferers with culturally prevalent "metaphorical paradigms," which they could rely on

and confirm with their own unique, individual experience. Narrative patterns were "guideposts" for writers of sickness, who sought to "restore to reality its lost coherence and to discover, or create, a meaning that can bind it together again."[5]

As scholars have shown, eighteenth-century Protestants were well practiced in narrating their experiences and reflecting on God's providence in their individual lives. The historian Bruce Hindmarsh has demonstrated how early modern Protestants relied on a template in their conversion narratives, but this template could also be "exploited as a creative means of literary self-discovery."[6] As Hindmarsh describes, conversion and death were narrative opportunities for individuals to interpret and relate their unique experience of the Holy Spirit in terms the larger Protestant community would understand. The collection of unique individual experiences with common narrative features, at the same time, confirmed God's providential direction over both the individual and the community.[7]

Like conversion, sickness also represented an opportunity for individuals and communities to engage in this narration of providence. On the evening of June 28, 1774, the Methodist itinerant Francis Asbury took up his journal and recorded a frustrating day of sickness and limited speech. A crowd of people had attended public worship that day, but Asbury was unable to preach more than a "few words of exhortation." Asbury narrated this silence before the eager audience as Satan's way of tempting him "to murmuring and discontent." Writing allowed Asbury to reflect and to interpret his

[5] Jackie Stacey, *Teratologies*: *A Cultural Study of Cancer* (London: Routledge, 1997), 4-5, 8-17; Hawkins, *Reconstructing Illness*, 2-3. For other works on modern pathography, see Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), and Arthur Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

[6] Bruce Hindmarsh, "Religious Conversion as Narrative," 348.

[7] Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 131.

experience. He prayed for resignation to God's will while questioning why, as a servant of God, he suffered silence during worship. He found guidance in scripture, recording the passage: "*If I be without chastisement, then am I a bastard and not a son.*"[8] Through retrospective perspective and scriptural reflection, Asbury was able to interpret his suffering and silence as marks of his chosenness and God's providence.

Personal spiritual writings, including accounts of illness, were shared among communities of like-minded faithful throughout the Atlantic world. In Asbury's case, his journals were published in the United States beginning in 1789 with the first publication of the *Arminian Magazine* of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. Methodist readers, publishers thought, would profit from Asbury's writing and witness of God's providential ways; they would be able to apply such a narrative to their own experiences.[9] The writing and reading practices that developed at this time encouraged individuals to interpret their unique experiences in the pattern of the archetypal Christian story of God's intervention in and redemption of the individual and communal life. Christians were actively engaged in the practice of not only writing but also reading, re-reading, and sharing writings for spiritual comfort and retrospective clarity.

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[8] See Asbury's journal entries for 28 June and 30 June 1774 in Frances Asbury, *An Extract from the Journal of Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist-Episcopal Church in America, From August 7, 1771, to December 29, 1778* (Philadelphia: Crukshank, 1792) 130-134; cf. Hebrews 12:8.

[9] *The Arminian Magazine: Consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises on General Redemption* (Philadelphia: Prichard & Hall, 1789). The *Magazine* did not sell as quickly as hoped, and Asbury's journal was spun off into a stand-alone publication beginning in 1792. According the introduction to the 1792 volume, there had "been no intention for many years, of making [the journal] public." But Asbury's journal, which "*contains the simple exercises of the author's mind and life*," was well-adapted for "*plain and simple people, who will look for nothing elaborate or refined; but for genuine experience and naked truth.*" Asbury, *Extract from the Journal*, preface page A.

Writings did not need to be formally published—like Asbury's—to be shared. The 1750s memoir of Sarah Pierpont, which was compiled from her journals and "published" as a manuscript volume by her minister Ebenezer Parkman, likewise stressed God's providence in her individual experiences. Pierpont called her diary the "Minutes of the Breathing of God's Spirit on her Heart." A Congregationalist from New Haven, she "began early to observe the Motions & Influence of the Holy Spirit on Her Inner-Man" and kept a journal "of Her Experiences or soul Exercises."[10] For Pierpont—or, at least, for her editor Parkman—narrative provided an opportunity to record those experiences into a treasury for the future, for moments when "she could hardly belive (*sic*) herself to be a Christian," so she could look to previous times, when "the Evidence broke out, with such irresistable brightnes, & Glory, That she could no longer Doubt."[11] For Christians like Pierpont, the practice of writing tracked the moments of God's work in their lives. Such a record could someday be reread and a former spiritual state reflected upon.

Eighteenth-century Protestant writings detailed stories of conversion, revival, and mission along with the minutiae of physical and economic setbacks and challenges. Sharing such details was a means to confirm God's providence throughout the wider Protestant community in the Atlantic world. This sharing occurred both informally, as journals and letters were passed between friends and community members, or more formally, as manuscript or published volumes, or as features in religious magazines.[12]

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[10] Ebenezer Parkman, "Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Pierpont," Parkman Family Papers, Box 2, Folder 4, AAS. Parkman included these quotations from Pierpont's journal in his introductory section (there is no pagination in this unpublished memoir). The "motions of the Holy Spirit" is a longstanding theme within Christianity and can be traced within Puritanism to, for example, Richard Sibbes. See Richard Sibbes, *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes,* Vol. 2, (Edinburgh: James Nichol 1862), 69.

[11] Ebenezer Parkman, "Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Pierpont," Parkman Family Papers, Box 2, Folder 4, AAS.

[12] In a biography of the eighteenth-century Congregationalist Sarah Osborn, Catherine Brekus has argued that writing a memoir allowed Osborn to give "her life a new religious meaning, and whenever she longed

The journals of Johann Martin Boltzius, a Pietist Lutheran missionary in Ebenezer, Georgia, reflect the hybridity between private reflection and public sharing—and also demonstrate how eighteenth-century Protestant print and correspondence culture extended beyond English-speaking communities into German Pietism. Boltzius's journals (written from 1732-1765) were edited, published, and shared throughout the Atlantic world and perhaps beyond—Boltzius himself received published reports of the Pietist mission that, in cooperation with the Danish crown, worked in Tranquebar (today Tharangambadi) on the eastern coast of India.[13] The journals focused on everyday details of community life, but Boltzius and his fellow ministers also wrote the journals with full knowledge that they would be published and distributed to a large audience of religious sympathizers and possible benefactors, much like the journals of English-speaking missionaries like Francis Asbury and, earlier, George Whitefield and John Wesley.[14] Boltzius and his editors had this audience in mind as they shaped the contents of the journals in both manuscript and published forms.[15] Writing and print

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for tangible evidence of her salvation she would sit down to reread her story." Catherine Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 133.

[13] Similar publications received from Halle included an annual *Relation* of the activities of the Francke Foundations and *Nachrichten aus dem Reiche Gottes* (*Reports from the Kingdom of God*). See Johann Martin Boltzius (hereafter JMB) to Gotthilf August Francke (hereafter GAF), 5 Oct. 1738, JMB to GAF, 13 May, 1741, JMB and Israel Christian Gronau (hereafter ICG) to GAF, 5 Jun. 1741, JMB to GAF, 5 Aug. 1746, in Johann Martin Boltzius, *The Letters of Johann Martin Boltzius: Lutheran Pastor in Ebenezer, Georgia*, ed. and trans. Russell Kleckley in collaboration with Jürgen Gröschl, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 256-257, 323, 328, 453 (hereafter JMB, *Letters*). See also W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 8-9.

[14] Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 102-137.

[15] Boltzius' journals were edited by the Augsburg pastor Samuel Urlsperger and, later, by his son Johann Urlsperger, and published in Halle almost annually under the title *Ausführliche Nachricht von den saltzburgischen Emigranten, die sich in America niedergelassen haben* (*Detailed Report of the Salzburger Emigrants, who have settled in America*) and, later in Augsburg, under the title *Amerikanisches Ackerwerk Gottes oder zuverlässige Nachrichten, den Zustand der amerikanischen und von salzburgischen Emigranten erbauten Pflanzstadt Ebenezer…* (*American Fieldwork of God, or reliable News, on the Condition of the American Colony Ebenezer, built by Salzburg Emigrants…*). The

were essential to the Protestant missions and revivals that defined eighteenth-century Christianity; readers were "edified" and inspired by accounts of the evidence of God's providence at work among ministers, missionaries, and Christian communities.[16]

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eighteen continuations of the original detailed reports can be found bound together in three volumes: Samuel Urlsperger, ed., *Ausführliche Nachricht von den saltzburgischen Emigranten, die sich in America niedergelassen haben* (Halle/Augsburg, 1735-1753). For the second series, see: Samuel Urlsperger and Johann Urlsperger, eds. *Amerikanisches Ackerwerck Gottes* (Augsburg, 1753-1759, 1766). There is an 18-volume series of English translations of the journals: Samuel Urlsperger, ed., *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants who Settled in America,* trans. and ed. George Fenwick Jones, et al. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1968-1995) (hereafter Urlsperger, *DR*). As translators and historians have noted, the editors Urlsperger altered—indeed occasionally "bowdlerized"—the ministers' content. Boltzius was well aware of the implications of his writing for publication and the uses of such accounts within a community. He reported frequently on reading both his own and others' published accounts. On Tranquebar (sometimes spelled Trankebar), see ICG to GAF, 21 July 1743, Missionsarchiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen (hereafter AFSt/M) 5 A 11: 2; and Boltzius's 8 Aug. 1750 journal entry in Urlsperger, *DR* 14 (1989), 112-113. Reports on missionary activities abroad could "awaken" the community with whom the accounts were widely shared, because God "blessed" such publications to have effect "in spiritual and material ways." A *Relation* from Halle in 1740, for example, served to "very powerfully remind" the ministers of mortality and left them "encouraged with new earnestness to build for heaven. JMB to GAF, 13 May, 1741, and JMB and ICG to GAF, 5 June 1741, in JMB, *Letters*, 323-324, 327. Perhaps because he read these accounts so carefully, Boltzius became concerned when he found his own accounts edited in such a way that altered his meaning. See JMB and ICG to Johann August Majer, 14 June 1743, AFSt/M 5 A 10: 51, which complained that an episode with a Moravian had been omitted from the *Ausführliche Nachricht* from 1743, and JMB to GAF, 24 June 1765, in JMB, *Letters*, 775-76, which complained that an excerpt in *Geistliches Magazin* had wrongly portrayed the ministers as collecting money for visiting the sick. Over time, the ministers themselves seem to have developed a more cautious approach to journal writing, and at times kept and transmitted "secret journals," or private discussions of events that they knew were not suitable for publication and transmission to pious audiences, which could include possible benefactors. Sometimes the ministers did not want to criticize a benefactor, discuss poor conditions or social relations, or admit to a change in community life—such as the closure of the orphanage—that seemed contrary to the goals of the community and its benefactors. See George F. Jones, "The Secret Diary of Pastor Johann Martin Boltzius," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 53 (1969), 78-110; Renate Wilson, "Public Works and Piety in Ebenezer: The Missing Salzburger Diaries of 1744-1745," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 77 (1993), 336-366. In another instance, the ministers sent a detailed, secret account of the erratic behavior of the Ebenezer physician, Christian Ernst Thilo. See JMB to GAF, 17 May 1738, AFSt/M A 5: 23. On possible audiences for the journals, see Renate Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer: Pietism, agriculture and commerce in colonial Georgia" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 1988), 83-84.

[16] Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative,*102-137. Hindmarsh's focus is the English-speaking world, but similar examples are found among German-speakers world. Bolzius's journals were published with an eye to an eager readership that was well informed of events and missions in the larger Protestant world and that was keen to read and to be "edified." Reports from Ebenezer and other missions, such as Tranquebar, appeared not only in self-standing editions but were also excerpted in other devotional publications, such as the *Geistliches Magazin* (*Spiritual Magazine*). This German-language magazine featured topics from missions to Native Americans in New England to the conversion of Africans in England and the Danish West Indies. Accounts of Ebenezer were republished in "Einige gute Nachrichten aus dem Reiche Gottes: I. Von dem gegenwärtigen Zustande der Saltzburgischen Emigranten in der Americanischen Provintz Georgien," *Geistliches Magazin zum nützlichen Gebrauch für Lehrer und andere Christen, die sich gern mit etwas erbaulichem, zur Förderung des Heils ihrer und anderer Seelen unterhalten wollen* 1:1 (1761), 160-175. The *Geistliches Magazin* discussed and republished work on an

Like conversion and revival, sickness presented a critical opportunity to write about Christian life and God's providence. Sickness, at once the most mundane and defining of life events, provided all eighteenth-century women and men with the chance to reflect individually and to contribute to a larger community of Protestants witnessing God's work and will in the world. Even those who did not or could not write had an opportunity to participate in the well-known Christian story of sin, repentance, consolation, and providence.

The centrality of writing to Protestant spiritual practice and community is perhaps best demonstrated by sickness sources, which often lamented an *inability* to write or a profound limitation on writing. When eighteenth-century sufferers attempted to write despite sickness and disease, the act attached them to a larger community and allowed them to find some voice and control in suffering. Writing about pain offered a connection to correspondents or to a future self; narrative provided a record upon which

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impressive expanse of topics, including, for example, a piece on the conversion of Africans in the Danish islands of the Carribbean and in England, a report on the spread of Protestant churches in America (particularly Pennsylvania), a biography of the brother of the popular seventeenth-century English children's book author James Janeway, the missionary work of Wheelock among the Native Americans in New England, and correspondence relating to George Whitefield. See "Fortsetzung guter Nachrichten aus dem Reiche GOttes, und zwar von den Anstalten zur Bekehrung der armen Negers, auf den Königlich-Dänischen Inselen St. Thomas, St. Croir, und St. Jean," *Geistliches Magazin* 1:4 (1762), 410-430; "Fortsetzung guter Nachrichten aus dem Reiche GOttes, und zwar von den Anstalten zur Bekehrung der armen Negers durch eine Gesellschaft in England," *Geistliches Magazin* 1:5 (1762), 525-556; "Vermischte Nachrichten, welche die Ausbreitung der evangelischen Kirche in den Americanischen Landen betreffen," *Geistliches Magazin* 2:1 (1763), 91-112; "Leben und Ende Herrn Johann Janewey, Diener des Evangelii, aus dem Englischen übersetzt, *Geistliches Magazin* 2:5 (1765), 567-590; "Vorläufige Anmerckungen über nachstehende, aus dem Englischen in das Teutsche übersetzte Nachricht, von den Indianischen Armen=Schulen," *Geistliches Magazin* 3:2 (1766), 231-302; and "Auszug aus einem Schreiben des Hrn. George Davis, an den Hrn. George Withfield in London, *Geistliches Magazin* 4:4 (1770), 442-444. Other Pietist communities, which had dissented from Halle, also published spiritual magazines with news from around the world. See, for example, Johann Samuel Carl, ed., *Geistliche Fama* (Berleburg: 1730-1744). Note that this work was sometimes published under the pseudonym of "Christianus Democritus" and is sometimes misattributed and miscataloged under the name of Johann Konrad Dippel, who used this pseudonym. This is the case at the Library Company of Philadelphia. On German-language translation in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, see Patrick M. Erben, *A Harmony of the Spirits: Translation and the Language of Community in Early Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hilll, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Jan Stievermann, "Faithful Translations: New Discoveries on the German Pietist Reception of Jonathan Edwards," *Church History* 83 (2014): 324-366.

Protestant authors and audiences could later look back. The inability to write could leave the sick and, often, their loved ones or witnesses feeling unanchored and adrift.[17]

It is not hard to find evidence of the silencing effects of illness in eighteenth-century sources. Archives offer evidence in abundance. In a collection from 1790s Virginia, for example, periodic sickness disrupted the attractive, regular, and error-free script in John Hargrave's letters to his employer, Henry Banks, a land speculator in Philadelphia. Hargrave always apologized for any silence or irregularity, and his apologies remind us of the physical requirements of writing in the eighteenth century. During a sickness in September of 1797, for example, Hargrave wrote: "You will meet with some difficulty reading this letter, for I am obliged to write as I lay on my pillow."[18] In October of 1798, Hargrave suffered from what may have been yellow fever and, again, explained his illness in terms of his near inability to write: "But I can assure you that I am at this time scarsly able to hold a Pen, for I have been immensely unwell for a considerable time." By December he was worse, writing: "I am scarsly able to set up

[17] Suffering could cause a breakdown of language, a phenomenon which the literary scholar Elaine Scarry has well described, but eighteenth-century Protestants made determined efforts to find language and to describe suffering—a moment, Scarry argues, akin to "the birth of language itself"—in which a certain reality is expressed or substantiated. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 6-14. I find Scarry's work compelling, particularly in its relation to the effects pain has on language in situations of torture and war. I have reservations about the second part of her book—on the "making" of the world—and find it difficult to apply her analysis of the scriptures and Marx to the eighteenth-century manuscript sources with which I am working here. But I think Scarry herself has not settled on a conclusion on the significance of "making" in these narratives: "It may be . . . that no other two texts in western civilization contain such sustained and passionate meditations on the nature of the human imagination. Their shared conviction that the 'problem of suffering' takes place and must be understood with the more expansive frame of the 'problem of creating' may at the very least be taken as an invitation to attend with more commitment, to the subject of making, a subject whose philosophic and ethical import we do not yet fully understand." See page 277.

[18] John Hargrave to Henry Banks, 1 September 1797, 6 September 1797, 11 September 1797, 20 September 1797, 29 September 1797, 13 September 1798, 16 September 1798, 24 September 1798, 19 November 1798, Henry Banks Papers, Section 1, Folder 8, Virginia Historical Society (hereafter VHS). On the tools required for letter writing in this era, see Konstantin Dierks, "Letter Writing, Stationery Supplies, and Consumer Modernity in the Eighteenth-century Atlantic World," *Early American Literature* 41 (2006): 473–94.

having on me a voilent [sic] Yellow Jaundice, which makes my skin and eyes precisely the Colour of Saffron and Gives me fevers.__As soon as I am able to say much I will write you a long letter."[19] Hargrave, in ways, measured his escalating health issues in terms of his ability to sit up, hold a pen, and write.

In citing the limitations sickness placed on their ability to write, writers revealed the enormous value they found in the activity of recording and narrating their sickness. Writing allowed them to witness the providential meaning they found in their suffering. In 1744, for example, Gotthilf Francke, the director of the Francke Foundations in Halle, Germany, wrote to Lutheran ministers in Georgia. Francke's wife had died a year previously, and since that time, Francke wrote, he had suffered emotionally as well as physically. During Lent he was attacked by a painful rash all over his body, which prevented him from preaching and other work. Although the illness had eventually eased, Francke could still "not write much," without "always renewing my pain." Francke wrote despite the pain, however, and also because of the pain: "I have wanted to report this only to continue unshaken your revival in intercession for me. God alone helps me and us all through this valley of sorrow."[20] Francke's words evinced a difficult

[19] John Hargrave to Henry Banks, 11 December, 1798, Henry Banks Papers, Section 1, Folder 8, VHS.

[20] GAF to JMB and ICG, 15 June 1744, AFSt/M 5 A 11: 12. "In dem nun fast zurückgelegen ersten Jahr meines betrübte u. einsamen Witwer Standes hat es an manchen traurigen Stunden u. schmertzlicher Erinerung meines Verlusts [inserted in margin: und Erfahrung, was mir vor Hülfe u. Beystand abgegangen] nicht gefehlet, und fehlet auch noch nicht daran, worunter die Erhebung des Gemuthes in jene Ewigkeit mein einiger Trost ist. Absonderlich habe von den neuer Jahr an bis geraume Zeit nach Oster mit beständiger Unpäßlickeit zugebracht, welche absonderlich zur Passions- u. Osterzeit [added in margin: darinnen ich auch nicht predigen oder sonst einige Arbeit verrichten können.] sehr zugenommen da ich an einem seit mehren Jahren öfters verspührten Ausschlag, welcher dismahl stärcker als jemahls gewesen, am gantzen leibe [above: solches(?)] brennen, Schmertzen, u. juckt empfinden, daß ich wenig Nächte auch können, wodurch ich sehr [illegible: abgemackt(?)] worden, so ~~ich~~ wir auch noch sehr nachhänget. Wie empfindl. der Abgang den sonst bey meinen Kranckheiten genossen Pflege gewesen werden Sie leicht gedencken, u. ich kan hiervon, ohne meinen Schmertz immer zu erneuen nicht viel schreiben; doch habe dieses nur zu Ihrer erweckung in der Fürbitte für mich unverruckt fortzu fahren, melden willen. Nun Gott helfe mir und uns allen duch dieses Jammerthal hindurch u. lasse nur sein

mixture of physical and emotional distress, but through that distress he sought to emphasize God's help. This help could be manifested physically (as seen in the illness's diminution and the accompanying ability to write again) as well as spiritually, which could be testified in writing.

In May of 1754, Francke's correspondent in Ebenezer, Georgia, the pastor Johann Boltzius, suffered from a difficult eye ailment that caused great discomfort and taxed his remaining eye and his ability to read and write. He wrote a supervisor in London that he would no longer be able to "keep an official journal [or] write according to my duty and heartfelt desire."[21] Boltzius was nonetheless necessitated periodically to take up journal keeping and letter-writing duties, but he rarely failed to mention the pain in his eye and the difficulty of the task. He grew weary, but he continued to write of not only his own hardships but also those of his community's members, and, like Francke, he never ceased to narrate these trials as gifts of God.

Boltzius viewed his suffering and that of the community providentially. It was sent by God to strengthen faith, and writing was a practice that allowed him to confirm this view. Narrative offered a break from the pain that figured so large in his temporal existence and provided a retrospective voice in which he could find a different perspective on time and human limitations.[22] He wrote joyfully of God's sustenance for

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Werck im Segen fortgehen u. blühen, und zerstören alle Höhe u. Hinderniß, die sich dagegen setzen." Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[21] JMB to Samuel Theodor Albinus, 16 May 1754, in JMB, *Letters*, 602.

[22] "[God] will patiently sustain us in faith and prayer until the end until finally we, with all our known and unknown blessed benefactors, his dear instruments, come together in the house of the Father to his eternal praise and our eternal communal joy and blessedness. What will be there? Ah, would that we were there! Time, when will you indeed break forth? Hours, oh when do you strike?" JMB to GAF, 27 June 1760, in JMB, *Letters*, 672-684. I follow Kleckley's translation with only slight alterations.

Christians in this life and the feast that awaited the entire Christian community in heaven, after persevering through all of God's chastisements on earth.[23]

In the case of Sarah Pierpont, the New Haven Congregationalist, sickness caused major pauses in her journal keeping. According to her editor, the minister Ebenezer Parkman, Pierpont's journal "was Interupted, by many avocations, & Changes of Life: but Especially by Bodily Disorders, Illnesses, Sicknesses, & Confinements to Her chamber, & often to her Bed." When Pierpont did manage to write about sickness, she narrated her pain in terms of spiritual trial. On July 25, 1742, she awoke "very Dull & stupid this morning in Spiritual Things no life in Reading or Secret Prayer." Her physical inability to read weighed heavy on her. She described her pain in terms of her hope for a future spiritual blessing:

> O Lord pitty me_ My earthly Tabernacle is often shaking and now seems to be very Tottering O that my inner Part may grow Strong Blessed savior come in by thy Spirit and put all Things in Order in my Disordered Soul O that when ever I shall be calld to quit this House of Clay I may quietly yea Joyfully sleep in the Arms of Jesus And whilst thou art embraceing me in the Arms of thy Love Let me take thee Dear Lord in the Arms of Faith then I can say Now let thy Handmaid Depart in Peace_____

Pierpont prayed for God's guidance and imagined a future state of spiritual health from which she could look back and see her life as "a shining Example" to her neighbors. She

[23] Through retrospective narrative, Boltzius was able to perceive his present sufferings from the viewpoint of a more distant future, or, as the historian Clark Gilpin has written in the case of John Bunyan and the Puritans, an "imagined end point, a view that sought to create distance from the immediacies of success and disappointment, frustration and confidence." W. Clark Gilpin, preface to *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to That Which Is to Come* and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, by John Bunyan (New York: Vintage, 2004), ix-xvi.

knew she could not "not live such a Life of my Selfe"—that is, through her own power—any more than she could "create a world," but God could "effect it" through "Grace & Power."[24] Pierpont distanced herself from the work of creation, work that the literary scholar Elaine Scarry cites as an important component of the language that emerges after pain.[25] For Pierpont, creation was God's work. She could not turn her pain into redemption, nor could she achieve a post-suffering position of spiritual meaning and purpose. Relying on the providential stress of Protestant sickness narratives, nonetheless, Pierpont could write about her sickness, imagine its spiritual fruits, and witness God's grace.

Sarah Osborn, a New England Congregationalist, also struggled to write due to illness, especially at the end of her life. She suffered for much of her life from pain in her hands and diminishing eyesight; by 1770, Osborn wrote her friend Mary Fish Noyes that her pain hindered her ability to write. Reflecting on Osborn's increasingly infrequent writings, historian Catherine Brekus wrote how troubled Osborn was by the silence

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[24] Parkman, "Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Pierpont," Parkman Family Papers, Box 2, Folder 4, AAS. Pierpont wrote a letter with similar reflections on illness and the human body to someone in the Parkman family (the recipient is unclear) on August 9, 1745; it can be found in the Parkman Family Papers, Box 3, Folder 2, AAS (although note that there Pierpont's name is spelled "Peirpont"). The whole of the passage cited above (from the memoir) reads: "Labouring under great bodily weakness (and knowing Helpe is to be had in God only_ I retird this Morning (as I have heretofore practicd, under all my Troubles: and have found it good so to do) The Lord enabled me to pour out my Troubles before him (my Spiritual as well as bodily Maladies) To plead for deliverance if it may consist with his blessed will but above all to give me a will swallowed up in his good pleasure____ I was led I trust with all my Heart to bless the Lord for every Affliction that ever he laid upon me even the most bitter of them at the same Time bewailing the wretchedness of Heart & Life that call for so frequent Chastisements and Now blessed Saviour thou great Physician of Soul & Body only speak the word Say Be thou healed be thou cleansed and the Cure shall be effected to the glory of thy great Name Lord let it be so & let me be forever devoted to thee May I live a Life of Holiness be much in the Duties of Selfe Denial & Mortification Patience & every other Christian Grace O that I might be a shining Example before all I shall Converse with that my Life & Conversation may be a Continual & powerful Sermon to all about me Dear Saviour this is the Life I long to live and tho I am sensible I can no more live such a Life of my Selfe & hone my own strength than I can create a world yet I know if thou pleases thou canst effect it O blessed Spirit of all Grace & Power grant me thy renewing, quacking & sanctifying Presence and the thing shall be done & the Glory shall be thine O adorable Three amen, amen amen."

[25] Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 6-14.

caused by her pain: "The desire to write still burned 'like a fire' in her heart, but because of her poor eyesight and physical weakness she rarely picked up her pen. Hungry to express herself, she sometimes asked friends to write letters for her or composed poems in her head. But one of the greatest joys of her life had been lost. Each day she had to reconcile herself to silence."[26]

Osborn's earlier use of narrative to navigate and enunciate her physical suffering suggests how difficult this inability to write might have been for her. Silences like Osborn's, however, "are not likely to be an emptiness," as the historian Greg Dening observed. Through writing, Osborn had long interpreted her suffering in terms of God's providence and ensured herself of a record that would, after the passage of time, offer a valuable retrospective perspective. On July 28, 1753, for example, Osborn wrote of how she awoke with a "sick headache, much out of order every way, and my spirits sunk exceedingly." She was downcast by her physical symptoms, and acknowledged that "Satan or unbelief took the advantage of my indisposition," causing her to despair over troubles with her school and endeavors there. But Osborn did not give in. Her longstanding practice of writing allowed her to imagine providential guidance even in the midst of troubles. She wrote: "I reward the trial that I may see the hand of Providence providing and over-riding all things well for me, as faith tells me it will."[27] As if to prove the point, she returned to this entry seven years later, on April 15, 1760, and wrote in the margin: "Time has shown me how needless these cares and fears were, for hitherto the Lord has helped me."[28] Osborn ended her original passage with a prayer for

[26] Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*, 290-291.

[27] Cf. Mark 7:37

[28] Cf. Psalm 118:13; 1 Samuel 7:12.

forgiveness and renewed trust in God's "providential care."[29] One can imagine that, even when resigned to silence in her writing, Osborn continued to interpret her suffering as a witness to God's providence.

When it came to final illness, some narration of the state of the body and the soul was expected among eighteenth-century Protestants.[30] Such records exist predominantly in accounts written by able-bodied (and able-minded) witnesses. As in Eli Forbes's letters to his father-in-law, these accounts offered important final observations on an individual's spiritual state as well as more general thoughts on decline, suffering, and the meaning of these experiences.

Sarah Pierpont could not write during her last illness, and her final witness, her attendant, died soon after. Pierpont's editor, Ebenezer Parkman, lamented this fact, but he presumed to fill in the lacking details, writing that Pierpont's final illness "was the most bright & glorious Part of all her Life." According to Parkman, Pierpont "might well be enrolled among the Ancient divine Heroes" and the "sacred Catalogue of Christian Worthies" found in Hebrews 11. Through her faithfulness, she brought forth great spiritual fruits and hope for salvation. Parkman went so far as to narrate Pierpont's

[29] Catherine Brekus, edited volume of Sarah Osborn's writings (forthcoming, Yale University Press), MS page 28; Greg Dening, "Texts of Self," in *Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America*, ed. Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel, and Fredrika J. Teute (Charlotte, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 161-162.

[30] Accounts of final sickness and death were frequently requested. For examples of requests recorded in correspondence, see: Samuel Stearns to Simon Houghton, 15 May, 1784, Samuel Stearns Papers, Folder 1, AAS; Elizabeth Stearns to Martha Houghton, 25 December, 1810, Samuel Stearns Papers, Folder 1, AAS. In the first, Samuel Stearns requests an account of his sister's last days; the second is a response from Elizabeth Stearns to her sister-in-law's request for details of Samuel Stearns' final sickness. There were also many well-known published accounts, and a popular English collection of such accounts was excerpted and published in a German periodical, *Geistliches Magazin*. See: Richard Burnham, *Pious Memorials; Or, the Power of Religion Upon the Mind In Sickness and at Death*, 2d ed. (London: Buckland, Ward, and Keith, 1754); "Leben und Ende Herrn Johann Janewey," 567-590.

ultimate salvation: "at length an Entrance was administered unto her abundantly into the Kingdom of our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ."[31]

Pierpont's final sickness narrative was not her own. It witnessed God's providence through biblical citations, but it lacked the details and vividness of her earlier retrospective descriptions of her pain and her efforts to enunciate that pain. Such personal details were a crucial part of these narratives—they demonstrated God's providence on a personal, local, and contemporary level and allowed readers to imagine the surprising ways in which God's plan might work out in their own bodies and spiritual lives.

Observers of suffering and pain often wrote narrative accounts of sickness; what was unusual about Parkman's account of Pierpont was his complete lack of a first-hand account as he composed her narrative. Nonetheless, Parkman could not complete Pierpont's memoir without a description of Pierpont's final end and spiritual state, which demonstrates the absolute importance of these accounts for eighteenth-century Protestants. Any reader of Pierpont's memoir would expect such a narrative conclusion and find it lacking without.[32]

We cannot surmise how a contemporary reader would have felt about the indirect and impersonal account of Pierpont's final illness, but perhaps they found Parkman's words tenable based on his earlier selections from Pierpont's journal. Parkman described Pierpont's occasional "Frame" of "ruminating" on "Divine Providences[,] Past

[31] Parkman cited Pierpont's earlier journal entries on the illness and deaths of her near relations to add support for the plausibility of his imagined account, and then he ventured into a scripturally-infused narrative of Pierpont as a fearless and faithful martyr. Ebenezer Parkman, "Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Pierpont," Parkman Family Papers, Box 2, Folder 4, AAS.

[32] As Catherine Brekus has shown, Samuel Hopkins, the pastor of Sarah Osborn, similarly tried to fill in the silences of Osborn's later life with a "happy ending" of spiritual "serenity." Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*, 321.

experiences & the present temper of her Mind," in which she sometimes "chids her selfe." He then quoted an example of Pierpont's self-chiding: "'O my unbelieving Heart! Lord helpe me to believe still to trust in thy kind Providence &c which I have abundantly experienced throwout my whole Life____ Lord 'tis base Ingratitude in me to mistrust ____ I that have had such Things shown me such great Things done me_____" Throughout her life, Pierpont sought to trust in the "kind Providence," of which she saw evidence whenever she re-read her diary. She hoped that this providence would lead her through each—yet unknown—stage of her life, even to salvation.[33]

Above all, Pierpont's memoir is a striking reminder that sickness narratives, no matter how personal, operated always between the personal story and the narrative themes expected by a wider community. Eighteenth-century Protestants wrote carefully about sickness; they often described their suffering in intense detail. They listed medical treatments. They conveyed the brokenness caused by pain and their efforts to enunciate that pain. They articulated individual somatic and spiritual experiences, but they did so always toward the end of highlighting God's providence over the entire community of Christian faithful. Sufferers and observers alike found consolation and hope in each distinct story of physical distress, witnessing anew God's direction over sickness and its spiritual dividends in the individual Christian's life.

Witness to Suffering and Death

Observers of suffering and death played an essential role in bearing testimony for those not present, including both absent contemporaries and an imagined posterity.

[33] Ebenezer Parkman, "Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Pierpont," Parkman Family Papers, Box 2, Folder 4, AAS.

Such testimony stressed first-hand observation, precise dating or organization, and detailed evidence, all of which would allow audiences to imagine the sufferer, his or her patient and faithful endurance of physical pain, and, correspondingly, his or her spiritual state and hope for salvation. Those who observed the sickness and death of a beloved longed to see and share the signs of a positive outcome in this struggle. These characteristics of witness accounts spanned the entire eighteenth century and were common to diverse Protestant communities. From New England Calvinists to Georgia Pietists, sickness and death were central moments in which to narrate God's providence. This narration required attention to both physical and spiritual details.

Narratives of sickness and death were expected; they and letters requesting them pervade eighteenth-century archival collections. Witnesses left detailed accounts of sickness for loved ones, communities, and sometimes for themselves in letters, journals, and memoirs. In a study of eighteenth-century correspondence, the historian Bruce Radford has argued that a central characteristic of letter writing is that it presumes absence. In a way, letter writers are magicians, who work to sustain "the illusion of physical presence."[34] Though not all witness accounts of sickness came in the form of letters, Radford's insight is nonetheless useful for understanding a fundamental aspect of sickness narratives. The central moment of sickness had to be recorded painstakingly. The point was to make the audience—be it a future self or a community member—feel the immediacy of a physically and spiritually tense situation.

In their effort to provide an accurate testimony, witness accounts of sickness and death were shaped by both an Enlightenment-era language of empiricism and a

[34] Bruce Redford, *The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 7-9.

Protestant narrative rooted in martyrology. The role of first-hand observation had been privileged by medical epistemology of the era and the interest in a full narrative of the patient's "case." But such careful observation of suffering is also rooted in martyr accounts. The Greek word for witness is "martyr," a term which developed within Christianity to mean one who bears witness to his or her faith in God's will and mercy, even unto death. Although "martyrdom" is associated with death at the hand of persecutors, there is a long tradition within Christianity that the holy suffering and death of the martyr could and should be emulated in even the most ordinary sickness and death. This tradition developed with and from the *Ars moriendi*, or the "Art of Dying," a set of medieval texts that described the temptations and struggles Christians would meet and need to overcome on their deathbed in a final struggle between God and the devil over their soul. To suffer and die well—patiently and without fear—was to bear witness to one's Christian faith and to God's mercy.[35] As in martyr accounts, witness's accounts of sickness could, in turn, inspire observers and audiences in their own Christian journeys.

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[35] Scholars have demonstrated how eighteenth-century laymen and women engaged the expanding epistemological emphasis on first-hand observation and used familiar genres, like the letter or the conversion narrative, in order to write about a range of topics—from medical cases to religious experience. Sarah Knott, "The Patient's Case: Sentimental Empiricism and Knowledge in the Early American Republic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 67 (2010): 645-676; Sarah Rivett, *The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 5-17, 29-31; Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 20-22, 79-80; Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*, 9-10, 185. On the *Ars Moriendi* see Brad Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 52-53; Austra Reinis, *Reforming the Art of Dying: The Ars Moriendi in the German Reformation* (1519-1528) (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006); on the use of martyrological narrative in early modern Protestantism, see: John N. King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); John R. Knott, "John Foxe and the Joy of Suffering," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 27 (1996): 721-734; Gregory, 195; Adrian Chastain Weimer, *Martyrs' Mirror: Persecution and Holiness in Early New England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Philippa Koch, "'God made this fire for our comfort': Puritan Children's Literature in Context," in *The Study of Children in Religions: A Methods Handbook*, ed. Susan B. Ridgely (New York: New York University Press, 2011): 202-219.

When witnesses included individual details of suffering and faith, they ensured that the account both reflected God's providence and that the sufferer was recognizable to the intended audience. Eli Forbes had taken seriously the task of witnessing and narrating his wife's sickness and death for her absent father. Forbes wrote his father-in-law a detailed account the day after Molly died. When his father-in-law did not immediately respond, Forbes wrote a second account, even more detailed than the first. The careful dating and organization of the second letter suggest his effort to perform adequately as witness to his wife's sickness and death: to maintain both his control of the narrative and to display his firm mnemonic grasp on the essentials that would accurately convey his wife's symptoms and make the story real for his father-in-law. These essentials included both the physical manifestations and treatments of sickness and several affirmations of Molly Forbes's strong faith. He emphasized his father-in-law's role in this faith, writing that his wife urged him to thank her father "for his pious Care of her Youth, tell him [So she] those impressions made on my mind by the grace of God thru his pious care offerd me the greatest Support in Death." Writing letters requires the fashioning of "a distinctive world at once internally consistent, vital, and self-supporting."[36] By offering details of his wife's suffering and faith, Eli Forbes told his wife's personal story in a way both he and her father would find familiar and real. Such details upheld Molly Forbes's life as an example of faith and God's mercy.

In addition to offering recognizable details, witnesses also stressed the exemplary and inspiring suffering and faith of their loved ones. In 1745, Catharina Gronau, a German living in Ebenezer, Georgia, wrote of her deceased husband to his absent family

[36] Eli Forbes to Ebenezer Parkman, 17 January and 2 March 1776, Parkman Family Papers, Box 3, Folder 3, AAS; Redford, *The Converse of the Pen,* 7-9.

and benefactors in Europe. She reported the active medical interventions to save her husband, a missionary, who suffered intensely and was eventually bedridden.[37] He remained, nonetheless, "always content and at peace with his savior." Gronau witnessed her husband's final sickness and death as a testimony to true Christian faith. She described his efforts to bring souls to Christ while he was still able to work, and this work continued in the last six weeks of his life, although he was bedridden. Though he "suffered much in body," Gronau wrote, "his heart was always content and at peace with his savior." She stressed God's providence over her husband's life and death. They did everything in their power to treat him, yet:

> the wonderful God had decided to fetch him home, and so he did, and since God decides and does nothing but what is useful and blessed to his children, so we may much less criticize his ways; rather we must—although with bowed hearts

[37] By beginning each letter with verses adapted from a popular Pietist hymnal, Gronau narrated her witness of her husband's sickness in the framework of God's providential guidance and spiritual consolation. The first letter—to the community's benefactor Samuel Urlsperger—began with the verse: "If I sink down into a powerlessness / Then he lifts my soul out again / The balsam of life flows into it." The second letter—to her husband's family—began with the verse: "God does what he determines, / And what is called impossible, / Is the least of his works." These verses introduced the themes of the letters: God's watchful and loving comfort of the suffering and grieving and God's overarching plan for humanity. Catharina Gronau to Samuel Urlsperger, 18 January 1745, AFSt /M 5 A 11: 28a; Catharina Gronau to Christian Friedrich Gottlob Gronau, 19 January 1745, AFSt/M 5 A 11: 28. "Gott thut was er beschleuß, / Und was unmöglich heist, / Ist das geringste seiner Wercke;" "Wenn ich in Ohnmacht sinke nieder / So hohlt er meine Seele wieder / Und flößt ihr Lebens balsam ein." A note at the top of the letter to Urlsperger describes it as a copy. I am unsure where the original might be, but I find the language and writing style of the two letters consistent. Without evidence to the contrary, I am treating the copy as faithfully done. The verses are from the hymns "Jehova ist mein Hirt und Hüter, nun wird kein mangel treffen mich," and "Gott du Tieffe sonder grund!" and can be found in Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen, *Geistreiches Gesang-Buch, den Kern alter und neuer Lieder in sich haltend*, edited by Gotthilf August Francke (Halle: Waysenhaus, 1741), 233, 266-267. This hymnal was originally published in two parts, in 1701 and 1714, which were published together in 1741. I referred to the 1741 version as it is likely the edition to which Gronau would have referred. Hymnals were often included in the shipments of goods to Ebenezer from Halle. They were occasionally directly requested by the pastors. See, for example, JMB and ICG to GAF, 7 January 1743, in JMB, *Letters*, 356.

and weeping eyes—say: the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, the name of the Lord be praised.[38]

Gronau interpreted her husband's sickness and death by remembering the clarity it gave him in his calling on earth and by citing a text from Job, a reminder of God's faithfulness to humanity throughout history.

In her letter to Ebenezer's benefactor, Samuel Urlsperger, Catharina Gronau remembered her husband's Christian faith as she contemplated her own. She echoed the consoling language of the verse with which she began her letter: "If I sink down into a powerlessness / Then he lifts my soul out again / The balsam of life flows into it." The verse came from a hymn based on Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my shepherd"), a Psalm that evokes images of spiritual guidance and physical care, even through periods of darkness. Gronau ascribed to God great power over the recent events in her life. With the death of her husband, she had lost a "spiritual guidepost," but his faith at death further bore witness to a God who soothed her grief and taught her to follow "in his footsteps." Gronau's witness of her husband's sickness and death transformed her present

[38] Catharina Gronau to Christian Friedrich Gottlob Gronau, 19 January 1745, AFSt/M 5 A 11: 28; cf. Job 1:21. "Er ist fast ein gantzes Jahr immer Kränklich gewesen, und hat sich seiner Amts=Geschäffte guten Theils entziehen mußen, welches ihn ein groß Creutz war: denn es war sein Element darinn er lebte, wenn er dem H. Jesu Seelen zuführen konte. Er hat aber destomehr gebetet für die gantze Gemeine, und sonderlich für seinen und meinen H. Schwager, den H. Pastor Boltzius, den der liebe Gott auch in diesem gantzen Jahre recht augensheinlich an Leibes= und Gemuths=Kräften gestärcket, welches ihm eine große freude war. In den letzten 6 Wochen ist er bettlägerig worden, und hat am Leibe viel gelitten, sein Hertz aber war immer zufrieden, und mit seinem Heylande recht wohl dran. Es würde an ihm nichts versäumet, was zu seiner Genesung hätte dienen können, und ist auch für ihn eifrig gebetet, worden, weil aber der wunderbare Gott beschlossen hatte, ihn heimzuholen, so thate ers auch, und da er nichts beschließet und thut, als was seinen Kindern nützlich und seelig ist, so dürfen wir seine Weege desto weniger tadeln, sondern müßen obwol mit gebeugten Hertzen und thränenden Augen sagen: der Herr hats gegeben, der Herr hats genommen, der Nahme des Herrn sey gelobet."

observation into a testimony for distant relatives, confirming her husband's witness to God's plan and grace.[39]

Ministers played an important role in ascertaining and detailing the physical and spiritual state of sufferers and in interpreting these details in terms of God's providential guidance over the wider community. Many detailed accounts of sickness and death were recorded by pastors, whose presence was expected at the bedside of the sick and dying. In October of 1741, the Pietist minister Johann Martin Boltzius recorded a difficult fever that had swept through his community of Ebenezer, Georgia. The account appeared as part of a general summary that he submitted to his supervisors in London and Halle, which he expected would be published and widely distributed to a sympathetic Protestant audience. In his account, Boltzius explained his recording of sickness in light of a scriptural passage—Tobit 12: 8: "One should conceal the secrets of a king; but it is honorable to make public and praise God's works."[40]

For Boltzius, narrating sickness in his community was a biblically-mandated part of his pastoral duty; his circle of correspondents expected it, and he found it an uplifting spiritual exercise.[41] Boltzius described the circumstances of sickness as a "cross," which, he wrote with retrospective reflection, was God's "wonderful way" of bringing several community members to conversion and others to repentance—or at least to awareness

[39] Catharina Gronau to Samuel Urlsperger, 18 January 1745, AFSt/M 5 A 11: 28a; Catharina Gronau to Christian Friedrich Gottlob Gronau, 19 Jan. 1745, AFSt/M 5 A 11: 28.

[40] The German Bible to which Boltzius referred has a different numeration of the verses of Tobit than is found in English versions. The original verse in the Luther Bible (1545) reads: "Geheimnisse eines Königs soll man verschweigen; aber Gottes Werke offenbar zu machen und zu preisen bringt Ehre."

[41] These included, as the letter enumerates: crop failures, anxieties about relations with the Spanish during the War of Jenkins' Ear, increasing animosities with Moravians in nearby Savannah (which, in turn, caused tensions in their relationship with their friend and benefactor George Whitefield), and the wood mill could not be used due to a flood.

"of their carnal and obstinate minds."[42] The act of writing allowed Boltzius to look back on the physical trials of the year and see, in the end, spiritual benefits for the social body. His narrative—per Tobit—publicly praised God's work.

Sickness in a community could dominate small-town pastors' daily journal entries, and they often used the occasion to retrospect on the spiritual state of their community and their own household. In the challenging work of caring for the sick, they looked for and they found God's direction. This was the case in the journal of John Ballantine, a mid-century pastor in Westfield, Massachusetts. In the early part of his ministry, Ballantine kept his journal on pages interleaved in an almanac. The format left very little room for detailed entries; Ballantine briefly recorded his pastoral work and, at the end of the year, a summary of major events in his community, including baptisms, admittance to church, deaths, and marriages. The short journal entries generally included remarks on sermon texts, visitors, and occasional strange occurrences, such as an earthquake. In periods of sickness, however, the entries became crowded with Ballantine's duties and movement. In a twenty-day period in July 1743, for example, Ballantine made at least sixteen visits to different families with illness, recorded at least fourteen prayer requests for the sick, and attended three funerals in addition to preaching four regular sermons, one of which required travel to the neighboring town of Blandford, where the population suffered from worms. These difficult twenty days were the most intense of a four-month period of "putrid fever" in Ballantine's small

[42] JMB to GAF, 14 October 1741, in JMB, *Letters*, 338-342 (following Kleckley's translation). On the Moravians, note that Boltzius was especially concerned with the "Herrnhuter Hagen." See JMB to GAF, 13 May, 1741, in JMB, *Letters*, 325. Hagen/Haagen—and his ties to George Whitefield—had been an ongoing concern of the Ebenezer ministers and GAF. See ICG to GAF, 20 September 1740, AFSt/M 5 A 9: 15, and GAF to ICG, 27 January 1741, AFSt/M 5 A 9: 22. For another example of Boltzius's citation of Tobit 12:8, see JMB to GAF, 27 June 1760, in JMB, *Letters*, 672-684.

community, during which he recorded at least 25 cases of the illness and 7 resulting deaths.[43]

Ballantine reflected on the sicknesses and deaths of his community, finding spiritual admonitions and inspiration in writing about the suffering he witnessed. In his early journal, such reflections were limited by space: he gave thanks for deliverance and prayed that "God would sanctify the sore strokes of his providence of late." Beginning in 1759, however, Ballantine began keeping a larger-format journal, which provided more room for such reflections. When reflecting on the sickness and death of an eleven-year-old slave named Cesar, for example, who suffered "great distress and pain" from "Consumption and Dropsy," Ballantine recorded a testimony to God's providence for both the youthful and the slave owners in his community. The young needed to prepare; Cesar's early death was a reminder that one never knew when sickness might strike. Masters, meanwhile, "must take care of the souls of their Servants as well as their bodies." Cesar's death was an opportunity to reflect on the sins of the wider community and to find comfort in God's providence. Alluding to the bad weather at Cesar's funeral, Ballantine wrote: "In the grave secure from storms . . . the weary are at rest and servants are free from their Masters. Death levels all, the lowest are equal to the highest."[44]

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[43] John Ballantine Diary, April-August 1743, AAS. For an example of Ballantine's summary charts, see the entry at the end of 1757. This is also the year in which, according to the transcriber and editor, Ballantine ceased to use an interleaved almanac for his journal. I do not have a population estimate for Westfield at this time. Ballantine would occasionally record the number of church members, but not everyone in the community was a member and Ballantine visited, prayed for, and attended the funerals of non-church members, including affiliated adults, children, Africans, and "Separates." For more information on diaries in interleaved almanacs, see Thomas Knoles, "A Tour of the New England Diary, 1650-1900," in *In Our Own Words: New England Diaries, 1600 to the Present*, ed. Peter Benes, The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings 1 (Boston: Boston University Press, 2006/07), 27-41.

[44] John Ballantine Diary, 10 and 14 July 1743; 25 and 26 January 1759, AAS.

The Protestant narrative of redemption and providence infused Ballantine's pastoral and personal recordings as his journal continued, over the next few months, to pivot between accounts of community members' sicknesses and deaths and his private retrospections and reflections on sickness within his own family. His children became sick with first the measles and then a fever between May and September of 1759. He prayed for recovery and thanked God, again, for previous recoveries. Between these sicknesses within his own family, Ballantine reflected on the recent death of Abigail Fowler, a fifty-five year-old woman. He described her patience in distress and her exemplary Christianity, and trusted—despite the loss felt by her friends—that she "gains by death." Ballantine echoed this attitude when the whooping cough appeared throughout the town in August and his infant Lydia became ill. He wrote that he desired to resign his children and himself to God's providential direction, praying that "the Lord spare her and make her a blessing, fit her and us for his Sovereign will."[45]

During this time of sickness, Ballantine buttressed his faith in God's providence with two retrospective entries. The first marked the anniversary of the death of his son Winthrop; he prayed that "it be kept in remembrance and have a suitable influence." The second appeared on the occasion of Ballantine's forty-third birthday. He reflected:

> I have lived 43 years in this world. Do I live so as becomes one that has had so much time and so many advantages to know my duty, how have I spent this time, have I spent it for God, my great Master, whom I am on so many accounts obliged to serve, how great has been God's patience towards me. I am nearer my end, am

[45] John Ballantine Diary, 29 May, 24 June, 29 June, 31 August, 14 September 1759, AAS.

> I nearer to God, nearer to heaven? May I work while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no man can work.[46]

Ballantine's journals attended keenly to the passing of life, the suffering of those around him, and the constant threat of sickness and death. He recognized the importance of preparation, and he used his journals not only to reflect on the spiritual examples he found in his community and family but also to witness God's patience with his own faith and preparation.

Having faith and hope through the end of sickness and life was crucial for eighteenth-century Protestants, who interpreted such evidence as a sign of God's mercy and grace. Such faith and hope could inspire and console family left behind. The importance of this final faith is, perhaps, most evident in sickness accounts where the sufferer lost the ability to speak or sank into delirium. Observers, in these cases, turned to memories of either the deceased's general state of Christian faithfulness or the sufferer's last moments of cognition. For example, the Reverend Thaddeus Maccarty was prevented from hearing his wife Mary Maccarty's dying words in 1784 because pain impaired her speech. He penned a touching memoir for his daughters, emphasizing his wife's previous state of cognition and strong faith, as well as his conviction of her salvation and hope for their future reunion.

> She lov'd the Day, the House, the Worship & Ordinances of God. She prized her Bible, and was wont to say, that that was one of the last things she should ever part with. She read it much, with the Annotations, was well acquainted with the Contents of it, and it had its practical Influence with her. She was very careful in

[46] John Ballantine Diary, 23 September, 10 November 1759, AAS; cf. John 9:4.

her Preparations for the holy Communion__ spent much time in reading, meditation & Prayer_ Prayer was her delight & daily Practice. __ She declared that she always came from the Sacrament, rejoicing. And the last time she attended (a few Weeks before she died) she told one of her Daughters, when she came home, that God had met her at the Ordinance and blessed her, and that her Saviour bid her welcome to his Table.__ And we entertain the hope that she has gone to sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb in the upper World.

Mary Maccarty's life left an example of trust in God's providence for her family: to "be followers of her, so far as she followed Christ, and have the unspeakable happiness & Joy of meeting her in the blessed World above, where there will be no more painful Separation." Such trust witnessed an unspeakable consolation in Christian faith.[47]

Maccarty's trusting narration of his wife's death echoed the providential interpretation of suffering that he had outlined in a 1779 sermon, which stressed the importance of retrospection for interpreting the pain, suffering and grief that characterized the human condition. Maccarty's sermon followed the story of Job, encouraging those who were suffering to remember that there would be a future perspective from which they could look back and find an order and a meaning to the events which caused so much pain. Maccarty wrote of the inevitability of pain and grief in the fallen human condition: "Bodily sickness & Pain __Bereavements of near friends & Relations &c. __these are among the Evils, w[hich]. they are called to meet wth_ These naturally produce Grief & Sorrow of heart. It can't be otherwise, as they have not & cannot put off human nature." He concluded, however, with great hope that they "are

[47] Thaddeus Maccarty to Mary West and Lucretia Maccarty, 12 January 1784, Maccarty Family Papers, AAS.

for the most part succeeded with Joy." Job exemplified this. Though "things may look dark & gloomy in the Course of God's Providence," the Christian knew of the "various Instances wherein God blessed [Job]." In both his personal writings and sermon, Maccarty stressed that, just as night turned to day, suffering turned to joy. Humans' perspective of God's providence was limited and incomplete, yet stories of great faith offered hope to Christian believers—hope Maccarty himself grasped in the death of his wife.[48]

Like Maccarty, the minister Justus Forward relied on retrospection and providence as he struggled to describe the death of a loved one whose capacity to speak at the end was marred by physical suffering. In a journal entry from 1766, he narrated his father's last waking moments, during which he shouted deliriously about robbers burning his house, intent on murdering the family. After his father's death, Forward decided to add a note to the end of the previous month's journal entries. He emphasized that during that month—before the delirium of his deathbed—his father had "a good Hope of himself," and "was sensible of the dreadfulness of being deceived, but upon the best Judgment he could make, tho't it would be well with him." Forward remarked that he had committed his father's good account of his spiritual state to writing at that point, when his "Reason was …intire."[49] Forward also noted his father's place of rest, in the

[48] Thaddeus Maccarty Sermon, 26 November 1779, Maccarty Family Papers, AAS. This particular sermon can be found in the booklet labeled "1. Worcester, June 23d. 1779, No. 457." It is the "second sermon" in the book and is labeled "No. 458." The text is Psalm 30:5. Maccarty paraphrases a commentary on Psalm 30:5 by Matthew Henry (1662-1714), a Presbyterian minister. Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume III (Job to Song of Solomon)* (1708-1710), n. pag., see Chapter 30: Psalms. Also available online at http://www.ccel.or g/ccel/henry/mhc3.

[49] Justus Forward Diary, 1, 12-16, 26 April, 20-22 May, 13 June 1766, AAS.Forward wrote: "my Father appeared resigned to gods will & not anxious about Life or Death, he gave us good Reason to think he was interested in Christ & had a good Hope himself, he was sensible of the dreadfulness of being deceived, but upon the best Judgment he could make, tho't it would be well with him."

midst of family members who had gone before and who had been noted for their faith. He found great comfort in this community of saints in which his father's body rested; and, though he suffered great sadness and even nightmares in the immediate aftermath of the loss, he blessed God that his father "left us exceeding good ground to think he was prepared for Death & that it ~~will be~~ is well with him."[50] Forward's editorial change of the verb from future to present tense suggests his concern to record his firm conviction that his father had died in faith and with a hope of salvation. For witnesses like Forward and Maccarty, memories allowed them to piece together a narrative of Christian hope and God's mercy even when the most desirable evidence of salvation—based on cognition in the final moments—was unavailable in the often confused and frightening ends of life.

Witnesses to sickness and death often found hope in God's providence by describing their suffering loved ones as exemplifying a Christian faith found in scripture. In 1750, the German minister Johann Boltzius wrote to Gotthilf Francke regarding his wife Gertraud Boltzius, who had been suffering for fourteen years from complications resulting from the birth of their first child. Boltzius began the letter by thanking Francke for a shipment of medicine, but the most important medicine for treating his wife was missing. He continued, recording what seems to be a mixture of both his own and his wife's interpretation of this lack of medicine and of her physical and emotional suffering:

> But she also has seen in it the hand of the Lord and awaited his help through the remaining blessed remedies, according to his merciful will; whereby, however, it is said: My hour is not yet come;[51] indeed, also: do not be afraid, only believe;[52]

[50] Justus Forward Diary, 24-27 May, 13 June 1766, AAS.

[51] cf. John 2:4.

through which sweet words the Lord has powerfully raised especially my heart that is often anguished on her behalf. She rests with her great pain and long suffering through faith completely in her Savior, which rest is disturbed only from time to time through severe inward assaults (*Anfechtungen*), in which, however, our kind Savior does not test beyond ability, but rather after the thunderstorm allows the sun to shine again, and also makes her soul elect in the furnace of misery (*Elend*). She very sincerely yearns to be soon with her Savior.[53]

The letter presented Gertraud Boltzius's suffering—both the physical pain caused by lack of a needed medicine and the concomitant spiritual torments—as sent by God as tests that prepared her for salvation. The two biblical passages embedded in the text ("My hour is not yet come" and "do not be afraid, only believe") were both from the Gospels. Both, intriguingly, came from scenes involving women, and both appeared shortly before Jesus performed a miracle. Using these passages, Boltzius connected his wife's long sickness to biblical stories of faith and salvation, thus narrating his wife's physical suffering with hope of future healing through faith in Christ—be it physically accomplished in this life or spiritually in the next.

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[52] cf. Mark 5:36.

[53] JMB to GAF, 14 September 1750, in JMB, *Letters*, 571-572. I have followed Kleckley's translation here, but I also consulted the original manuscript: JMB to GAF, 14 September 1750, AFSt/M 5 B 1 : 41. ". . . hat aber auch darin auf die Hand des Herrn gesehen, und seine Hülfe durch die übrigen gesegneten Mittel nach seinem gnädigen Willen erwartet; wobey es aber geheißen: Meine Stunde ist noch nicht kommen; doch auch fürchte die nicht, gläube nur; durch welche süße Worte der HE sonderlich mein ihrenthalb oft beklemtes Hertz kräftig aufgerichtet hat. Sie rufet bey ihren großen Schmerzen u. langen leiden durch den Glauben gantz in ihrem Heylande, welche Ruhe nur unterweilen durch innerliche schwere Anfecthtungen gestöret wird, wobey doch unser gütigster Heyland nicht über Vermögen ersucht, sondern noch den Ungewitter die Sonne wieder scheinen läßt, auch ihr Sele in den Ofen des Elends auserwehlt machet. Sie sehnt sich hertzlich[hole punch] bald gar bey ihrem Heylande zu seyn." Cf. John 2:4; Mark 5:36; Luke 8:50.

Scripture was an invaluable resource for witnesses to sickness, who confronted the limitations of human life and perspective and wished to stress God's providence. Mary Fleming, a woman in Williamsburg, Virginia, found consolation in scripture when writing to her convalescing uncle Charles Fleming of the 7th Virginia Regiment in 1777. Charles Fleming had just recovered from smallpox, which he contracted through inoculation. Mary Fleming gave thanks for the woman named "Robinson" who nursed her uncle, and urged her uncle to care for his health so she would "not be depriv'd of all that's dear." She had recently lost her brother, and, when she felt overwhelmed by her own perspective on sickness and suffering, she imagined how her deceased brother—who had apparently been with their uncle at the time of death—would wonder at her mortal, "short-sighted" grief:

> I thought of your situation at the time of his Death, and believe me I suffer'd more for the surviver, than for Him whom I trust is supremely blest and out of the reach of those distresses we mortals soon are subject to, & no doubt looks down with pity and compassion on those he has left behind him, & wonders how they can be so short-sighted as to grieve for those who enjoy the blessings prepar'd for them who die in the Lord: they enjoy that Happiness which no tongue can tell, no pen describe, nor has it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive [page blotted].[54]

Ending with a reference to 1 Corinthians, Fleming questioned the ability of the human pen to fathom God's providential grace, yet she attempted to describe it by appealing to an imagined perspective through the eyes of her lost—and presumed saved—brother.

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[54] Mary Fleming to Charles Fleming, 16 April 1777, Mss2 F6295 a 1, Virginia Historical Society; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Narrating sickness and death was a critical opportunity to witness the persevering faith of the sufferer and God's corresponding mercy. These accounts were shared throughout eighteenth-century America among diverse Protestant communities. Observing and writing sickness and death allowed Protestants to record a testimony for themselves, their community, and their posterity. They found meaning in intense suffering by narrating it in terms that were detailed enough for their audiences to imagine the individual experience and that highlighted themes the wider community would understand. Witnesses connected the mundane suffering of the world to the exemplary death of martyrs, who died with hope in their salvation—the ultimate witness to God's providence over earthly life.

Change, Doubt, and Persistence

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, changing theological understandings of heaven, God, and predestination began to emerge. Protestants' views of the end of life were shaped and changed by new understandings of heaven as not static and unchanging but as a place where progress and change might occur. At the same time, Protestants influenced by intellectual shifts associated with the Enlightenment developed an increasingly benevolent image of God. Some grew wary of theological outlooks that emphasized God's wrath and predestination.[55] These new ideas about heaven, God, and human agency altered specific features of sickness writings, but the

[55] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 266-274, 649; Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World,* 83-85; on debates over predestination, see Peter Thuessen, *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 75-99.

providential and retrospective narration of redemption remained the organizing premise of interpretations of suffering and death.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Protestants perceived heaven—as it had long been seen—"as a place of rest and eternal contemplation." This idea of stasis had been crucial to the practice of retrospection: for Protestants imagining an "end point" from which they could gaze back on their life and spiritual journey. Over the course of the eighteenth century, as Catherine Brekus has argued, evangelical Christians developed a new vision of heaven, influenced by contemporary philosophical attitudes that saw change and progress as good. Evangelicals increasingly "hoped that [heaven] would be filled with progress, activity, knowledge, and friendship—heaven as a more perfect earth."[56] Even with this changing understanding, however, Christians continued to interpret the time leading up to death as an important opportunity to look back, repent, and prepare, and they continued to find consolation as they narrated these endeavors.

Between 1788 and 1792, Jeremy Belknap, a New Hampshire Congregationalist minister, and Ebenezer Hazard, a New York publisher, corresponded regarding the illnesses and deaths of their sons. Belknap's eighteen-year-old son became very ill in December of 1788 and Hazard wrote Belknap several times through the sickness, praying that the "dispensation of Providence" might provide strength. He also encouraged Belknap to accept God's providential will and to adopt a retrospective perspective. Though "Divine rebukes" might be difficult, Hazard wrote, "they are proofs of a Father's love. They should lead us nearer to him; and, if they do, the time will come

[56] Gilpin, preface to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ix-xvi; Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*, 318.

when even the remembrance of them will be sweet." Hazard maintained a traditional view of God's providence in human suffering. In the immediacy of loss Belknap's afflictions were grievous, but such suffering could strengthen faith. With time and perspective, Hazard wrote, Belknap would remember his experience and pain with hope.

When Hazard's newborn son died a few years later, in 1792, Belknap condoled with his friend by merging the familiar language of God's providential care with a vision of heaven as a place of transformation. Belknap grieved that Hazard lost the "great satisfaction" of watching his child grow, along with the pleasure and assurance of his child's hope for salvation that such witnessing would have afforded retrospectively. But Belknap also imagined a parent's proud and retrospective perspective on his child's life in heaven, positing that Hazard's son would have an opportunity to grow and progress there:

> He is safely lodged in that apartment of the universe which is destined to receive infant humanity, and preserve it from the contagion of the present state, that it may be introduced with greater advantage into a more exalted sphere, and that its faculties may expand and improve by the most rapid degrees in a superior world.[57]

Belknap had lost his own son after a long and debilitating illness, and perhaps he found comfort in imagining, on behalf of his friend, the possibility of the safe and continued growth of a child in heaven. It was a way to retain a retrospective view of the lost child's

[57] See Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, 12 December 1788, 8 December 1792; Ebenezer Hazard to Jeremy Belknap, 17 December 1788, 13 January 1789, 28 March 1789, 4 April 1789, 14 November 1792, in Jeremy Belknap and Ebenezer Hazard, *The Belknap Papers*, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 5th series (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1877), 2: 81, 84, 96, 113, 115, 316, 318.

life and find some hope in his spiritual progression and salvation. Such a view offered providential consolation in the loss of a young child, whose promise, though unfulfilled on earth, would be fully unveiled in heaven.

Not all illness narratives were infused with unmitigated certainty and faith in God's providential care. Shaped by contemporary discussions of theodicy, American Protestants were concerned with how to reconcile suffering in the world with an image of God as good. While some Christian thinkers addressed theodicy by limiting God's intervention in the created order and relegating God's actions, instead, to creation or the eschaton, those who wrote about sickness generally maintained a strong conviction of God's active presence in their lives and pain.[58] Even when they expressed doubt or questions over the righteousness of God's actions in sending sickness, they nonetheless remained committed to a retrospective narrative framework that confirmed God's providence in their own and others' suffering.

John Ballantine, the minister in Westfield, Massachusetts, faced many sicknesses in his congregation and within his home, and he recorded them in his journal with resolute faith in God's goodness in sending them—except one. On August 13, 1760, Ballantine took up his pen and questioned God's ways:

> My child is dangerously sick, she is greatly distressed. Righteous art thou O Lord, yet let me plead with thee. I have sinned and done wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done. I can easily reconcile my afflictions to the divine perfections. That one who knows not the difference between good and evil and is

[58] Richard Rosengarten, *Henry Fielding and the Narration of Providence: Divine Design and the Incursions of Evil* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 22-23; Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 232-233.

not capable of getting good from affliction is thus distressed, is hard to be accounted for.

While Ballantine admitted the righteousness of God's judgment in sending sickness to an adult like himself, he stumbled to account for his daughter's suffering or the use toward which such suffering could possibly be directed. He ignored even his own journal entries from the previous year, when his family encountered measles, fever, and childbirth, and when he variously called on God to "fit her and us for his Sovereign will," and to "spare him and make him a blessing[.] [M]ay the Lord who revived him from the measles, recover him from the fever, that will be another obligation to devote him to Thee." Over the course of many diary entries, Ballantine had perfected the retrospective analysis of illness, the perspective it provided on God's design for humans, and the corresponding faith and trust such design encouraged.[59]

Yet despite the doubt conveyed in his plaintive exclamation of August 1760, Ballantine in fact retained a providentially and retrospectively inflected sickness narrative, as evidenced in his scriptural citations embedded in the journal entry. "Righteous art thou O Lord, yet let me plead with thee" came from Jeremiah 12:1, a passage that followed the story of God's judgment against the people of Israel for worshipping other gods; and "I have sinned and done wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done" was from 2 Samuel 24:17, David's response to the plague which God sent in response to his presumption to conduct a census. Ballantine's choice of these passages is fascinating. Before questioning God's justness in afflicting his daughter, Ballantine chose to frame his question with the words of the prophet Jeremiah and the

[59] John Ballantine Diary, 15 March 1759, 24 June 1759, 14 September, 1759, 13 August 1760, AAS.

king David—as if he buttressed his right to plead with God by pointing to scriptural exemplars of faith who had also done so. These citations demonstrate how Ballantine's query rested, fundamentally, on his commitment to a providential understanding of tribulation: God's righteousness and direction were assumed, because they were established in the past as illustrated throughout the Hebrew Bible. Ballantine's question over the rightness of his daughter's suffering may have been influenced by new ideas of human and divine goodness, but his narrative framing relied, ultimately, on a long tradition of humans who acknowledged—and yet were occasionally distraught over—God's hidden ways.

Those who witnessed sickness in their lives and writings were often moved by grief and perplexity to question God's providential design. Their accounts demonstrate that it was not always straightforward to narrate suffering and loss in terms of God's plan and mercy. As outlined by Mather's *Wholesome Words*, grief over the death of a loved one was understood as a natural human response, but it should be accompanied by a certain resignation to God's providential plan.[60] Sometimes grief could almost overwhelm sickness narratives, however, creating holes of doubt and despair. Writers nonetheless always returned to—indeed, clung to—the providential emphasis of Protestant sickness writing.

Eli Forbes' letters regarding his wife Molly's sickness and death exemplify the extent to which grief could upset normal narrative patterns. In writing his father-in-law, Eli Forbes sought accurately to witness his wife's death, but he also conveyed his tangled emotions of horror and despair: "O my Father! my Father! – God, a Sovereign God who

[60] Cotton Mather, *Wholesome Words*: *A visit of advice, given unto families that are visited with sickness* (Boston: Henchman, 1713), 22-24.

has said be still[61] – has taken away from me my dear Partner, – my *Molly* whom I loved most tenderly—I know that it is God, a holy a wise God, a good and gracious God that has done it- and yet O Sir it cuts my soul thro, and thro_" Eli Forbes described his emotions variously: his "passions" were unbalanced, his heart was made to "bleed afresh," the situation placed him "under such a cloud," the circumstance "has brake me al to peices," and he was "in a great measure unfit for any Business but tht of weeping."[62]

Eli Forbes recognized in his wife's death a model for his own, and, after several letters, was eventually able to write that "God has in his Wise and sovereign Providence seen fit to call home your dear child and my dearest *Molly*." He recorded her feeling of assurance, her retrospective perspective on her past, and her faith in God's providence, but in quoting her words he made clear that they were her sentiments and not his own:

> She prayed me to imbrace the first opportunity to acquaint her Father of her Death and thank him for his pious Care of her Youth, tell him (So she:) those impressions made on my mind by the grace of God thru his pious care offerd me the greatest Support in Death.[63]

Forbes knew the narrative form with which his letter should conform—his dear wife had dictated it in her last words—and it infused aspects of his account of her death, but he struggled to adopt it fully as his own.

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[61] cf. Psalm 46:10.

[62] Eli Forbes to Ebenezer Parkman, 17 January, 2 March 1776, Parkman Family Papers, Box 3, Folder 3, AAS.

[63] Forbes edited this section of his letter as he struggled with voice and pronouns. I have noted the corrections to the original in the following transcription: "She prayed me to imbrace the first opportunity to acquaint ~~my~~ her Father of ~~my~~ her Death and thank him for his pious Care of ~~my~~ her Youth, tell him [inserted in margin: "So she"] those impressions made on my mind by the grace of God thru his pious care offerd me the greatest Support in Death." Eli Forbes to Ebenezer Parkman, 17 January, 2 March 1776, Parkman Family Papers, Box 3, Folder 3, AAS.

Forbes finally adopted a providential narrative of his wife's sickness and death in a letter written three months after her death, on March 14, 1776. He had at last heard from his father-in-law and appears to have found some consolation in this letter. After being in "so dark, so painful a Spot," he had found "Comfort and Light and cant but rejoice in tribulation. O may I have grace to conduct with Christian meekness and Prudence under this Rod." He still struggled with his loss, however, writing: "I loved her intirely it may be too much- She is gone but not lost therefore I love her still, and I believe she loves me, with what kind, I don't know- My affection is not lost, it is immortal, I love her *Name*, her *Dust*, her immortal *part*." Forbes nonetheless attempted to check these outpourings of grief and to use the language of trust in God's providence that he well knew. Thus, even while he despaired that "all the world is a Blank to me," he concluded: "may God point out the Path and dispose and enable me to walk in it."[64]

A providential narrative of suffering was not easily overtaken in the eighteenth century—not by grief, a new conception of heaven, a more benevolent image of God, or, finally, a rejection of the theological doctrine of predestination. In 1807 Samuel West, the Congregationalist-turned-Unitarian Pastor of the Hollis Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts, wrote a memoir that speaks eloquently to the power of providential themes in Protestant sickness narratives. Born in 1737, West had grown up in a Calvinist family in Rochester, Massachusetts. His father, Thomas West, was a Congregationalist minister. At some point, West chose to break with the theology of his upbringing and to reject the notion of God as a partial and "austere parent," who only "designed to rescue a Small part [of humanity] from sin and misery." West found such a representation of God

[64] Eli Forbes to Ebenezer Parkman, 14 March 1776, Parkman Family Papers, Box 3, Folder 3, AAS.

as "dishonorary to the Great God and distructive of that peace and consolation [for] which Christianity was evidently designed." God was a "kind and impartial parent," West wrote, and salvation "belongs to us." It did not rest on God's predestination but on human effort and will.[65]

West rejected predestination, but he held fast to the notion of God's providential guidance over human life—even in very active and particular ways—and this conviction was evidenced most strongly in his discussions of sickness and death. In February of 1776, West's daughter Priscilla became ill with the throat distemper while staying with her grandparents. West's wife was expecting a child at the time, and although West was able to visit his sick daughter, circumstances pulled him painfully in different directions. Priscilla died and was buried soon after; West was left to comprehend the loss. Writing many years later, he stressed God's providence: God "who sees the end from the beginning" took children from the world "to preserve them and their friends from more painful events which He [God] alone could foresee." In retrospect, West could confirm that God always "consults our interest and happiness and it is both our duty and interest to acquiesce in his decisions and to say in the language of our divine Saviour and perfect example 'Father thy will be done'."

West looked back with a perspective that confirmed God's providence and power, and he merged this perspective with an interpretation of sanctification that required human work and effort. Reflecting on his loss after his daughter's funeral, West wrote that he sought "to improve the event by illustrating the example [of] David on the death of a child." Mather had also cited David's grief over his son's death in *Wholesome*

[65] Samuel West, Memoirs (1807), 5-8, AAS.

Words. For Mather, David was an example that grief was natural for parents who had lost a child, but David (and Rachel) also served as a caution for Christians who refused the comfort accorded to people of faith.[66] Echoing Mather, West reminded himself that he had a concrete example of God's comfort for the faithful in the midst of judgment: the birth of his son Benjamin shortly after Priscilla's death. West saw "nothing more perfectly wise and good than the measures of his [God's] Government." Reflecting on God's providence opened humans to happiness: "It would reconcile us to the most painful events and enable us to enjoy peace amid all the uncertainties and doubtful expectations with which we are here surrounded."[67] Remembering occurrences that confirmed God's good government girded faith during the trials of sickness and loss.

Ministers might exhort sufferers to patience and submission to "the allotments of Providence," but West did not believe that religion could ever make humans find in pain "a state of enjoyment." Humans could never be "reconciled" to pain, West wrote, and "all the Philosophy and all the Religion in the world cannot convert pain to pleasure nor make us think that we are perfectly at our ease while we feel ourselves tortured in every joint."[68] He might have been responding here to teachings of the New Divinity movement—a reassertion of Calvinism among the followers of Jonathan Edwards, such as Samuel Hopkins and Joseph Bellamy—which taught that pain and suffering were a good and could lead to a state of happiness found only in belief.[69] West rejected such an

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[66] Mather, *Wholesome Words*, 22-24.

[67] West Memoir, 83-87, AAS. It is possible that in naming his on Benjamin, West was thinking of the biblical story of Rachel, Jacob, and Benjamin. See Genesis 35:16-20.

[68] West Memoir, 150, AAS.

[69] Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*, 87; see also E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 135-149. For a detailed study of the New Divinity movement, see Mark Valeri, *Law and Providence in Joseph*

idea, but he remained committed to a traditional understanding of providence that relied on a retrospective perspective. When pain subsided, he wrote, "time and reflection will reconcile us to our situation."[70]

West argued passionately for human freedom, but he confined that freedom within strict limits in which God maintained an extraordinary power. "Man is indeed a moral and therefore a free agent," West wrote. He "bears the image of his Maker," and thus possesses power over his actions and morality. The sphere of humans' "agency," however, was severely curtailed, and they were "completely dependent . . . even in that narrow sphere, on the universal agent, who fills, upholds and governs all!" Humans should fulfill their free agency "with propriety" and "according to the dictates of Conscience." The reward, therefor, was God's acceptance and human happiness.[71]

West acknowledged human freedom in a limited way and framed God's power in general terms of creation and salvation, but he nonetheless also left considerable room for God's "particular Providence." He cited Alexander Pope's observation that "the World is governed not by partial but general laws," but West modified Pope's assessment. He wrote:

> it ought to be remembered that the great Author of the Universe is intimately present at every instant of time with every particle of this grand machine, and that the operation of its laws is nothing more than the agency of the first cause, who can with infinite ease either increase or diminish their force for the

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Bellamy's New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[70] West Memoir, 150, AAS.

[71] Ibid., 324-325.

> accomplishment of his own particular purpose, and that without any appearance of miracle in the case.

West was undoubtedly influenced by intellectual strands that posited God as first cause, but he did not relinquish his conviction of God's active engagement with and responsiveness to faithful Christians. West's father had favored interpreting his experiences in terms of "divine interposition," and, indeed, West saw "no absurdity in admitting it." Scriptures confirmed it, and it offered a great motivation for prayer and faith in the lives of Christian believers.[72]

West remained bound to the doctrine of providence, and it, along with a strong retrospective voice, shaped each page of his memoir, from the beginning to the end, and in the most profound moments of sickness, pain, and grief. Early on, West commented: "I am on a retrospect of my life thoroughly convinced of the truth of the following observation That Man is the child of Providence." For West, this recollection shaped his reflections throughout, even his reflections on the writing of the memoir itself. Illness repeatedly hindered his writing, and he occasionally decided to end his memoir, only to begin again when he had recovered.[73] After one close call with death (and more than 200 pages into the memoir), West reflected:

> I gratefully adore that divine goodness which has thus rescued me from the hand of death, and rendered me capable of so much enjoyment as I now find, especially in writing these memoirs. I have recorded the acts of the loving kindness of my

[72] Ibid., 151.

[73] Ibid., 36. West might have developed this perspective from his father, who "in old age took great pleasure in recollecting and repeating to his children particular instances of the goodness of God which he had experienced in the course of his life." See 152. For examples of West's various endings and beginnings, see, for example, pages 202-207, and pages 308-310.

> God, and I pray it may be useful to those very few of my friends who may think it worth their time and trouble to read them; that they may be excited to repose confidence in God and his all governing Providence as the only way to secure present peace and future happiness.[74]

West perceived a spiritual practice in his retrospective recording of the events of his life; in so doing, he witnessed God's providence throughout his life and found faith in his future state.

Although West's emphasis on human freedom could have considerably weakened his commitment to providential thought, his retrospective reflection on sickness and death shaped how he wrote about his life and forged the final meaning he took from suffering. As in the writings of Ballantine and Forbes, doubts and uncertainties could overwhelm observers of sickness and pain, but their narratives returned always to God's providence. Their community expected this emphasis; seeking and narrating the evidence of God's providential direction and human faith were central tasks for individual sufferers and their observers. These tasks provided a framework and voice in the midst of pain.

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Personal narratives of sickness shared the central themes of faith and consolation found in more formal, published pastoral manuals. Sickness and fear of sickness were constants in the eighteenth century, and pastoral manuals like those of Cotton Mather and Samuel Urlsperger recognized the effects disease and suffering could have within their communities. They offered messages of repentance, consolation, and faith to their

[74] Ibid., 206.

readers by stressing God's providential care and by reminding sufferers that time and patience would bring a different perspective to pain and grief. Some scholars consider such published pastoral narratives as instruments of control—as opportunities for hammering orthodoxy or dogma on the sick without pity, speaking only of God's will, and avoiding practical treatment advice. But such studies, which see narratives of disease as, in short, encouraging passivity in the face of suffering, miss the point.

Narrative was an opportunity for activity in the face of sickness. Writing allowed sufferers to break free from the silencing effects of pain, to describe and make sense of their suffering, and to connect them to their larger community through shared language and ideas. Sickness narratives were an opportunity to witness God's providence; to share the details of an individual's pain was a way both to ground and to confirm God's grace in everyday life. Although emotions like grief, along with shifting ideas of human nature, the afterlife, and God challenged the providential commitment of some sickness narratives, these narratives could not avoid providence. Reflecting retrospectively on pain, death, and loss, writers remained committed to providence. It was a deep-seated and compelling theme for comprehending the challenges of human life, connecting the suffering faithful, and witnessing God's direction and mercy.

Chapter 3

Experience and the Soul in Eighteenth-Century Medicine

In April 1748, the pastor Johann Boltzius wrote a despairing letter to his supervisor Gotthilf Francke in Halle, Germany. A strange condition had appeared in Boltzius's small community in Ebenezer, Georgia: people—mostly children—were eating raw corn and rice, dirt, ashes, and clay. Nothing could turn them from their appetite for these things; even sugar and honey could not compete. Parents, distressed by their powerlessness, could barely stand to look on as their children became bedridden, feverish, and unwilling and seemingly unable to eat anything of nutritional value. Boltzius interpreted the condition and its spread as a trial sent by God, whom he called on for aid. He also asked Francke to send advice from the physicians associated with the charitable Francke Foundations and the medical university in Halle.[1]

Christian Thilo, the local physician in Ebenezer, reported his observations of the peculiar distemper in a letter to Francke. Thilo described an eight-year-old girl whose strange eating habits had eventually led her to eat tobacco stalks. He could find no medicine that worked; the girl would eat nothing else. She died, and Thilo feared the younger brother, who had learned her habits, would soon follow her to the grave.[2]

Francke responded to Boltzius a few months later with the advice of a physician named Johann Juncker, who had been one of Thilo's medical instructors at the

[1] Johann Martin Boltzius (hereafter JMB) to Gotthilf August Francke (hereafter GAF), 21 April 1748, in JMB, *The Letters of Johann Martin Boltzius: Lutheran Pastor in Ebenezer, Georgia*, ed. and trans. Russell Kleckley in collaboration with Jürgen Gröschl, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 495-496 (hereafter JMB, *Letters*).

[2] Thilo writes they were eating "*Tabackpfeiffer Stückgen (Stengel wie sie es nanneten)*." Christian Ernst Thilo to GAF, September 1747, Missionsarchiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen (hereafter AFSt/M) 5 A 11: 76.

university in Halle. According to Juncker, the described disease was not unknown, but called pica. Pica was not a corruption of the body but rather the sign of a corrupted appetite or desire. Because the corruption had to do with desire, medicine was unnecessary; instead, treatment should involve a bit of trickery: giving the patient the dirt—or whatever she most desired—secretly mixed with an unpleasant-tasting tincture of bitter apple or ox gall. This treatment would cure the disordered desire of the patient, particularly, Juncker added, in the case of children.[3]

In 1750, two years after the original correspondence, Boltzius was still reporting cases of pica in his journal, suggesting that Juncker's remedy was never received, was disregarded, or was ineffective. Boltzius tried bribing children, going to their school and offering rewards to those who did not eat the dirt, charcoal, or raw rice. The children could not control their appetites when they were alone, though, and Boltzius remained frustrated. He wrote that he had circulated an article on a cure, which he had found in a London magazine and translated into German.[4]

The Ebenezer community's encounter with pica is a story of the intersection of religion and medicine in the Atlantic world. For eighteenth-century Christians, the created order, including the individual body, served as a symbol of the spiritual world. Disorder in the physical world meant something was spiritually amiss; it drew attention to the soul of the sufferer—or to the spiritual state of the suffering community—and called for close observation in order to discern God's will. In the case of pica in

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[3] GAF to JMB, 9 September 1748, AFSt / M5A11: 87.

[4] JMB, journal entry, 11 July 1750, in Samuel Urlsperger, ed., *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants who Settled in America,* trans. and ed. George Fenwick Jones, et al. 14 (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 89 (hereafter Urlsperger, *DR*). Along with this medical advice, Boltzius also circulated an article he translated regarding a famous cure for the rattlesnake bite, which had been advanced by a slave name Caesar.

Ebenezer, not only clergy but also trained medical practitioners made their diagnosis and treatment in terms consistent with a long-standing Christian conception of a corrupted will causing bodily disorder. They echoed the conflict described in Paul's letter to the Romans: "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do."[5] The human body, vitiated by the effects of original sin, was prone to sickness. Sickness thus demanded reflection on the state of the individual soul.

Sickness was a problem not only for the individual body but also for the social body. As the pica episode demonstrates, both the minister and physicians were committed to combatting illness within the community. In so doing, they relied on an empirical approach to medicine that involved detailed observation, wide reading, and hands-on treatment. Their efforts were motivated by their faith in providence: they saw medicine and medical knowledge as divinely given and were convinced that caring for the sick offered an opportunity to do God's work in the world. Medicine was a chance to rid both the individual and social body of physical and spiritual corruption. Survival meant further opportunities to spread God's kingdom on earth. With these high stakes, Christians read widely, sought help, and encouraged treatments.

The relationship of the soul to bodily health was a central point of dialogue between religion and medicine throughout the eighteenth century. Christians participated in central changes within medicine: they engaged debates over the soul's role in bodily health, they used new medical theories and treatment, they relied on empirical approaches, and they participated in medical print culture. Following

[5] Romans 7:18-19 (New Revised Standard Version).

Descartes and, later, Newton, the body had increasingly become seen as fully observable and like a machine. By the eighteenth century, the soul's role in maintaining health was placed into question by a new, mechanistic approach to medicine. Mechanism represented a major transformation from the empirical approach, which had roots not only in the scientific method of Francis Bacon but also in the emphasis on patient observation reaching back to the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates and his second-century transmitter, Galen.[6] Even with the turn to mechanism, however, some continued to prefer and defend empiricism. The empirically-oriented physician Thomas Sydenham, for example, remained popular on both sides of the Atlantic. There was a wide variety of theory, knowledge, and practice within eighteenth-century medicine, and this variety was reflected in the emerging medical print culture. Although non-academic medical practitioners were criticized as "quacks" for their foray into print, academics also participated in this emerging genre. Increasingly attentive to the varieties of medical education, practice, and knowledge in the eighteenth century, historians of medicine now analyze these varieties as part of a continuum rather than as a simplistic dichotomy of "orthodox" and "fringe."[7]

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[6] Although Newton himself thought his mathematical theory protected against the atheistic leanings he perceived in mechanistic approaches, others worried that his followers' mathematical approach to medicine furthered mechanistic views of the body, limited the role of God and the soul in bodily health, and assumed too much of human knowledge. For introductions and detailed studies on the history of medicine in this era, see: William Bynum, *The History of Medicine: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5-18, 34-42; Roy Porter, *Blood & Guts: A Short History of Medicine* (New York: Norton, 2004), 59-74; the introduction in Andrew Cunningham and Roger French, *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-3; Anita Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment: The Life and Times of George Cheyne* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000); xviii, 30-31, 35-38, 41-43, 143-145; Anita Guerrini, "Archibald Pitcairne and Newtonian Medicine," *Medical History* 31 (1987), 71-74; Deborah Madden, *A cheap, safe and natural medicine: religion, medicine and culture in John Wesley's Primitive Physic* (London: Rodopi, 2007), 99-101, 104-106; J. W. Haas, "John Wesley's View on Science and Christianity: An Examination of the Charge of Antiscience," *Church History* 63 (1994), 385-386.

[7] See the introduction of W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter, eds., *Medical Fringe & Medical Orthodoxy, 1750-1850* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 1-4; Deborah Madden, *A cheap, safe and natural medicine*, 107-114.

Despite recent attention to the importance of cultural and social context in unraveling the complex history of eighteenth-century medicine, scholars continue to overlook the role of religion. The medical participation of many eighteenth-century men and women—including trained medical practitioners, clergy, and laity—was motivated by an understanding of God's providential gifts of medicine and knowledge and a belief in God's call to evangelize, which included helping and healing those in need. Some medical historians have dismissed religious involvement in medicine as non-scientific, or, indeed as anti-scientific.[8] Other scholars have offered simplistic or theologically-uninformed assessments, arguing that participation in medicine was a symptom of secularization or decline from Calvinist orthodoxy.[9]

Studies of religion and medicine often mistakenly connect Protestant medical intervention to Arminian theology as developed by John Wesley and the Methodist

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For excellent historiographical overviews on the history of medicine, see: Ludmilla Jordanova, "The Social Construction of Medical Knowledge," *Social History of Medicine* 8 (1995): 361-381; Mary E. Fissell, "Making Meaning from the Margins: The New Cultural History of Medicine," in *Locating Medical History: The Stories and Their Meanings*, eds. Frank Huisman and John Harley Warner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 364-389.

[8] This is especially found in the debates over John Wesley's medical work. See G.S. Rousseau, "John Wesley's *Primitive Physic* (1747)," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 16 (1968): 242-256; Haas, "John Wesley's View," 378-392; John C. English, "John Wesley and Isaac Newton's 'System of the World," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 48 (1991): 69-86; Deborah Madden, *A cheap, safe and natural medicine*, 109-125.

[9] See, for example, Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment*, 99, 105. For examples of declension or secularization narratives, see Maxine Van De Wetering, "A Reconsideration of the Inoculation Controversy," *The New England Quarterly* 58 (1985): 46-67; Robert Tindol, "Getting the Pox off All Their Houses: Cotton Mather and the Rhetoric of Puritan Science," *Early American Literature* 46 (2011), 1; Margot Minardi, "The Boston Inoculation Controversy of 1721-1722: An Incident in the History of Race," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61 (2004), 49; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 345-366. Miller argues that William Cooper, the author of one pro-inoculation tract, did not realize "that he had refashioned Calvinism into an activism more Pelagian than any seventeenth-century Arminianism had ever dreamed of" (365-366). Calvin's discussion of science and medicine can be found in: John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* the *Institutes*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 270-277. The relevant sections are in Book 2, Chapter 2, Sections 12-17.

denomination. Wesley was an eighteenth-century Anglican minister whose renewal movement led to Methodism, one of the most rapidly expanding denominations of the early American republic. Wesley was a proponent of Arminianism, a theology that responded to the Calvinist theology of predestination by emphasizing individual Christians' responsibility to work toward their own salvation. In studies of the nineteenth century, scholars have seen a parallel between, on the one hand, the Arminian principle of individual striving toward holiness and, on the other hand, the emerging medical literature that promoted self-medication and individual regimen in the pursuit of health. But scholars have uncritically read the eighteenth century through the nineteenth, applying to the former an alien paradigm of Calvinist aversion to medical intervention and Arminian rejection of providence. Such a conclusion overlooks both Calvinist medical engagement and the strongly providential cast of Wesley's medical writings. It mistakenly assumes that a Calvinist commitment to predestination—the belief that humans have no agency in earning salvation—entailed a rejection of activity to better "earthly" existence, and that an Arminian assertion of agency in salvation precluded the discernment of divine direction in earthly events.[10]

[10] Deborah Madden, '*A Cheap, Safe, and Natural Medicine*,' 141; Phyllis Mack, "Religious Dissenters in Enlightenment England," *History Workshop Journal* 49 (2009), 16-17. Guerrini's work on Cheyne also fits into this narrative, although Cheyne was not a Methodist. See Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment*, 149-152. "Physical Arminianism" is a phrase that has been used to characterize the perceived parallel between Arminian soteriology and nineteenth-century religious health movements. James Whorton first used the phrase. See Heather Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860-1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 61-62. The perception of Calvinists as "fatalists," passively accepting disease as a scourge sent by providence, seems to have been a common claim or understanding of nineteenth-century health reformers and remains a significant assumption in some scholarship today. See R. Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 45; Madden, '*A Cheap, Safe, and Natural Medicine*,' 128-129; Andrew Wear, "Puritan perceptions of illness in seventeenth century England," in *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 55-99. On Methodist membership numbers, see Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 181.

By examining three different communities—Calvinists, Lutherans, and Arminians—and their interactions with medicine, this chapter argues that eighteenth-century Protestants actively participated in the diverse medical debates and treatments of the era, and that this participation was motivated by their conceptions of providence. The Puritan minister Cotton Mather interpreted the physical efficacy of smallpox inoculation in terms of its effect on the animal soul, created by God to serve as a mediator between God and the human body. He also saw the promotion of inoculation in Boston as a divinely-designed opportunity for Christian benevolence. The Pietist pastors in Ebenezer, meanwhile, became frustrated with their university-trained physician's obsession with the soul and spirit-led medical treatment, particularly when it hindered the interventions they saw as vital to the community's survival and evangelistic goals. The pastors turned, instead, to their own observations, reading, and women's medical knowledge. John Wesley's popular medical manual, *Primitive Physic*, finally, relied on a traditional providential understanding of the human, fallen in both soul and body. The manual stressed the divine origins of empirical medical knowledge and its missionary potential.

These communities exemplify the theological and geographical diversity within eighteenth-century transatlantic Protestantism. Despite their differences, they have in common people, ideas, and concerns, and, most importantly, a shared conception of God's providence. Providential belief was not antithetical to medical activity. Rather, it shaped all aspects of Protestants' medical involvement. Protestants interpreted the human body and soul as integrally-connected parts of God's providential creation. They believed medical knowledge and medicine were part of this created order, inviting

humans to act as God's intermediaries in the work of healing. And they perceived in this work a significant opportunity to build God's kingdom.

Cotton Mather: Managing the Body and Soul, Devising the Public Good

When a smallpox epidemic threatened Boston in 1721, Cotton Mather had a plan. After living through several previous smallpox epidemics, Mather had learned of a possible treatment that would stall the disease and save hundreds of lives, particularly the lives of those most vulnerable to the non-endemic smallpox cycles of New England: previously unexposed children. Along with other prominent Boston clergy and the physician Zabdiel Boylston, Mather promoted a new procedure called inoculation. Mather had learned about inoculation both from his slave, Onesimus, who described the use of the procedure in West Africa, and from a report in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* by Emanuele Timoni, who witnessed the procedure in Turkey. Inoculation worked by taking live virus from the pustule of someone sick with smallpox and implanting it into incisions cut in the arms of a healthy person. The patient would generally develop a less virulent form of smallpox, which he or she usually survived with less suffering and scarring than in the normal form. The procedure stirred great controversy.[11]

Mather's involvement in smallpox inoculation has been a central focus of scholarship on religion and medicine in eighteenth-century America. Scholars have characterized Mather as an important early American medical thinker—indeed, even a "first." They have debated his medical knowledge and argued about whether his choice

[11] For a general historical overview of the inoculation controversy, see John Duffy, *Epidemics in Colonial America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, [1953]), 16-29.

to support inoculation—a procedure that, at the time, had undergone little testing or analysis in the western world—was truly forward-thinking or merely overconfidence, proven correct in retrospect. Meanwhile, while some studies have focused on the "superstition" that marked other areas of Mather's career, for example, his involvement in the trials of accused witches in Salem from 1692-1693, others look to Mather's engagement in medicine to consider his emerging "enlightenment" and its significance for secularization or, at least, for the decline of Puritan orthodoxy. The latter generally apply a false timeline to Mather's medical writings, suggesting that Mather's concrete advice on disease management usurped his earlier focus on the redemptive opportunity presented by disease. In fact, both themes dominate his medical writings throughout.[12]

Mather's involvement in the inoculation controversy must be considered in the larger context of his providential belief. This belief influenced Mather's understanding of the human body and soul, his approach to disease management, and his conviction that medical care was a crucial component of Christian benevolence and community. Mather described all of his work and ideas on the topic of inoculation in terms of providence; although new visions of human benevolence were emerging in his time, Mather, along with many of his contemporaries, perceived medicine and benevolence as part of God's will for human work.

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[12] Otho T. Beall, Jr. and Richard H. Shryock, *Cotton Mather, First Significant Figure in American Medicine* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1954); I. Bernard Cohen, ed., *Cotton Mather and American Science and Medicine: With Studies and Documents Concerning the Introduction of Inoculation or Variolation* (New York: Arno, 1980); Van De Wetering, "A Reconsideration of the Inoculation Controversy," 46-67; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*, 345-366; Tindol, "Getting the Pox off," 1-2; Louise A. Breen, "Cotton Mather, the 'Angelical Ministry,' and Inoculation," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 46 (1991): 333-357. For general—non-inoculation focused—discussion of Mather, witchcraft, and the Enlightenment, see: Margaret Humphreys Warner, "Vindicating the Minister's Medical Role: Cotton Mather's Concept of the *Nishmath-Chajim* and the Spiritualization of Medicine," *Journal of the History of Medicine* 36 (1981): 278-295; Richard Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather: Origins of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1979), 41-51.

Mather understood physical sickness providentially. Like most Christians of his generation, he found the origins of sickness in the original sin of Adam and Eve. Physical health and spiritual health were intimately linked in his unpublished medical manual *The Angel of Bethesda*.[13] Mather saw more than a helpful analogy between, on the one hand, the medical terms of bodily sickness and treatment and, on the other, the spiritual understanding of sin and the work of repentance. Sickness was a symptom and reminder of human weakness and transience and an invaluable opportunity to encourage sufferers to reflect on their spiritual state and God's providential promise of salvation. By repenting and turning to God, sinners could heal their souls.[14]

Mather also believed that a healthy soul was the first step to physical health. In this conviction, Mather relied on medical opinions gleaned from his vast reading. He described, for example, an "Eminent Lady" with a "Chronical Malady," who was cured by turning "*herself wholly to God*." He also cited George Cheyne, a popular physician in early eighteenth-century England and an influential advocate of regimen in the promotion of bodily health. In a chapter on healing the soul, Mather quoted a passage from Cheyne's *Essay of Health and Long Life*, which described the importance of the soul and right belief to bodily health:

> The *Love of God*, as it is the Sovereign Remedy of *all Miseries*, so, in particular, it *Prevents* all the *Bodily Disorders* the *Passions* introduce; by keeping the *Passions* themselves within due Bounds; and by the unspeakable *Joy*, and perfect

[13] Mather worked on *Angel* between 1710 and 1724, but except for a small portion of it, most of the work remained unpublished until 1972. Cotton Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda,* ed. Gordon W. Jones (Barre, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1972), 5-6; for the portion of *Angel of Bethesda* published in Mather's lifetime, see: Cotton Mather, *The angel of Bethesda, visiting the invalids of a miserable world* (New London, CT: Timothy Green, 1722); Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 406.

[14] Breen describes this as the "analogical use of conversion." Breen, "Cotton Mather," 357.

> *Calm* . . . it gives the Mind, it becomes the most powerful of all the Means of *Health* and *Long Life*.

The soul that properly loved God was the center of somatic wellbeing. It controlled the passions, prevented sickness, and promoted long-term health.[15]

Mather elaborated on the soul's role in bodily health in a chapter called "*Nishmath-Chajim*," or the "Breath of Life" in Hebrew.[16] According to Mather, God created the Nishmath-Chajim as an intermediary between the rational soul and the body. The Nishmath-Chajim was akin to the lower soul of the animal world. It provided physical "Safety and Welfare," manifesting itself as "*A Meer Instinct of Nature*." Mather's prime examples were a nursing infant and mother, who do "Very Needful and Proper Things, without Consulting of *Reason* for the doing of them."[17] Mather was not alone in his understanding of a mediating, animal nature; it had long been a central part

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[15] Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda* (1972), 12-13, 17, 22-23. On Cheyne and his influence, particularly on Wesley, see Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment*, 101, 149-152, 161-162. On Cheyne's cultivation of close relationships with his patients, see Stephen Shapin, "Trusting George Cheyne: Scientific Expertise, Common Sense, and Moral Authority in Early Eighteenth-Century Dietetic Medicine," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 77 (2003): 263-297.

[16] A version of this chapter appeared in print in 1722, the only part of *Angel of Bethesda* published in Mather's lifetime. Cotton Mather, *The angel of Bethesda, visiting the invalids of a miserable world* (New London, CT.: Timothy Green, 1722).

[17] Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda* (1972), 28-38. There has been some scholarly attention to Mather's concept of the "Nishmath-Chajim." See Warner, "Vindicating the Minister's Medical Role." Warner argues that Mather used a "purportedly scientific concept," in order to claim an important and new role for clergy in health matters and thereby "improve his own position as a figure of importance." It is unclear what Warner finds "new" about Mather's claim for the importance of clergy in health matters in New England. There was a long history of ministers, often the most educated members of rural New England communities, working to help the sick and diseased. See Patricia Ann Watson, *Angelical Conjunction: The Preacher-Physician Colonial New England* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991). For more recent scholarship on the Nishmath-Chajim, see: Brett Malcolm Grainger, "Vital Nature and Vital Piety: Johann Arndt and the Evangelical Vitalism of Cotton Mather," *Church History* 81 (2012): 852-872. Grainger, influenced by the work of W. R. Ward, is especially attuned to Mather's interest in "vitalism" extending from the work of Paracelsus. See W. R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). While Mather was certainly interested in Paracelsus and his followers, it is important to consider how Mather interacted with contemporary medical ideas and practice. This interaction need not be described in overly simplistic terms, which Grainger seems to think has been the case. Grainger, 853n4.

of the natural philosophy of Christian Aristotelians, and was maintained by the Flemish physician Jan Baptista van Helmont—with whose work Mather was acquainted—and by the German physician Georg Ernst Stahl at the University of Halle.[18]

The Nishmath-Chajim allowed Mather to incorporate mechanistic notions of the body within historic Christian conceptions of the soul's role in physical health. Mather accepted, in part, the contemporary iatrophysical figuration of the human body as machine, but he resisted a purely mechanical notion of the body's operation: "There are many Things in the Humane Body, that cannot be solved by the Rules of *Mechanism*." Without rejecting mechanism, Mather perceived something else was at work in the body. He argued that the "*Machin*" of the body was regulated by the Nishmath-Chajim, whose "*Faculties*" and "*Tendencies*" were "imprinted" by God. The Nishmath-Chajim assisted when the "*Engine*" of the body faltered: "other Parts of the Engine Strangely putt themselves out of their Way that they may send in Help unto it." The body, as machine, relied on the Nishmath-Chajim to correct disorder.[19]

With the Nishmath-Chajim, Mather participated in contemporary religious and medical debates regarding God, the soul, and the origin of bodily motion. Mather posited that the Nishmath-Chajim was "the *Strength* of Every Part in our Body" and

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[18] Richard Toellner, "Die Geburt einer sanften Medizin," in *Die Geburt einer sanften Medizin: Die Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle als Begegnungsstätte von Medizin und Pietismus im frühen 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Richard Toellner (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen, 2004), 17-21; Jürgen Helm, *Krankheit, Bekehrung und Reform. Medizin und Krankenfürsorge im Halleschen Pietismus* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2006), 31. Although it is not known whether Mather was familiar with Stahl's work, he did cite Stahl's colleague Friedrich Hoffman. See Gordon W. Jones, introduction to *The Angel of Bethesda* by Cotton Mather (Barre, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1972), xxiii. For a citation to Hoffman, see: Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda* (1972), 16. On Hoffman and Stahl, see: Almut Lanz, *Arzneimittel in der Therapie Friedrich Hoffmans (1660-1742)* (Braunschweig: Braunschweiger Veroffentlichungen zur Geschichte der Pharmazie und der Naturwissenschaften, 1995), 30-35; Roger French, "Sickness and the Soul: Stahl, Hoffman and Sauvages on pathology," in *The medical enlightenment of the eighteenth century*, ed. Andrew Cunningham and Roger French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 88-110.

[19] Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda* (1972), 31-32.

gave "*Motion* to it," thus accounting for the "Origin of *Muscular Motion*." Like others of his time, Mather questioned the explanatory power of Cartesian mechanism or Newtonian physics for the origin of bodily motion. In discerning the origins of motion, Archibald Pitcairne, George Cheyne's teacher at Edinburgh, focused on the heartbeat and circulation and posited some divine intervention. Mather's reluctance to accept a fully mechanistic view of the body and his interest in the soul was not necessarily, as has been argued, an effort to buttress ministers' place in the sick room;[20] clergy and medical practitioners alike were interested in God's role in the human body.

Mather's smallpox writings reflect these debates within eighteenth-century medicine. In discussing smallpox in the *Angel of Bethesda*, Mather stressed not only repentance but also disease management. He introduced both themes with language from Job, whose "*broken*" and "*lothesome*" skin and "*Wearisome Nights*" were widely associated with smallpox in Mather's time.[21] Mather made vivid reference to Job's suffering and lament: "*Lord, From the Sole of the Foot, even to the Head, there is no Soundness in me; nothing but putrifying Sores.*" With Job, Mather situated the suffering of smallpox within a providential narrative of sin and a call for humble repentance and resignation to God's will. Yet Mather's providential narration did not end with sin and repentance; he went on to identify smallpox as the "Adversary" of Job's account—a formidable force against which humans were powerless but which God controlled. Mather exhorted his readers to courage against the "Adversary", exclaiming:

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[20] Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda* (1972), 33; Warner, "Vindicating the Minister's Medical Role"; Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment*, 42-43.

[21] Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda*, 96. For another example of the use of Job in smallpox writing, see: Edmund Massey, *A Sermon Against the Dangerous and Sinful Practice of Inoculation* (London: Meadows, 1722), 1; cf. David E. Shuttleton, *Smallpox and the Literary Imagination: 1660-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10.

"There is a way to Manage him!"[22] Mather used the Book of Job to stage smallpox as both an opportunity for repentance and a battle that required human management and intervention. This intervention required, nonetheless, God's direction and a properly repentant soul.[23]

The soul's role in disease management was tied to the stomach, or bowels, which housed the Nishmath-Chajim. This would prove critical for Mather's defense of inoculation.[24] The stomach was the place of digestion and the home of the passions, which were, significantly, the main faculties Mather attributed to the Nishmath-Chajim—the "*Main Digester*." As the lower soul, the Nishmath-Chajim was responsible for nourishment and the basic function of life. Because of its centrality to human life, the stomach, when disordered, represented the "*Seat of our Diseases,* or the *Source* of them."[25] Medical treatment had to target the stomach, focusing on proper digestion and humoral balance. In describing smallpox treatment—before he knew of inoculation—Mather stressed care of the stomach. Inducing vomit in order to remove "Morbid

[22] Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda*, 96-97; cf. Isaiah 1:6; Job 2:7.

[23] Disease management was a chief concern of Mather's since at least 1713, when he wrote a tract on measles. He emphasized God's aid in his citation of Psalm 108:12: "Give us aid against the enemy, for human help is worthless." Cotton Mather, *A letter, about a good management under the distemper of the measles, at this time spreading in the country. Here published for the benefit of the poor, and such as may want the help of able physicians* (N.p.: 1713), 1. Van De Wetering looks at this tract as a sign of Mather's more enlightened thinking because it focuses on remedies rather than repentance. She did not note Mather's scriptural citations. Van De Wetering, "A Reconsideration of the Inoculation Controversy," 59.

[24] In the pages on smallpox management and treatment written (presumably) before he learned of inoculation, Mather cited Sydenham, Pitcairne, and John Woodward. Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda* (1972), 98-107.

[25] Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda* (1972), 30, 33.

Matter" was a chief way to clear corruption, balance the passions, and diminish the disease within people. [26]

In his attention to the stomach and the balance of the passions, Mather was influenced, on the one hand, by the writings of John Woodward, a controversial medical writer in early-eighteenth-century England, who saw the stomach as the origin of disease and the main target of treatment.[27] On the other hand, Mather combined this focus on the stomach with the ancient theory of medicine known as humoralism. Humoralism, which first developed under the Greek physician Hippocrates and had lasting influence into the nineteenth century, was a system of medicine that divided the body into four humors: yellow bile, black bile, phlegm, and blood. Maintaining the balance of these four humors was essential to bodily health. To do so sometimes required an evacuation—generally in the form of bodily fluid. An excessive fever, for example, could signify that the body had too much blood and required bloodletting. The body also had its own natural defense mechanisms when diseased, as seen, for example in pus, vomit, or diarrhea. As humoralism developed over time, the humors came also to reflect aspects of an individual's temperament. An excess of black bile, for example, could make a person melancholy, but this was a two-way street: a person, could, by attending to or controlling her emotions—or passions—also affect her physical health.[28]

For Mather, finding this emotional balance depended on the soul and on God. Comprehensive disease management demanded not only the physical intervention

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[26] Ibid., 105.

[27] John Woodward, *The State of Physick: and of diseases: With an inquiry into the causes of the late increase of them: but more particularly of the small-pox*. (London: T. Horne, 1718), 1-5.

[28] Bynum, *The History of Medicine*, 10-18.

required to restore balance to the stomach and lower soul but also the religious reflection of the higher "*Rational Soul*." The rational soul controlled the passions, the balance of which was essential to the health of the Nishmath-Chajim and the body more generally. Through reflection and "Serious PIETY," the rational soul effected "Wonderful Influences" on the Nishmath-Chajim. The Nishmath-Chajim, in turn, successfully mediated the higher soul and physical body. With the Nishmath-Chajim, Mather bound piety and physical intervention closely together.[29]

Mather focused on the stomach, home of the Nishmath-Chajim, when he differentiated the way corrupted matter spread in natural versus inoculated smallpox.[30] Mather believed that the former was acquired through the air, went directly to the blood in the lungs, pulsed quickly into the heart and, soon after, passed into the "*Bowels*." The "*Bowels*," which Mather seems to have understood broadly to include the stomach, represented the *"Centre* of the Citadel." They housed the Nishmath-Chajim, which maintained the body as "machine" by balancing the passions, fighting off corruption, and restoring order. The speed with which naturally-acquired smallpox approached the bowels limited the opportunity for active response and survival.[31]

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[29] Ibid., 37.

[30] Mather's description suggests that he toyed with the idea that smallpox was innate and only awaited a spur to erupt. This idea fully emerged in the 1730s and was a dominant theory of smallpox by the 1750s. Whether or not Mather supported the idea of innate disease is unclear; he seemed elsewhere to have an (albeit limited) understanding of smallpox as contagious. Sara Stidstone Gronim, "Imagining Inoculation: Smallpox, the Body, and Social Relations of Healing in the Eighteenth Century," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 80 (2006), 262.

[31] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, in Mather's time the word "Bowels" could have referred specifically to the intestines or, more generally, to any internal organ, including the stomach. "Bowels" could also refer to the seat of feelings. Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda*, 111-112. William Cooper, another proponent of inoculation, likewise argued: "Why must I **needs** stay till it come in at my *Mouth* or *Nostrils,* or thro' some of the *porous Parts* of my body?" William Cooper, *A letter to a friend in the country, attempting a solution of the scruples and objections of conscientious or religious nature, commonly made against the new way of receiving the small-pox* (Boston: Kneeland, 1721), 5.

Inoculated smallpox, however, was acquired through the skin. Based on physical observation and their understanding of the soul, Mather and others believed that acquiring smallpox through the skin affected the body's ability to fight off the corruption. Mather thought that inoculated smallpox worked more slowly and only approached "the *Outworks*" of the "Citadel." By keeping corrupt matter away from the "*Vital Powers*," or the bowels, they were better able to combat smallpox. The Nishmath-Chajim had time to order the body, to turn to piety and to God, and to balance the passions. It could then "oblige [the inoculated matter] to *march out the same way as* [it] *came in*." Mather's metaphor alluded to how, several days after inoculation, pus ran from the incisions. He interpreted this running as a sign of corruption exiting the body. Though inoculated smallpox was not harmless, according to Mather it left no scars through which it could return, and the patient could be "sure of never being troubled with [smallpox] any more."[32]

In early America, the state of one's soul was reflected in the body; complexion reflected both the physical health achieved through balanced humors and the spiritual health reflected in right behavior.[33] Mather and others, including the minister Benjamin Colman, pointed to the relative lack of scars on inoculation patients compared to the common and often disfiguring scars suffered by those who survived naturally-acquired smallpox. They appealed to this widely-experienced and highly-visible evidence when promoting inoculation in print. These ministers interpreted scars as a visible sign of corruption beneath the skin. Colman argued that, when contracted naturally, smallpox scabs—together with the corruption they covered—prevented "free perspiration by the

[32] Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda*, 111-112.

[33] Martha L. Finch, *Dissenting Bodies*: *Corporealities in Early New England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 6, 12-14.

Pores," and left a "foul mass upon" the body. In this scenario, Colman reasoned, the smallpox could return and lead to the "second fever," which defined the confluent and more fatal smallpox. Inoculation incisions, on the other hand, released corruption and prevented scars and lingering corruption.[34] A clear complexion implied that the vital power of the body, the Nishmath-Chajim, together with the higher, rational soul had successfully fended off corruption.

Like Mather and Colman, anti-inoculators also attempted to explain their position to the public with tracts that appealed to visible evidence of corruption in the body. John Williams, drawing on his own experience and observation of smallpox and inoculation, argued that the running of pus at the incision was not a sign of corruption leaving the body. Rather, it signaled the living and more venomous corruption physicians had foolishly inserted into the body. The corruption of inoculated matter was evident, Williams believed, in its smell, which some witnesses reported as "worse than ever they smelled." Such a smell was "contrary unto nature."[35]

The observation of inoculation's effect in individual bodies—which was encouraged by the tradition of empirically-based medicine—affected how writers interpreted inoculation as an activity of God's providence within the broader social body. Williams saw inoculated matter as corrupt. While he did not interpret preventative medicine (like bloodletting or a purge) as against God's providence, he

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[34] Benjamin Colman, *Some Observations on the New Method of Receiving the Small-Pox by Ingrafting or Inoculating* (Boston: Green, 1721), 6-8, 12; Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda*, 98. John Corrigan has argued that Colman was a part of a "catholick" party that opposed the "Matherian" party. Some of the differences between the two parties are collapsed when attending to their joint efforts in promoting inoculation and their similar understanding of the way smallpox worked within the human body. See John Corrigan, "Catholick Congregational Clergy and Public Piety," *Church History* 60 (1991): 210-222.

[35] John Williams, *Several Arguments, Proving that Inoculating the Small Pox is not contained in the Law of Physick, either Natural or Divine, and therefore Unlawful*, 2d ed. (Boston: Franklin, 1721), 5-6.

could not see the application of corrupt, inoculated matter as preventative or providentially ordained. Williams argued that, instead of preventing disease, inoculation actually spread disease and corruption; the incautious inoculated patient could, in fact, give the natural and more dangerous virus to her neighbors. "To have it brought to them by a voluntary Motion of their Neighbour," Williams wrote, "is more hard to be born by their injured Neighbour, than if it came to them in or by the common way; (the Providence of God casting it where and when he will)."[36] In addition to introducing corruption to an otherwise healthy person, inoculation, in effect, intentionally introduced corruption into an entire neighborhood.

For his part, Mather interpreted the protests against inoculation as evidence of a community suffering from evil and corruption, determined to undermine a procedure that was providentially ordained to save lives and prevent suffering. After his house was targeted by a homemade grenade (that failed to trigger) at the height of the controversy, Mather described anti-inoculation protests as the work of the devil, who was attempting to undermine Mather's efforts on behalf of his community's welfare. He prayed for God's compassion "to a Town already under dreadful Judgments, but ripening for more," and hoped that God would "yet appear to rescue and increase my Opportunities to do good, which the great Adversary is now making an hellish Assault upon." Inoculation was, as Mather's journal repeatedly echoed, a "good devised." Influenced by German Pietists, Mather increasingly sought out God-given opportunities to engage in

[36] Williams thought that the potential harm of inoculation for neighbors went against the Sermon on the Mount. Though some, like Colman, doubted it, inoculated smallpox was contagious—an enduring problem for smallpox inoculation (which was also limited by its expense) in the eighteenth century. See Williams, *Several Arguments,* 13; Colman, *Some Observations*, 12.

such Christian benevolence.[37] As his own son, Samuel, underwent inoculation, Mather outlined plans to recommend the procedure abroad in order to save more lives, believing that "a World of good may be done to the miserable Children of Men."[38] The phrase "children of men" is a scripturally-laden reference to humankind's sinful nature and God's loving and redeeming intervention in times of distress.[39] Inoculation, in Mather's view, was the most recent example of God's providential care and guidance for human activity on behalf of others.

Mather defended and promoted inoculation as a God-given public good, as an effective way to assist a soul-driven body in maintaining health, and as an empirically-tested procedure that prevented and purged corruption in both the individual and social body. While Mather was certainly, as scholars have argued, motivated by his desire for authority and his confidence in his own expertise, his outspoken role in the inoculation debates also—and more importantly—reflected his engagement in the central questions animating his medical and Christian contemporaries. Mather responded to these questions not only by reiterating his commitment to the importance of repentance in

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[37] Mather began reformatting his journals in 1709: he began each entry with the initials "G.D.," which stood for "Good Devised." This occurred around the same time Mather began corresponding with the Pietist August Hermann Francke. Inspired by Francke's vision to revitalize Christianity and transform society, Mather's reforming impulse grew. Mather ,*The Angel of Bethesda* (1972), 107; Silverman, *The Life and Times*, 231-234. Silverman cautions against interpreting Mather's writing as "drift[ing] into secularism… Both he and the Pietists maintained a delicate synthesis of engagement with the prevailing culture and mortification to life." Cf. Lovelace, *The American Pietism,* 49-51. Wolfgang Splitter argues against overstating the influence of the correspondence between Mather and Francke. Wolfgang Splitter, "The Fact and Fiction of Cotton Mather's Correspondence with German Pietist August Hermann Francke," *The New England Quarterly* 83 (2010): 102-122. See also Kuno Francke, "Further Documents Concerning Cotton Mather and August Hermann Francke," *Americana Germanica* 1 (1897): 54-66; Kuno Francke, "The Beginning of Cotton Mather's Correspondence with August Hermann Francke," *Philosophical Quarterly* 5 (1926), 193-5.

[38] Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Volume II: 1709-1724*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957), 621, 627-628, 633, 637-638. On the grenade episode: Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda* (1972), 113.

[39] See, for example, Psalm 107.

sickness, but also by positing that active medical intervention in a proven form could actually assist the soul, or the Nishmath-Chajim, in fighting disease. Mather, his supporters, and his opponents appealed both to providence and to traditional medical emphases on observation and experience as they explained how physical symptoms signified internal corruption within the individual body. They extended these observations to their understanding of the spread and treatment of disease within the social body.

Both sides of the inoculation debate sought to comprehend God's providence in their response to smallpox. For Mather, inoculation was a gift of God to help his neighbors. For anti-inoculators, it dangerously introduced corruption and could inadvertently spread disease, which was not, they believed, God's plan. In the end, each side saw a central connection between the human soul and medicine, a connection defined by their efforts to discern providential direction in their efforts to devise good for suffering humanity.

Ebenezer, Georgia: Medical Networks and Debates in a Pietist New World Settlement

In February of 1738, the long-awaited physician Christian Thilo arrived in the German-speaking Pietist settlement in Ebenezer, Georgia. Shortly after Thilo's arrival, he had an argument with the community's lead pastor, Johann Boltzius. The argument ended, according to Boltzius, with Thilo running into his room, laying on his bed, and throwing a fit. Boltzius, meanwhile, fell to his knees in the courtyard and prayed to God for mercy and wisdom before he called Thilo to him. Running outside, Thilo pulled off his wig, put his head to the ground, and, according to Boltzius, mumbled perverse things. Thilo ceased going to church services, suggested the ministers were idolatrous,

dallied with married women, and offered nonsensical reasons for refusing medical treatment one day but allowing it the next. Boltzius reflected with disappointment: after two long years without a physician, "now arrives such worthless material to sadness and moans."[40]

Rumblings of Thilo's problems began even before he arrived in Ebenezer. His behavior and preparation shocked the men he met in London, his first stop, including important representatives from the Francke Foundations in Halle, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), and the Georgia Trustees. They reported that Thilo suffered miserably from a lack of provisions during his passage from Holland to England: he expected the voyage to be a mere twenty-four hours, not a full seven days. Further, they worried that Thilo—although well educated in the method of Georg Ernst Stahl under the instruction of Johann Juncker at the medical university in Halle—was unprepared in essential medical practices, including bloodletting and surgery. Alarmed by these reports, Gotthilf Francke sent a letter to the Ebenezer ministers explaining that

[40] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. JMB to GAF, 27 February 1738, AFSt/M 5 A 5: 19; JMB to GAF, 17 May 1738, AFSt/M 5 A 5: 23. The latter source appears to be a private journal in which Boltzius recorded details of Thilo's behavior not included in the official journal, which was published. Among many problems, Boltzius was concerned that Thilo sought a "spiritual sister- and brother-hood" with the wives of the orphanage overseer (Kalcher) and the schoolteacher (Ortsmann). It is not entirely clear what this meant. Thilo seemed to be interested in forming his own church, but the ministers were concerned about sexual impropriety. There were initially some positive responses to Thilo's arrival; see: Achnes Liesabetha Wöllner [Müller] to GAF, 8 February 1738, AFSt/M 5 A 7: 5; cf. Urlsperger, Samuel, ed., *Zweyte Continuation der ausführlichen Nachricht von den saltzburgischen Emigranten, die sich in America niedergelassen haben* (Halle: Waysenhaus, 1738-1741), 2574. The eighteen continuations of the detailed reports can be found bound together in three volumes: Samuel Urlsperger, ed., *Ausführliche Nachricht von den saltzburgischen Emigranten, die sich in America niedergelassen haben* (Halle/Augsburg, 1735-1753). The journal sections of the *Ausführliche Nachricht* are available in translation in Urlsperger, *DR*, but letters like Müllers are not always included in the English translations. See also Renate Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer: Pietism, agriculture and commerce in colonial Georgia" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 1988), 83-84.

Thilo suffered from hypochondria, both of the body and the spirit, which was worsened by problems on his journey. The ministers were to welcome him, nonetheless, with love and gentleness.

The Francke Foundations, the SPCK, and the Georgia Trustees were committed to the support of a missionary physician, recognizing the central place of physical care to the success of Christian mission in the colony. Thilo received preliminary provisions and a stipend as well as medicines free of charge; Francke opined that Thilo was a better physician for Ebenezer than one who sought honor, money, and good living.[41] In the end, Thilo lived in Ebenezer nearly thirty years, during which he was a constant source of frustration and distress. The Francke Foundations' steadfast commitment to providing missionary medicine and Thilo's erratic behavior and professional choices, however, produced an extensive manuscript record that offers invaluable insights into the medical world of Ebenezer in the mid-eighteenth century.

As in Cotton Mather's inoculation-frenzied Boston, medical debates in Ebenezer revolved around conceptions of the soul's role in bodily health and the conviction that medicine and healing were crucial to Christian mission. The ministers' writings demonstrate how, when disappointed in Thilo, they turned to both formal and informal medical networks in their earnest efforts to keep community members alive. They relied

[41] Francke told the ministers that the Trustees had decided to support Thilo with three years of provisions and the SPCK had given him 30 pounds sterling. Samuel Berein to GAF, 14 October 1737, AFSt/M 5 A 5: 13; Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen [hereafter FMZ] to GAF, 23 Sept. 1737, AFSt/M 5 A 6: 3; GAF to JMB and ICG, 7 Nov. 1737, AFSt/M 5 A 3: 53. For the official letter indicating the George Trustees' support, see: Harman Verelst to FMZ, 3 Oct. 1737, AFSt/M 5 A 5: 14. The Trustees hoped "Thielow" would also "be assistive to all other Settlers in the Neighbourhood of Ebenezer that may want his help." The Francke Foundations had previously supported a physician in Ebenezer, Johann Andreas Zwiffler, who left after controversy regarding reimbursement for his work. According to Boltzius, Zwiffler was provided with supplies and medicines from the Francke Foundations, with the intention that he would provide the community with cost-free care. Urlsperger, *DR* 3 (1972), 117-118, 172-173; and JMB and ICG to Samuel Urlsperger, 6 October 1736, in JMB, *Letters*, 177-179.

on their own minimal missionary medical training in Halle, empirical observations, networks of female medical knowledge, and articles from the popular press. Like Mather, the Ebenezer ministers interpreted their medical activity in terms of Christian mission. They embraced a Pietist impulse to do good, convinced that a healthy body allowed the human soul to pursue its work in the world, to promote the kingdom of God, and to exemplify Christian piety in colonial America. While many historians have told the story of Mather and 1720s Boston, almost no one has examined the history of medicine in Ebenezer, despite its rich trail of sources.[42]

Thilo's unusual treatment practices were grounded in a soul-oriented medicine, which had its origin in his training at the medical university in Halle and his exposure there to theoretical debates within medicine. Boltzius's frustration with Thilo's medical practice became apparent in Thilo's response to malaria, a disease that had constantly afflicted the Ebenezer community since its initial founding in 1734. Despite relocating to better land, the malaria outbreak of 1736 proved even worse, spreading widely among adults and children.[43] Reports were so dreadful that sponsors in Europe, who annually published the ministers' journals for eager audiences, delayed publication of the 1736 journal until it could be prefaced with more encouraging news. Desperation was

[42] Renate Wilson briefly touched on Ebenezer and Thilo in *Pious Traders in Medicine: A German Pharmaceutical Network in Eighteenth-Century North America* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), x, xxiv-xv, 26, 51, 119, 145, 156, 170-172. (Note that Wilson occasionally confuses Thilo's name, calling him variously Georg Ernst Thilo and Ernst Thilo.) See also Joseph Krafka, Jr., "Medicine in Colonial Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Society* 20 (1936), 335; Renate Wilson's dissertation, which focuses on Ebenezer's economy. Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer: Pietism."

[43] JMB to Jakob Gottfried Bötticher, 9 May 1734; JMB and ICG to GAF, 12 July 1734; JMB and ICG to Samuel Urlsperger, 6 Oct. 1736, in JMB, *Letters*, 99, 105-6. Urlsperger, *Zweyte Continuation* (1738-1741), 701, 706-707, 710, 721-22; Urlperger, *DR* 3 (1972), 156-72, 186-87. On the move of Ebenezer, see FMZ to James Edward Oglethorpe, 2 June 1736, AFSt/M 5 A 3: 40.

widespread, and some threatened to move away.[44] Ebenezer's stability and success were at risk.

The first record of the community's treatment strategies for malaria is from 1740. On May 29, Boltzius wrote Francke to thank him for medications and the advice of Halle physician Johann Juncker on the "*Fieber-Kuchen*," or the hard knots that formed in the left side of the abdomen in those affected by malaria. Boltzius hoped Thilo would implement Juncker's treatment and prayed for God's blessing on the cure.[45]

Boltzius continued by describing past advice the community had received for malaria treatment and his resulting debates with Thilo. Samuel Urlsperger, an important Ebenezer benefactor in Augsburg, had shared his physician's advice. The advice posed a problem, however: not only was the prescription difficult to fulfill with ingredients available in Georgia, but Thilo also refused to follow it, because it did "not seem to follow the *method organica*." Boltzius explained that Thilo particularly objected to the use of "*cortex peruvianus*." Frustrated, Boltzius concluded that he "certainly does not take an active interest in the patients."[46]

Boltzius's frustration and Thilo's response to "*cortex peruvianus*" and alignment with the "organic method"—which was associated with the medical practitioner Georg Ernst Stahl in Halle—reveal a theoretical debate over the place of the soul in medical practice and bodily health. In the eighteenth century the most effective treatment for malaria was the bark of the Cinchona tree (*cortex peruvianus*, or Jesuit's Bark), which

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[44] George Fenwick Jones, introduction to Urlsperger, *DR* 3 (1972), xix.

[45] JMB and ICG to GAF, 29 May 1740, AFSt/M 5 A 9: 6; following the translation in JMB, *Letters*, 298-299.

[46] The name of Urlsperger's physician was recorded as "Plohs." JMB and ICG to GAF, 29 May 1740, AFSt/M 5 A 9: 6; following translation in JMB, *Letters*, 298-299.

contained quinine, but this treatment had its detractors, who feared that quinine's effect on fevers did not correspond with humoralism. As in Mather's Boston, humoralism was still an influential theory of medicine. Because of the focus on balance within humoralism, a medicine designed to reduce a fever (a main symptom of malaria) was expected to produce a corresponding form of evacuation. For example, bloodletting was thought to release the corruption causing the fever. Quinine was problematic because it did not have an evacuant, leading to the fear that the fever—or corruption—was simply suppressed and lingered within the body.[47] This fear echoed debates surrounding smallpox inoculation in 1720s Boston and the significance of the pus—or evacuant—observed to run from the site of implantation.

The theoretical debate over quinine in Ebenezer was shaped by professors at the medical university in Halle, and their approaches reflected different conceptions of the soul's role in bodily health. In the late-seventeenth century Friedrich Hoffman, an iatromechanist, experimented with quinine and concluded that it neutralized the acidity in the blood, which he interpreted as the cause of fevers. Hoffman's colleague, Georg Ernst Stahl, however, was wary of mechanism. Stahl favored the "organic method." For Stahl—like Mather—the soul directed healing, and fever represented a normal release of corruption that should not be repressed. Because quinine prevented fever, Stahl and his

[47] Andreas-Holger Maehle, "Experience, Experiment and Theory: Justifications and Criticisms of Pharmaco-Therapeutic Practices in the Eighteenth Century," in *Medical Theory and Therapeutic Practice in the Eighteenth Century: A Transatlantic Perspective,* ed. by Jürgen Helm and Renate Wilson (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008), 65; Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 9-10. In England, Sydenham's experience with quinine and recognition that it was a "specific" transformed his understanding of disease and contributed to the modern classification of disease. Bynum, *The History of Medicine*, 37-38.

students, including Johann Samuel Carl and Johann Juncker—Thilo's teacher—rejected its use in malaria treatment.[48]

Carl, Juncker, and, eventually, Thilo, went beyond Stahl in emphasizing the soul's role in healing and, correspondingly, in promoting "gentler" and more selective treatment. In treating malaria, for example, Carl recommended gentle dietary measures to aid the soul in removing corruption. Thilo, meanwhile, avoided treatments such as bloodletting and relied "on the course of nature." He also, according to Juncker, fixated on patients' spiritual states. Juncker reported that while Thilo was still in Halle, he occasionally extended appointments several hours, seeking to ascertain the condition of his patients' souls. In 1738, Boltzius reported that Thilo could change treatment mid-course, depending on "inspiration."[49]

Despite Thilo's formal medical training, Boltzius and his assistant minister, Israel Gronau, found his treatments and methods unreliable and they were spurred to involvement. Like Mather, they were influenced by wide reading, personal observations, and a providential sense of Christian mission centered on survival and the growth of God's kingdom. In the case of malaria, the Ebenezer ministers apparently used quinine despite Thilo's objections. Francke reprimanded them in 1743 and 1745, astonished at reports of quinine use. He warned the ministers with language grounded in humoralism and empirical observation: he argued that quinine "plugs" or "jams" fever and, despite

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[48] On Carl, Juncker, and Thilo, see Wilson, *Pious Traders in Medicine*, 170-171; on Stahl and the organic method, see Maehle, "Experience, Experiment and Theory," 65-66; JMB, *Letters*, 298-299fn. I do not mean to imply here that Stahl, Carl, Juncker, and Thilo were identical in their medical theories; Stahl's stance on Cinchona did, however, influence his students. For a critique of scholars who identify a single "Pietist medicine," see Jürgen Helm, *Krankheit, Bekehrung und Reform. Medizin und Krankenfürsorge im Halleschen Pietismus*, Hallesche Forschungen 21 (Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen, 2006), 11-14.

[49] Johann Samuel Carl to GAF, 7 March 1743, AFSt/M 5 A 10: 58; Wilson, *Pious Traders in Medicine*, 171-172; Johann Juncker to GAF, 7 November 1737, AFSt/M 5 A 5: 16; JMB and ICG to FMZ, 26 August 1738, AFSt/M 5 A 7: 22; also in JMB, *Letters*, 248.

appearances, left dangerous corruption beneath the skin. He also worried that quinine had aggravated the symptoms and sickness that the minister Gronau described himself suffering.[50]

Even if the Ebenezer ministers did not appreciate the theoretical medical debates behind Thilo's treatment methods, they knew enough about medicine to understand Francke's humoral concerns. Nonetheless, when it came to the persistent diseases that threatened communal stability, they proved willing to intervene and try new treatments. Both ministers had received some medical training in Halle and used it, particularly when Ebenezer lacked a doctor in early years. Even after Thilo's arrival, the ministers remained highly involved. In light of Thilo's dislike of bloodletting, Gronau practiced it, and Boltzius dispensed medicines, because Thilo rarely used the medicines freely provided to him from Halle.[51] They also recruited the help of Johann Ludwig Mayer, a 1741 immigrant from Swabia, who favored the use of quinine in treating malaria.[52]

The ministers were focused on their community's survival; the success of their God-directed mission in Georgia depended on their physical health. Ministering to a community originally made up of Protestant refugees from Salzburg, they found, like the Puritans and Separatists of New England, a symbolic pressure to survive and witness God's providential mercy. Disappointed in their physician's lack of active intervention

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[50] GAF to JMB and ICG, 15 November 1743, AFSt/M 5 A 10: 55; GAF to JMB, 6 January 1745, AFSt/M 5 A 11: 17.

[51] JMB to GAF, 26 August 1738, in JMB, *Letters*, 245; JMB and ICG to FMZ, 26 Aug. 1738, AFSt/M 5 A 7: 22; also in JMB, *Letters*, 248.

[52] Wilson, *Pious Traders in Medicine*, 171-172; Wilson writes that the Cinchona bark had been promoted among the Ebenezer community "against the wishes of the pastors and the local physician from Halle since the 1750s by new arrivals from Augsburg," and that Cinchona bark was, like opium, never included in shipments of medicine from Halle. Ibid., 51, 151n17. As I discuss in this section, however, correspondence suggests this promotion actually extends back to at least the 1740s. On Gronau and bloodletting, see ICG to GAF, 9 June 1737, AFSt/M 5 A 3: 58.

and trying to care for as many as he could, Boltzius repeatedly turned to other networks of medical knowledge, including women. Although the only evidence we have of this from Ebenezer is in Boltzius's writings, it is important to remember that women as well as men participated in empirical medicine and that, although certain conditions highlighted discretion, this participation was often joint and interconnected. In July of 1749, Boltzius wrote two letters to Henriette Rosine Goetze,[53] the mother-in-law of Gotthilf Francke, regarding the poor health of his wife, Gertraud Boltzius.[54] Boltzius wrote that he would have asked Thilo to submit a report, but Thilo was "rather inexperienced in women's conditions." Boltzius diplomatically did not mention his dissatisfaction with Thilo, who had proven unreliable in treating Gertraud Boltzius. Early on, Thilo refused to treat or even see her; he sent medicine with a child messenger and also resisted bleeding her, vaguely explaining that "the bloodletting must occur tomorrow and not today." Boltzius wrote to Goetze not only because he found Thilo's

[53] Goetze took over household responsibilities for Francke after the death of her daughter in 1743; she eventually moved to Halle from Leipzig after the death of her husband. She had taken great interest in the Salzburger exiles who had traveled through her town in 1732, and it is possible she met Boltzius in Halle. [Henriette Rosine Goetze?] to [Johanna Henriette Francke?], [1732?], AFSt/M 5 C 5: 10. On Goetze, see: the database of the Archives of the Francke Foundations; the entry for Gotthilf August Francke in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, ed. der Historischen Kommission der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. 5 (Berlin, 1971), 325 (available online: http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/bsb00016321/image_341); Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg, *Die Korrespondenz Heinrich Melchior Mühlenbergs: 1740-1752,* ed. Kurt Aland, vol. 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 14n5.

[54] In 1749, Gertraud Kroher Boltzius was around thirty years old. She was from Salzburg and had arrived with the first transport to Ebenezer in 1734. She married Boltzius in 1734 and had four children between 1735 and 1749. She was literate and became skilled at silk reeling. Boltzius trusted his wife with the management of the properties and goods he left behind, making her his sole heir. See: Catharina Kroher Gronau, Gertraud Kroher Boltzius, and Maria Kroher Gruber to Matthias Rohrmoser, 9 Jul 1739, in Urlsperger, *Zweyte Continuation* (1738-1741), 2288; JMB to GAF, 1 September 1735, and JMB to Eva Rosina Boltzius, 1 September 1735, in JMB, *Letters*, 144-145, 148; JMB to Henriette Rosine Goetze, 28 Jul. 1749, in JMB, *Letters*, 539-540, or AFSt/M 5 B 1: 19; JMB to GAF, 28 Mar. 1749, and JMB to GAF, 16 Feb. 1755, in JMB, *Letters*, 521, 622; Renate Wilson, "Public Works and Piety in Ebenezer: The Missing Salzburger Diaries of 1744-1745," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77 (1993), 360-361; Wilson, *Pious Traders in Medicine*, 154-155; JMB to Samuel Theodor Albinus, 3 March 1755, in JMB, *Letters*, 623-624; JMB, Testament, 1 June 1763, Hauptarchiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen (hereafter AFSt/H) RB 3: 2; Hermann Heinrich Lemke to GAF, 27 January 1766, Francke-Nachlaß der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (hereafter Stab/F) 32/3: 10.

spiritual direction in medical treatment unpredictable, however, but also because he listened to his wife, who told him to contact Goetze.[55]

Boltzius explained his active intervention in his wife's health was motivated by love—the love he and his children had for a "helpmeet" and mother given by God. He recognized that the outcome of Goetze's counsel would depend ultimately on God's mercy.[56] Nonetheless, he did his best to provide Goetze with detailed information regarding Gertraud Boltzius's condition in order to improve the chances for effective treatment. Gertraud Boltzius had read a book on medicine by David Samuel von Madai, *Unterricht der bewehrten Hallischen Artzeneyen* (*Instruction Concerning the tried and tested medicines of Halle)*, which Goetze had included in a recent shipment to Ebenezer, and Johann Boltzius wrote Goetze requesting specific medicines based on his wife's reading.[57] Urged by his wife, he also detailed her longstanding health problems. These began around age 17 during her first childbirth, when she was "very damaged . . . by an unscrupulous midwife." He described Gertraud's "distressful gynecological (*hysterischen*) incidents"[58] with care, hoping that such detailed observations would assist in a cure:

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[55] JMB to Henriette Rosine Goetze, 28 July 1749, AFSt/M 5 B 1: 19; following translation in JMB, *Letters*, 538-542. On Thilo's early care of Gertraud Boltzius, see JMB to GAF, 17 March and 2, 3, 7 April 1738, AFSt/M 5 A 5: 23.

[56] JMB to Henriette Rosine Goetze, 28 Jul. 1749, AFSt/M 5 B 1: 19; following translation in JMB, *Letters*, 538-542.

[57] The book was titled: *Unterricht der bewehrten Hallischen Artzeneyen* (*Instruction Concerning the tried and tested medicines of Halle)*. JMB to Henriette Rosine Goetze, 22 July 1749, in JMB, *Letters*, 532-533, or AFSt/M 5 B 1: 18.

[58] Although "hysterical" could refer to a disorder of the passions or nerves, in this case the illness seems to have been caused by damage to Gertraud Boltzius's reproductive organs.

> her stomach has become so weak through the many ebullitions of the blood that she feels almost every bit of bread and the lightest food, and must, after eating, if it can be said, vomit … Please excuse me for mentioning out of necessity yet one particular condition. She indeed has always had her menstrual period, but irregularly; for example, every 3 weeks, sometimes too much, sometimes too little.

Despite his discomfort with the level of detail, Boltzius hoped for Goetze's sympathy, and, "at the request of my helpmeet," he did not want to omit vital information.[59]

Boltzius's appeal underlines his dissatisfaction with Thilo and desire for active medical intervention, even if intervention required once again sidestepping professional networks of medical knowledge. Boltzius's account and its detailed observations reflect ongoing participation in traditional empirical- and humoral-based medicine. He and his wife hoped the details would allow for diagnosis and treatment. Unfortunately, Goetze died before she received the letters. Boltzius followed up with Francke, and in October of 1750 Madai himself responded. Although unable to make a diagnosis based on Boltzius's account, Madai suggested a treatment nonetheless.[60]

Gertraud Boltzius's sickness was not the only occasion in which Johann Boltzius alluded to a separate, or parallel, line of communication when it came to women's health and his perpetual disappointment with Thilo. During a 1750 epidemic, which has been

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[59] Following Kleckley's translation, with slight changes. JMB to Henriette Rosine Goetze, 28 July 1749, AFSt/M 5 B 1: 19; in JMB, *Letters*, 538-541.

[60] JMB to GAF, 21 April 1750, AFSt/M 5 B 1: 28, and in JMB, *Letters*, 558-559; JMB to GAF, 14 September 1750, in JMB, *Letters*, 572-573; Daniel Samuel v. Madai, "Stellungnahme zur Diagnose und Behandlung der Erkrankung Gertraud Boltzius," 16 October 1750, AFSt/M 5 B 1: 32. The doctor J. H. Schomburg also offered a diagnosis of Gertraud Boltzius's illness, but the letter is extremely difficult to read. It is interesting that he addressed the letter to a noble woman, and unclear how they became involved in the case. See J. H. Schomburg to [Charlotte Christiane Albertine Henckel v. Donnersmarck?], 27 December 1749, AFSt/M 5 B 1: 31.

variously identified as "Rothe Friesel," scarlet fever, or measles, Boltzius rarely mentioned Thilo and instead relied on his own observations and readings and his wife's personal observations in trying to determine treatment.[61] Boltzius believed bloodletting to be the best treatment. He reported that "adults who have this scarlet fever say that there is an extraordinary movement of the blood as if it is wished to break out of all veins." He wrote that the English said bloodletting was the best cure, and he noted that he had seen children regain health after suffering a nose bleed. Gertraud Boltzius, meanwhile, confirmed the overwhelming significance of blood in observing several women's experiences with the disease, including:

> A grown girl had her first period during her paroxysm, but then it rose immediately to her breast as if it all wished to come out of her throat, and from this she suddenly died five weeks ago . . . A pregnant woman in her first months was brought into mortal danger by the extraordinary motion of the blood in her body. However, because the blood broke out and she aborted, she soon recovered.

Boltzius reported his wife's observations as further evidence of the need for bloodletting as well as for constant scrutiny in treatment.[62]

Boltzius turned to women's medical knowledge not only because it corresponded with his own humorally- and empirically-based understanding of the human body and the effects of illness, but also because it furthered the opportunity for intervention that he saw as critical to Christian mission. Despite his struggles and differences with Thilo,

[61] Urlsperger, *DR* 13 &14 (1989), 178. For Jones' explanation of the Rothe Friesel, see his comments on v-vi, and 226n24.

[62] Urlsperger, *DR* 13 &14 (1989), 204-205. Following Jones' translation.

which stemmed from Thilo's fixation on the soul's role in sickness, Boltzius nonetheless also perceived spiritual significance in the practice of medicine and healing of the body. He maintained a Pietist-inflected perspective on good health: it represented a gift of God directed toward a spiritual end, to do God's work in the world. Medical treatment made it possible, as Jürgen Helm has argued, for the sick person to "redeploy the body again in a condition that facilitated it to achieve the will of God and further it in the world. . . . [The body] served as 'guest giver' and suitable instrument of the soul. Because of this function, the body was necessarily worthy of preservation."[63]

Boltzius understood the healthy human body as a house for the soul, its spiritual work, and mission, and he grounded this conviction in a providential understanding of Ebenezer. He longed for his community's survival, hoping to continue God's work in Georgia and to serve as an example of God's blessing on missionary work. Francke had shared this vision in a 1743 letter, invoking language from Matthew 5:14-16: "May the Lord therefore allow Ebenezer to be a city on the hill, and be a light on a glowing candlestick. May he then also grant to all inhabitants grace, to allow their light to be shone, through a spiritual and Gospel-worthy transformation, above all to the European inhabitants in America."[64]

After the Rothe Friesel epidemic of 1750, Boltzius envisioned a charitable institution designed for Ebenezer's physical and spiritual health: a hospital. The 1750 epidemic had been particularly bad: in a two-month period at least thirteen children, or about 5% of Ebenezer's population, had died. Boltzius lost his oldest son, Samuel

[63] Helm, *Krankheit, Bekehrung und Reform*, 28. Translation mine.

[64] GAF to JMB, 27 March 1743, AFSt/M 5 A 10: 34. Translation mine. Cf. Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer," 19.

Leberecht, and his youngest daughter, Christiana Elisabeth.[65] He was heartbroken. He accepted the loss as God's will and hoped for future retrospective clarity, citing John 13:7 in the top margin of a letter to Francke: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Boltzius also dwelled on the sheer number of deaths among children in Ebenezer since its founding: "If all the children who were born and baptized sixteen years ago in old and New Ebenezer were still alive, how large our congregation would be!" In hope, Boltzius envisaged "a beautiful troop of chosen and transfigured children from the Ebenezer congregation . . . resplendent before God's throne," but he also suffered acute grief.[66]

In responding to the loss of children, Boltzius envisioned a "spacious sickbay," which would provide protection for poor families in winter. When inhabitants became sick during this time, he wrote, "their quick recovery is hindered, and they also contract long-lasting sickness and consumption." Although physicians and medicines were freely provided, such a sickbay would transform the experience of illness in Ebenezer: "much good would accrue from it to the congregation and the whole country under the influence of God's blessing."[67]

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[65] The first transport to Ebenezer included approximately 50 immigrants. Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer," 86; JMB, *Letters*, 35n79. The first transport was supplemented by transports in 1735, 1737, and 1741, bringing the population to 249 adults and children by the end of 1742. This number did not significantly change until the early 1750s, when new transports of immigrants and increasing childhood survival rates finally brought the population to approximately 650 people by 1754. Although small, this number nonetheless represented, according to Wilson, 12 percent of the population of the entire colony of Georgia at this time. Ibid., 99-100.

[66] See especially Boltzius's journal entries from Jan. 28, Oct. 12, 21, Nov. 3, 6, 9, 17, 18, 24, 26, 28, Dec. 6, 8, 9, 13, 1750, in Urlsperger, *DR* 15 (1990), 161-207. Instead of offering a direct translation of the German scripture Boltzius cited, I use the John 13:7 translation from the King James Version, the contemporary English-language Protestant Bible.

[67] See Boltzius's journal entry from Dec. 13, 1750, in Urlsperger, *DR* 15 (1990), 206-207.

Ebenezer could not survive without children, and if Ebenezer did not survive, what did that mean for its providential call to serve as an example of renewed piety and Protestant mission in America? Although Boltzius's sickbay never materialized, his vision of a congregation and country transformed by a benevolent institution—approved by God's providence—demonstrates the power he saw in the Christian commitment to medicine and care. Disappointed in Thilo and his fixation on soul-based medical care, Boltzius displayed his own deep desire to intervene actively among the sick. His concerns were both practical and providential. Far from centers of learning and medicine, he engaged—through correspondence, popular print, and conversation—the medical knowledge and treatments available and sought to act upon this knowledge with the urgency impressed by his situation. His writings illuminate both the medical debates within Pietist academic medicine and the central Protestant concern with providing physical relief in the hope of survival, spiritual renewal, and Christian mission.

John Wesley, Primitive Physic, *and American Mission*

In 1789, a new preface was added to the twenty-first edition of John Wesley's *Primitive Physic*, a medical manual first published in England in 1747. The 1789 edition was published in Philadelphia, and the new preface was written by Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, bishops of the recently-formed Methodist Episcopal Church. They began their preface: "The grand interests of your souls will ever lie near our hearts, but we cannot be unmindful of your bodies."[68] More than forty years after Wesley made

[68] John Wesley, *Primitive Physic: Or An Easy and Natural Method of Curing most Diseases,* 21st ed. (Philadelphia: Prichard & Hall, 1789), xxvii-xxviii. I consulted the 1789 editions located at the American Antiquarian Society and the Library Company of Philadelphia. On the publication history of *Primitive Physic*, see Madden, *A cheap, safe and natural medicine*, 11-12; G. S. Rousseau, "John Wesley's *Primitive Physic*," 253-256.

bodily health a central part of his renewal movement within the Church of England, his writings on the subject remained central in the new American denomination he and his followers shaped.[69]

Like Mather and Boltzius, Wesley's interest in medicine was tightly bound to contemporary medical debates and Christian reactions to them. Wesley believed that theoretical medicine had developed at odds with God's design for human health. Following Cheyne, Wesley emphasized the importance of piety in the maintenance and restoration of bodily health, and like Mather and Boltzius, he also saw a clear connection between Christian benevolence and mission and medical care. But he took this connection one step further, using this commitment to benevolence and evangelism to critique theoretical medicine, which had grown too complicated for the average sick person's participation. Wesley remained committed to the empirical tradition and, like Mather and Boltzius, learned from wide reading and observation. Wesley sought to make medical knowledge widely available by printing an inexpensive medical manual; in this he surpassed Mather, and, indeed, all Christian authors on medicine of his time.

Wesley's *Primitive Physic* was immensely popular, with more than thirty-seven editions printed in the English language before 1859, including at least twenty-four editions published in America. According to the historian G. S. Rousseau, the book "was found in almost every English household, especially in those of the poor, usually beside

[69] The most extensive study of Wesley and medicine is Madden, *A cheap, safe and natural medicine*. See also: Rousseau, "John Wesley's *Primitive Physic*"; English, "John Wesley"; Philip W. Ott, "John Wesley on Health as Wholeness," *Journal of Religion and Health* 30 (1991): 43-57; Haas, "John Wesley's View"; Deborah Madden, "Medicine and Moral Reform: The Place of Practical Piety in John Wesley's Art of Physic," *Church History* 73 (2004): 741-758; Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley on Holistic Health and Healing," *Methodist History* 46 (2007): 4-33. Finally, Guerrini and Mack both include discussions of the topic within their larger work: Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment*, 160-162; Mack, "Religious Dissenters," 3; Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 174-182.

the Bible." Notes and alterations to surviving American editions suggest that the book was well used, shared, and passed on.[70]

Primitive Physic and the general Methodist commitment to good health were important manifestations of Methodist theology in both eighteenth-century England and America.[71] Wesley's writings on medicine were premised on a providential understanding of the fallen human soul, the corresponding condition of sickness, the gift of medicine from God, and the place of medicine and treatment in the Christian mission to the larger community. Scholars, however, have overlooked the commitment to providence evident in Wesley and in the broader Methodist movement; this oversight results from the efforts of scholars—and early Methodists themselves—to distinguish Methodism from Calvinism through reference to the Methodists' Arminian stress on human effort, action, and practice. Attending to how providential views shaped Methodist theology and writings on medicine highlights the important parallels in medical interest and practice between Methodists and other religious communities, including Puritans and Lutherans. This is particularly important because some historians have termed Wesley's ideas as "Christian enlightened thinking," implicitly

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[70] Rousseau, "John Wesley's *Primitive Physic*," 242. The 1789 edition of the Library Company of Philadelphia, for example, has at least three different owners listed on the first two pages; the names are difficult to make out because they have been obscured by a bookplate of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, but the third name begins with "Margaret." The 1788 edition at the Library Company appears to have been re-bound with extra pages interspersed throughout, so that the owner could take his or her own notes. There is only one place in which such a note was added, after St. Anthony's Fire (pp. 23-24): "St. Anthony's Fire. Strong liquors should be avoided as poison. This disease raged severely in the year 1093 in the 11th Century under Urban the 2d. The Religious Order of St Anthony was formed for the relief of persons afflicted with this dreadfull disorder. NB. Scorbutic people are most subject to it." John Wesley, *Primative Physic: or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases* 16th ed. (Trenton: Quequelle and Wilson, 1788).

[71] Although the theological significance of early Methodism is often overlooked in favor of emphasizing its "practical" theology or piety, the Methodists' practical interest in medicine and health demonstrates deeply theological commitments, including a strong belief in providence. Noll, *America's God*, 331-331; E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 256-257.

binding his attention to medicine to modern enlightenment without acknowledging his dependence on historic and contemporary Christian understandings of providence and healing.[72]

Wesley's interest in medicine was shaped by his participation in both formal and informal medical networks. From his own family history and the models set by other ministers, he knew medicine could serve as a useful parallel career for English clergy. His medical development was shaped by his time as a missionary in the colony of Georgia in 1736 and by his relationship with George Cheyne, who treated Wesley on his return to England. Cheyne's straightforward writings on diet and exercise and his attention to piety influenced Wesley just as they had Cotton Mather. In the 1740s, Wesley opened a medical dispensary in London that served the poor free of charge, but it was costly and difficult to operate effectively. He redirected his efforts, and in 1747 he published *Primitive Physic,* an accessible book on medicine that was inexpensively distributed to interested readers in London and beyond. Recognizing the value of print in Christian evangelism, Wesley joined the already expansive medical marketplace that had emerged in eighteenth-century England.[73]

In the preface to *Primitive Physic*, which remained unchanged through over a century of new editions, Wesley articulated a story of sickness and healing that originated in the sin of Adam and Eve. Both sickness and healing were ordained by God

[72] Madden uses the phrase "Christian enlightened thinking" without offering an exact definition. Madden, "Medicine and Moral Reform," 742, 745. Two scholars briefly mention Wesley's understanding of providence: English, "John Wesley," 74-75; Haas, "John Wesley's View," 392.

[73] Wesley's great-grandfather, Bartholomew Wesley, worked as both a minister and a physician until the 1662 Act of Uniformity, after which he supported himself solely through medical work. Maddox, "John Wesley," 5, 26-27, 99; Ott, "John Wesley on Health," 43-50; Rousseau, "John Wesley's *Primitive Physic,*" 243; Madden, "Medicine and Moral Reform," 744; Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment*, 49-50, 67, 160. On clergy practicing medicine in other contexts, see Watson, *Angelical Conjunction*.

as a result of humanity's sinfulness, and both were transmitted from generation to generation—the former by nature and the latter by education. Wesley told this story in providential cadences, explaining to readers the fall of humanity and the origins of sickness, God's gift of medical knowledge and its proper use, and the importance of making medicine available to everyone. Wesley's preface welcomed readers familiar with a traditional providential view of the origins of sickness in human sin, while also explaining medical education and action in providential terms. In so doing, the preface offered an important Christian commentary on the contemporary state of medicine in England.

Wesley argued that God had ordained medical knowledge, together with other expertise, to pass seamlessly from parent to child—similar, in a way, to original sin. Medicine was traditional: "every father delivering down to his sons, what he had himself in like manner received concerning the manner of healing." God had ordained not only sickness, but also the human ability to accumulate and share knowledge for the promotion of cures and health. For Wesley, Native Americans offered an unadulterated example of this process; they passed knowledge to the next generation and participated in the foundational and God-ordained activities that prevented disease in the first place: exercise, diet, and temperance. These activities were key components of the physical regimen that, according to Cheyne, accompanied spiritual discipline and health. Only recently, Wesley wrote, had Native American temperance been corrupted, but their medicines, passed from father to child, remained "quick, as well as, generally, infallible."[74]

[74] Wesley, *Primative Physic* (1788), iv-v. The preface remained the same throughout the various editions, but the citations in this section are taken from the 1788 edition I consulted at the American Antiquarian

Wesley's preface detailed how medical knowledge was a part of God's providential plan to heal fallen creation. What might seem an "accident" was how the "Author of nature" taught fallen humanity the means of medicine: "doubtless numberless remedies have been . . . casually discovered in every age and nation."[75] God's order shaped human experience and corresponding knowledge of medicine. As long as "physic was wholly founded on experiment," Wesley wrote, it reflected God's created order and was oriented to "common humanity."[76]

From this description of God-designed medical practice, Wesley turned sharply to criticize what he considered the contemporary corruption of the process. This corruption included theoretical approaches to medicine, which, he added, made profit rather than Christian humanity the orienting motive of the medical profession. When "men of a philosophical turn" ceased to be "satisfied" with the experimental approach to medicine, they turned increasingly to "hypotheses" and "theories" as they "inverted" the "whole order of physic." In so doing, these men forgot the simples—medicines consisting of a single ingredient—that had long dominated medical therapy in order to promote compound medicines, which contained multiple ingredients and came with complicated rules for use. Together with compound medicines appeared an ever-increasing supply of difficult books, which were inaccessible "for common people." Medicine "became an abstruse science"—involving anatomy, natural philosophy, and even astronomy—and therefore "quite out of reach of ordinary men." This theoretically-

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Society (unless otherwise noted). On Cheyne and regimen, see Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment*, 139-140.

[75] Wesley, *Primative Physic* (1788), v-vi.

[76] Ibid., vi.

obsessed medical profession secured "honor and gain" and was territorial. Compound medicines, Wesley wrote, were designed "to swell the Apothecary's bill," indeed, "possibly on purpose to prolong the distemper, that the doctor and he may divide the spoil." Meanwhile, the rest of humanity was left "utterly cut off from helping either themselves or their neighbours." Medicine had been diverted from the God-ordained method of experience and goal of helping others in need.[77]

Wesley's intent in writing *Primitive Physic* was to return medicine to what he considered its providential design in experience-based knowledge oriented toward Christian mission to fallen humanity, including the most "common man." Wesley cited others who wanted to "explode" from medicine "all hypotheses, and fine spun theories," particularly Thomas Sydenham, George Cheyne, and physicians who avoided complicated compound medicines, such as Herman Boerhaave. But Wesley went further, attempting to make medical advice widely available to even the lowest classes. Common people could promote good health by following the straightforward and simple remedies Wesley provided as well as by eating temperately and exercising regularly. Wesley reminded readers, "above all," however, of the importance of prayer, "that old unfashionable medicine." It was prayer that turned humans away from their own knowledge, away from the dangerous enticement of theory and medicine oriented to private gain, and reminded them to "have Faith in God, who '*killeth and maketh alive, who bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up*." By echoing Hannah's praise of God's faithfulness and power over humanity in 1 Samuel 2, Wesley reiterated to readers the

[77] Ibid., vi-x; Madden, '*A Cheap, Safe, and Natural Medicine*', 101.

importance of remembering and trusting in the ultimate arbiter over human health and sickness.[78]

Within this trust in providence, Wesley was not against reading widely in medical literature and, with the goal of helping others, he participated actively in many of the scientific and medical developments of his time. Regardless of his rhetorical promotion of "ancient and contemporary 'popular' medicine," Wesley, as historian Deborah Madden has shown, "adopted, elaborated and simplified those authoritative medical sources that were validated by leading contemporary physicians." As new editions of *Primitive Physic* were produced, Wesley occasionally added notes and described new treatments. He began adding an asterisk, for example, if he had personally tried or observed a remedy, or he appended a note if he found a person's testimony particularly compelling. For example, under the third treatment option listed for the condition "The Bite of a Mad Dog," Wesley wrote:

> mix a pound of salt, with a quart of water. Squeeze, bathe, and wash the wound with this for an hour. Then bind some salt upon it for twelve hours. N.B. *The author of this receipt was bit six times by mad dogs, and always cured himself by this means.*

Wesley was actively engaged in attaining medical knowledge, most famously in his use of a personally-built "electrical machine," which he began using to treat patients in 1746. He used electricity to treat a variety of conditions, including deafness and obstructed menses. By 1760, he added a prefatory remark on the benefits of electricity as "*far*

[78] Wesley, *Primative Physic* (1788), viii, x-xi; Madden, '*A Cheap, Safe, and Natural Medicine*', 108-111; Maddox, "John Wesley," 23. On Wesley's efforts to make Cheyne's advice—directed to the middle and upper classes—available to the lower class, see Maddox, "John Wesley," 19. On Wesley's conception of the limitations of human knowledge, see especially Haas, "John Wesley's View," 385-386.

superior to all the other medicine I have known." While Wesley's participation in the medical world was wide-ranging, he always wrote with clear and simple language that he couched in personal experience, and he stressed that the outcome of human medical activities relied, ultimately, on the "blessing of God."[79]

Wesley ended the preface with a citation of "a few plain, easy rules"—gleaned from Cheyne—which focused on the importance of balancing passions for the maintenance of bodily health. Like Mather, Wesley quoted Cheyne's admonition that "the love of God" assists in "keeping the passions themselves within due bounds." Such love represented "the most powerful of all the means of health and long life."[80] Following Cheyne, Wesley also argued that the passions were both animal and spiritual, and both influenced the physical body. Indeed, the passions motivated the body and its activity in a way similar to how gravity affects matter. In describing the relationship between body, mind, and soul in the post-Cartesian world, Cheyne was influenced by contemporary Newtonianism, but his understanding of body and soul also held intriguing similarities to Georg Ernst Stahl's conviction of the soul's driving influence in healing the body. Unlike Stahl, however, Cheyne perceived the influence between body and passions as a "two-way street": that is, Cheyne did not limit the direction of influence to soul on body. Influenced by John Locke, Cheyne believed external stimuli could have internal influences. Thus, as his treatment methods developed, he came to

[79] Mack, *Heart Religion*, 178; Madden, '*A Cheap, Safe, and Natural Medicine',* 113-115; Rousseau, "John Wesley's *Primitive Physic,"* 247-250; Haas, "John Wesley's View," 381-382; Wesley, *Primative Physic* (1788), xi, xvii.

[80] Wesley, Primative Physic (1788), xiv. This passage is misattributed to Wesley by Ott, "John Wesley," 51, and Mack, *Heart Religion*, 175, who quotes it from E. Brooks Holifield, *Health and medicine in the Methodist tradition: journey toward wholeness* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1986), 21.

stress—as did Wesley—that "discipline of the body was an essential counterpart to discipline of the soul."[81]

This mutually influential interrelationship between soul and body remained the driving impulse behind the publication and distribution of *Primitive Physic* in the United States: "the grand interests of your souls," Coke and Asbury had written, required attention to "your bodies." The 1789 *Primitive Physic* was not the first appearance of the book in the United States, but it was the first from the newly-opened publishing house of the Methodist Episcopal Church: the Book Concern.[82] The Book Concern was founded in 1789 in Philadelphia as part of an effort to build Methodist community in the rapidly expanding denomination. In the United States, Methodist membership grew dramatically between the years of 1784 and 1791: from 15,000 to 76,000. Aware of both the opportunity and the dangers of this amazing growth in such a large geographic space, publication became a central focus of American Methodists. The opening pages of *The Arminian Magazine,* a Methodist periodical first published in the United States in 1789, reminded readers of the importance of publication efforts on the "extensive continent" of the United States. Popular print, including journals, hymns, poems, and letters, represented an opportunity to enunciate the doctrines of Methodists

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[81] Guerrini notes that "it is not known whether Cheyne read Stahl." Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment*, 124-125; cf. Mack (2008), 176-177. Guerrini's analysis of the religious dimensions of Cheyne's work questions Roy Porter's description of Cheyne's later work, *The English Malady* (1733), as "a highly secularized work. Guerrini argues that "a pervasive sense of sin underlies Cheyne's discussion, culminating in his autobiography," which appears at the end of the book. Guerrini finds this in an important continuity with Cheyne's earlier work and subsequent development. Ibid., 149; cf. Maddox, "John Wesley," 13-16.

[82] Wesley, *Primitive Physic* (1789), xxvii-xxviii. The 16th edition, cited throughout this section, was published in Trenton in 1788, and the 12th edition was published in Philadelphia (by Steuart) in 1764. I have viewed the 1764 edition at the Library Company of Philadelphia. It has the standard early prefaces and quotations from Cheyne, but predates Wesley's insertion of asterisks to indicate cures he had himself tried. John Wesley, *Primitive Physic* 12th ed. (Philadelphia: Steuart, 1764).

and to differentiate them from Calvinists on the one hand and Universalists on the other. It is significant that among the first books published by this new publishing enterprise were *Primitive Physic* and *Imitation of Christ* (by Thomas á Kempis), which represented the two sides of holistic care that Wesley himself had long identified as essential for every household and pastor.[83]

Although early Methodist publications in the United States were not overtly theological, they contained nonetheless the central components of Methodist theology: human sinfulness, God's providential grace to all humans, and a mission to care—both physically and spiritually—for the sick and needy. In the early Methodists' involvement in hospitals in England, they understood their work as an opportunity not only to heal physically, but also "to reclaim the souls of the sick." Participating in charitable medical endeavors was, further, important for the healer, as it provided an opportunity for Christian usefulness. Medicine was a chance to engage once again in the human-to-human transmission of medical knowledge ordained by God as the healing counterpart to disease transmission. *Primitive Physic* became a way for Wesley to encourage widely the impulses of healing, evangelism, and spiritual growth, and the publication proved vital for Coke and Asbury in the development of the Methodist community in the United States.[84]

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[83] *The Arminian Magazine: Consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises on General Redemption. Volume 1.* (Philadelphia: Prichard and Hall, 1789), iii-v. I consulted the edition at the Library Company, which was owned by John Dickinson. On the Book Concern, see Noll, *America's God*, 336; Holifield, *Theology in America*, 257; Nathan Bangs, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Volume IV* (New York: Mason and Lane, 1839), chapter 16, available online at: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bangs/history4.ii.ii.vii.html; on *Imitation of Christ* and holistic care, see Maddox, "John Wesley," 8; on Methodist membership, see Noll, *America's God*, 181.

[84] Noll, *America's God*, 331-336; Haas, "John Wesley's View," 382-383; on early Methodist involvement in the founding of voluntary hospitals, see Madden, "Medicine and Moral Reform," 746.

Wesley's *Primitive Physic* offered an important critique of the contemporary medical world and theoretical medicine. Like other Protestants of his time, Wesley articulated a Christian understanding of the soul's role in sickness and bodily health and the importance of medicine for Christian benevolence and mission. *Primitive Physic* was a work of practical piety, but its preface also taught fundamental theological principles of human sinfulness, charity, and—above all—God's providence over creation. For Wesley, medicine was tightly bound to God's providence and was most successful when pursued with attention to the providentially-ordained method of experience, the generational transmission of knowledge, and the goal of helping others both physically and spiritually. The enduring popularity of *Primitive Physic* in both England and the United States demonstrates the appeal and significance of Wesley's arguments and providential perspective in shaping early Methodist communities.

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Eighteenth-century Puritans, Lutherans, and Methodists participated in an ever-changing and diverse world of medical knowledge. Contemporary debates on the nature of the human soul, spurred by emerging mechanistic and Newtonian conceptions of medicine and the body, demanded a response. Some Protestants, like Wesley, joined these debates and responded forcefully and publicly to theoretical and profit-driven medicine. Wesley saw medicine as God's gift for fallen humans to share inter-generationally with the intent of Christian healing and evangelism. Other eighteenth-century Protestants, like Mather, were less concerned with the increasing theorization of medicine and more focused on integrating traditional Christian conceptions of the soul within new mechanistic understandings of the body. Mather promoted smallpox inoculation, because, like Wesley, he felt a providential call to "do good" in the world.

But, unlike Wesley, Mather was unaware or inattentive to the practical aspects of inoculation that affected its accessibility to all of society. For Mather, God's providence would see to inoculation's implementation for the good. For Wesley, God's providence required more work on the part of Christians to make sure medicine truly reached the common good.

Boltzius, meanwhile, grew impatient with the missionary physician Thilo and his intensive, soul-focused medicine. Like Wesley and Mather, Boltzius read widely and felt a Christian duty to help those who suffered. Like Wesley, he valued first-hand observations and experiences of symptoms and treatments as he pursued cures for his entire community, but, unlike Wesley, he did not contemplate his work and intervention as a response to the theoretical changes within larger eighteenth-century medicine—changes that were, nonetheless, exemplified by the frustrating Thilo, his medical education, and his practice. Like Mather, Boltzius sought to implement treatments and cures that would ensure his community's survival. Like Wesley, he actively worked to make sure these treatments were available to all, and—due to the small size of his community and the discrete nature of his mission—this direct intervention was achievable in a way it was not in Mather's colonial Boston or in Wesley's wide readership.

These differences are important, but they also highlight a unifying theme among eighteenth-century Protestants and their engagement with medicine. Although scholars have sought to define, differentiate, and limit this engagement based on soteriologies or stances on predestination, all early American Protestants actively pursued medical care, disease prevention, and health management. They combined knowledge from their own humoral or empirical understandings of the body, from informal medical networks that

included African slaves and women, and from the burgeoning medical print culture in order to help the sick in the most effective and efficient way possible. They understood their interventions in terms of a Christian mission of benevolence, recognizing that physical care was closely linked to the spiritual renewal and rebirth of both the individual and the community.

Mather, Boltzius, and Wesley—along with their correspondents and contemporaries—are a crucial part of the story of eighteenth-century medicine. They have been overlooked because scholarship has assumed, based on caricatures of their theologies, that they could not have participated in the eighteenth-century transformations in medicine. Yet their focus on the soul's influence on bodily health was not a theological, anti-empirical Christian maneuver, but a serious participation in contemporary medical conversations based on observation and theory as well as religion.

Mather, Boltzius, Wesley, and their circles actively shaped the physical and medical worlds of their communities in concrete ways. Through treatments and writings they promoted medical care as an essential component of Christian benevolence and mission. Their ideas did not reflect a dawning Enlightenment or a decline of theological commitment but rather their contemporary medical world and deep-rooted Christian beliefs in God's providential direction over the human body, soul, medicine, and mission.

Chapter 4

Providence and Benevolence in Philadelphia's Yellow Fever

On the evening of September 13, 1793, the Lutheran pastor Heinrich Helmuth wrestled before God. "My Jesus," he wrote in his journal, "has fled from me." Living and working through the yellow fever epidemic that had enveloped Philadelphia, he felt spiritually barren and "cheated" in his hopes for a decline in deaths. He buried seven people from his congregation that day; an eighth was buried at midnight.[1]

As the epidemic grew, Helmuth continued to serve his congregants of St. Michael's and Zion, the largest Lutheran parish in North America. He preached, he visited, he buried, and he baptized. He worked himself sick, fretted over the toll on his own family, and went to bed, often, "wrestling before God," heartsick from the death and misery he witnessed during the day. Each night he dreaded sleep punctuated by disturbing dreams.[2]

And yet, Helmuth forged on. He reminded himself of God's mercy and oversight, while also exhorting himself to pious action. On the morning of September 19, after awaking "full of perplexity due to the great misery," he inscribed a passage from Genesis 17:1: "*wandle vor mir und sey fromm*" ("walk before me and be pious"). This passage is part of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants. The covenant, a central part of Christianity, is God's promise to—or contract with—the human faithful. Helmuth

[1] Justus Heinrich Christian Helmuth, journal, 13 September 1793, Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia (hereafter Helmuth journal, LAC). "Wurde in meiner Hofnung betrogen – ich hatte auf heute eine Verringerung der Leiche erwartet, aber es erfolgte der Gegenteil_ … beerdigte 7 Personen heute_ die 8te ist um Mitternacht begraben worden_ …Abends starkes Ringen vor Gott_Mein Jesus hat sich mir entzogen-ach wie bin ich doch so dürre!" Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[2] Helmuth journal, 12-23 September 1793, LAC.

chose a passage that focused on the human side of the agreement: to "walk before" God and to "be pious" required a two-fold attention to both duty and providence. The covenant required humans not only to show Christian charity toward their neighbor, but also to pay attention to God's direction and promise of salvation.[3] The covenant demanded, in other words, humans' efforts to discern and pursue God's providence in their actions and words.

Why did people stay in Philadelphia during the epidemic and help the sick, suffering, and needy? Those who had the means and wherewithal to flee could leave, and many did, seeking relief from the disease and the attendant chaos, fears of contraction, and noxious smells of death.[4] But some, like Helmuth, stayed. Helmuth remained because of how he interpreted the covenant. To walk before God and be pious, in his reading, meant to stay and serve. Like many Philadelphians, he viewed the epidemic as God's judgment on the city. In discerning God's providence, however, Philadelphians—including Helmuth—sought not only to comprehend passively God's judgment but also to ascertain God's mercy through their active efforts to alleviate suffering.

Occurring at the cusp of the modern political era, in a world transformed by the free exercise of religion, the yellow fever epidemic offers a brief but vivid window into

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[3] Helmuth journal, 19 September 1793, LAC. "Voll von Verlegenheit wegen der groß en Jammer—Ach Gott! Erbarme dich um Jesu willen amen. **Spruch** Wandele vor mir und sey fromm." Translation mine. The contemporary English Protestant Bible translation, the King James Version, renders this passage: "Walk before me and be thou perfect."

[4] See, for example, the letters of Elizabeth Rhoads Fisher to her husband Samuel W. Fisher, dated between 11 September and 17 October 1793. She had fled Philadelphia to Woodfield. Samuel W. Fisher papers, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). Peter Grotjan fled from Philadelphia during the 1798 epidemic to Reading. Peter Adolph Grotjan, memoirs, vol. 2: 93-97, HSP; Edward Garrigues stayed in Philadelphia during the 1798 epidemic, but his diary nonetheless has extensive discussion of those who fled. See his entries from August through November of 1798 in: Edward Garrigues, diary, HSP.

how religious commitment continued to shape American individuals and communities in their response to the sick and suffering. The epidemic was a momentous event in the history of the new United States and its capital city, Philadelphia, and while numerous studies have explored the epidemic's implications for early-national politics, medicine, literature, and race relations, none has provided a close analysis of the epidemic's significance for early American religion.[5] Responses to the epidemic magnify broader trends in America's religious history, including the privatization of charity and the emergence of humanitarianism in the nineteenth century. Although scholars have seen such privatization and humanitarianism as critical to the development of a secular age, this chapter argues that traditional Christian views of God's providential direction—both in sending sickness and in encouraging acts of charity and service—defined benevolent endeavors in early national Philadelphia.[6]

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[5] See, for example, the collected essays in J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith, eds. *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic* (Canton, MA: Science History Publications/USA, for the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1997); an older classic is J. H. Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949). On medical history, see: Simon Finger, *The Contagious City: The Politics of Public Health in Early Philadelphia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Thomas Apel, "Feverish Bodies, Enlightened Minds: Yellow Fever and Common-Sense Natural Philosophy in the Early American Republic, 1793-1805" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2012). On literature and race, see: Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African American and Native American Literatures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 151-178. A recent study that places the epidemic in transatlantic context is: Billy G. Smith, *Ship of Death: A Voyage That Changed the Atlantic World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

[6] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007), 15-16, 257-262. The idea that privatized charitable action is secular has played out in several studies. Kathleen D. McCarthy argues, for example, that Benjamin Franklin "fastened on [Cotton Mather's] ideas, secularized them, and made them his own." See Kathleen D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700-1865* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 15. Susan M. Ryan has described nineteenth-century benevolence as emerging from two separate genealogies: one religious and one secular. See Susan Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003). A. G. Roeber argues—in a study focused on Helmuth in Philadelphia—that the privatization of charity "ended any chance that Pennsylvania, or any state, could legitimately be described as a 'Christian Republic." See A. G. Roeber, "J. H. C. Helmuth, Evangelical Charity, and the Public Sphere in Pennsylvania, 1793-1800," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 121 (1997), 77-78. Cf. Jessica Roney's study on the tradition of voluntary societies in eighteenth-century Philadelphia and the ways in which they provided care when the civic government failed and religious institutions were still growing, and Bruce Dorsey's work on benevolence and reform in antebellum Philadelphia, which

Along with Helmuth, others wrote vivid accounts of their responses to the yellow fever, including the Committee to Attend to and Alleviate the Sufferings of the Afflicted with the Malignant Fever, the African American ministers Absolom Jones and Richard Allen, and John Redman, a physician and the first president of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. These accounts reflect a variety of interpretations of duty and compassion from both religious and (what some might call) "secular" professions. They represent the wide and diverse engagement with Christian and Enlightenment questions about benevolence, sympathy, and the role of God in humans' actions to alleviate suffering.[7] When scholars study the religious history of early American benevolence, they generally look to New England Puritans or their successors: John Winthrop, Cotton Mather, or Samuel Hopkins. They overlook the important contribution of other traditions, such as German Pietists,[8] African American Methodists,[9] and

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addresses the lack of historical studies of religion in antebellum Philadelphia: Jessica Roney, *Governed by a spirit of opposition: The origins of American Political Practice in Colonial Philadelphia* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 60-61; Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 2-3, 10, 21, 27-28, 46-47.

[7] On connections between Christian and Enlightenment thought in eighteenth-century understandings of benevolence, see: Norman S. Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion: An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sympathy and Humanitarianism," in Maryanne Cline Horowitz, ed. *Race, Gender, and Rank: Early Modern Ideas of Humanity* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1992), 378-401 (originally published in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37 (1976): 197-218); Catherine Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 217-247.

[8] There are some studies on the connections between Pietism and Puritanism in early America, but they mostly focus on the early eighteenth century even though Halle Pietism continued to shape the experience of German immigrant Protestantism in America into the early nineteenth century. On earlier connections, see: F. Ernest Stoeffler, ed., *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1976); W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); W.R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 58-59; Jonathan Strom, Hartmut Lehmann, James Van Horn Melton, eds. *Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Hartmut Lehmann, Hermann Wellenreuther, Renate Wilson, eds. *In Search of Peace and Prosperity: New German Settlements in Eighteenth-Century Europe and America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000). There has been some scholarly attention to Helmuth and his influence in late eighteenth-century Philadelphia. See, for example, Roeber, "J. H. C.

Presbyterians.[10] Studies of the Enlightenment story of benevolence and the rise of humanitarianism, meanwhile, generally focus on a handful of elite male intellectuals, such as David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, and Adam Smith.[11] The influence of these men is undoubted, but other men and women—including ministers, physicians, and concerned citizens—also reflected on the origins and significance of human benevolence and developed passionate concern for doing good.[12]

The 1790s yellow fever accounts point to important changes in Christian responses to sickness over the course of the eighteenth century. Early-eighteenth-century pastoral manuals on sickness had urged repentance and trust in providence.

Helmuth"; Wolfgang Flügel, "Selbstbildnis mit Amerika - Hallenser Pastoren in Pennsylvania in der Ära nach Mühlenberg," in *Freiheit, Fortschritt und Verheißung. Blickwechsel zwischen Europa und Nordamerika seit der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Claus Veltmann, Jürgen Gröschl, and Thomas Müller-Bahlke (Halle: Franckeschen Stiftungen, 2011), 117-129.

9 African American ministers Richard Allen and Absolom Jones have been recognized as important early black leaders, but little attention has been given to their description of their actions and experiences during the epidemic as the result of human sympathy and an earnest faith in God's guidance. See Phillip Lapsansky, "'Abigail, A Negress': The Role and the Legacy of African Americans in the Yellow Fever Epidemic," in *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*, ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith (Canton, MA: Science History Publications/USA, for the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1997), 61-65; Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 162-178.

10 The physician John Redman, who was one of the first American practitioners to train in Europe, was a devout Presbyterian whose medical practice was based on his strong conviction that doctors have a duty to serve their fellow humans to the glory of God. He has been only briefly acknowledged as a teacher of the more famous Benjamin Rush and as a founder of the College of Physicians. George H. Ingram, "Biographies of the Alumni of the Log College: 10. John Redman," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 13 (1929): 356-362.

11 See, for example: Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions*, 14-15; Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion," 381-396; Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *The American Historical Review* 100 (1995), 303-307.

12 The Committee, for example, was made up of middling white men who remained in the city while the federal and civic governments fled; although the political significance of their actions has been explained, they also described their work with ample reference to compassion, affection, and providence. Sally Griffith, "'A Total Dissolution of the Bonds of Society': Community Death and Regeneration in Mathew Carey's *Short Account of the Malignant Fever*," in *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation: The Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic*, ed. J. Worth Estes and Billy G. Smith (Canton, MA: Science History Publications/USA, for the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1997), 55-56.

While trust in providence remained a central theme in the 1790s yellow fever accounts, repentance was often overshadowed by the accounts' emphasis on immediate physical and social action in response to suffering. Further, while early- and mid-eighteenth-century Christian medical manuals and missionary medical endeavors had focused on the possible conversion and future Christian life of the patient or recipient, accounts of the yellow fever often stressed the spiritual development—or, indeed, happiness—of the benefactor.

The idea that humans might find pleasure in doing good works was contested in the eighteenth century, as philosophers, novelists, and ministers alike sought to articulate the virtues of "sensibility" and "benevolence." One contemporary defined sensibility as "a temper which interests us in the concerns of our brethren; which disposes us to feel along with them." This language of sensibility concerned Christians who worried about motivations for compassion rooted in human feelings rather than in God's command. "Benevolence," meanwhile, had long been a term associated with God's goodwill toward creation, but had more recently been used to describe human efforts to do good. Christian clergy on both sides of the Atlantic, including Samuel Hopkins and John Brown, argued for a notion of "disinterested benevolence," rooted in self-sacrifice. The term "benevolence," however, has never escaped skeptics who saw—and see—it rooted in selfishness and a desire for power.[13] For most eighteenth-century Christians,

[13] Numerous studies have addressed arguments that religious benevolence and reform were rooted in a desire to exert social control. See, for example: Natalie Zemon Davis, "Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975), 17-64 (originally published in: *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 5 (1968)); Lee Palmer Wandel, *Always Among Us: Images of the Poor in Zwingli's Zurich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Cornelia H. Dayton and Sharon V. Salinger, *Robert Love's Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Deborah Madden, "Medicine and Moral Reform: The Place of Practical Piety in John Wesley's Art of Physic," *Church History* 73 (2004): 741-758; Conrad Edick Wright, *The Transformation of Charity in Postrevolutionary New*

the debate spoke centrally to the concern of finding pleasure in good works. They worried such pleasure betrayed sinful self-interest and insisted that charitable enterprises should spring from a commitment to God's providence.[14]

Accounts from the yellow fever demonstrate that, between the extremes of self-sacrifice and sinful self-interest, eighteenth-century Americans had many perspectives on benevolence, its motivations, and its rewards. Those who wrote about yellow fever described their motivations for benevolence as grounded in a sense of duty, informed by both Christian conviction and human sympathy. Their benevolence was rewarded by the sense of fulfillment or happiness they found in performing their duty toward others. Some interpreted this happiness in Christian terms of God's providence, joyfully perceiving their good works as manifestations of their faith or as the result of their own free will to work toward their salvation. Others found their happiness beyond human reason to explain and, while not always explicitly religious, turned to Christian themes of self-sacrifice. All of the authors depended on a retrospective framework to narrate

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England (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 10-11; Lois W. Banner, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation," *The Journal of American History* 60 (1973): 23-41.

[14] Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World*, 226-227; Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989; 1998), 461-487; Carolyn D. Williams, "'The Luxury of Doing Good': Benevolence, Sensibility, and the Royal Humane Society," in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century,* ed. Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 77-108. For the contemporary discussion of sensibility, see Hugh Blair, an ordained Anglican and professor at Edinburgh, whose popular *Sermons* were published in several editions in the early republic. Hugh Blair, *Sermons* (New York: Hodge, Allen, and Campbell, 1790), 23-24. For one contemporary description of benevolence, see Samuel Davies, a Presbyterian minister and fourth president of Princeton University, who offered a succinct discussion of what he believed was the proper notion of benevolence for young Christians, in an address delivered to the graduating class of 1760: "let Religion be the Source of your Benevolence and Publick-Spirit; and have a Regard to the Will of God, in all your good Offices to Men. Let it not be your principal End, to gratify a natural Benevolence of Temper; to procure Honour to yourselves, or to accomplish some interested Design; but to PLEASE GOD. Let this be the Center, in which all the Actions of your Life shall terminate, and the Scope to which they end. Then you may claim a Character more noble than even that of a Patriot, I mean a CHRISTIAN." Samuel Davies, *Religion and public spirit, A valedictory address to the Senior Class* (Portsmouth, NH: Fowle, 1762), 11.

their actions in a time of despair and to stress in providential terms the transcendent meaning that the experience provided in the story of their lives.

"die süßte Pflicht" / "the sweetest duty"

For the Lutheran pastor Heinrich Helmuth, writing provided an essential comfort and resource during and after the yellow fever epidemic. He left both a journal and a published account, which convey his conviction that God led him to know his duty during the epidemic and guided him in fulfilling it. He perceived that his actions and faith were significant for his Christian journey toward salvation and that God directed him in ways that, while not immediately clear to his human perspective, would be evident in retrospect. Helmuth's account of duty was also shaped, however, by the common sense philosophy that pervaded contemporary conversations of benevolence. He acknowledged that humans had an innate sense of sympathy; the desire to do good—to act benevolently—was a natural instinct. But despite his openness to this new optimism about human nature, Helmuth retained a deep sense of human sin. He realized that any innate benevolence could be thwarted by other human instincts, including fear, without God's providential intervention.

Echoing generations of Christians before him, Helmuth perceived the epidemic as God's chastising hand upon a city of sinners and, based on this interpretation, attempted to discern the human response God sought. In his famous account of the epidemic, *Nachricht von dem sogenannten Gelben Fieber* (1793; translated into English in 1794 as *A Short Account of the Yellow Fever*), he began with an extensive discussion of God's righteous chastisement of the city, echoing at one point Jesus's lament over Jerusalem from the Gospels. Helmuth bemoaned Philadelphia's godlessness, sinful

luxuries, theater, and circus, but his deepest concern was the city's corresponding lack of care for its widows and orphans. God wanted sinful men and women not only to convert but also to help others. By turning his account on the pivot of charity, Helmuth claimed that the *"reflecting Christian*" would recognize that the fever was the result of social breakdown. In a society that privileged folly and amusements over compassion for its neediest members, the reason for God's stinging judgment was clear.

Helmuth's diagnosis came with a straightforward treatment: take care of your neighbor.[15]

Helmuth's interest in charity predated the yellow fever epidemic. As a child, Helmuth had been a charity student at the orphan house of the Francke Foundations and the University in Halle. He eventually taught at the orphan house before accepting a call to Pennsylvania in 1768. His experience as a student and educator informed his concern about how the city of Philadelphia cared for its poor, including the widows and orphans. Following the lead of the city's English-speakers and their blossoming mutual-aid and voluntary societies, Helmuth and members of his congregation founded *Die Gesellschaft zur Unterstützung der redlichen Hülfsbedürftigen Haus=Armen* (The Society for the Support of the Honest Needy Poor). In its earliest printed document from 1790, the Society agreed to meet monthly, gathering money and organizing for the relief

[15] J. Heinrich C. Helmuth, *Nachricht von dem sogenannten Gelben Fieber in Philadelphia für den nachdenkenden Christen* (Philadelphia: Steiner & Kämmerer, 1793); J. Henry C. Helmuth, *A Short Account of the Yellow Fever in Philadelphia, for the Reflecting Christian*, trans. Charles Erdmann (Philadelphia: Jones, Hoff & Derrick, 1794), 10-21. I have compared the two editions; the English translation is, overall, satisfactory, and I will provide quotations from it throughout but reference also the pages from the German edition (the pagination is not consistent between the two versions). It should be noted, however, that the German edition does have several paratexts that the English lacks, including a list of the number of dead organized by date and congregation, a record of weather conditions, and a poem about the dead in the graveyard. Helmuth's reference to Jesus's lament (Luke 13:34; Matthew 23:37) occurs on page 17 of the English tract and page 31 of the German: "O Philadelphia!! Philadelphia! wie oft hat dich auch die Jesus versammlen wollen, wie eine Henne versammlet ihre Küchlein unter ihre Flügel, aber du hast nicht gewollt."

of the poor. There was a fee to join the society and a collection at each meeting. Even in its informal, pre-1790 meetings, the Society pulled in twenty dollars a week, and by 1796 it was incorporated. It received money from donations, bequests, and publications, including Helmuth's *Short Account of the Yellow Fever*, and directed its funds for the food, fuel, and clothing of those in need—the "honest poor" of its title—including widows and orphans.[16]

Helmuth's Society affirmed a duty to relieve the suffering of the poor, a duty located in God's direction as well as in human compassion. The eighteenth century was an era of increasing philosophical conviction that humans were born with an innate sympathy. Although preceding the word "humanitarianism," the idea that humans' inborn affections or passions directed their responses to suffering was already widespread in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, engaging thinkers such as Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury, William Wollaston, Francis Hutcheson, and Adam Smith. An increased faith in human nature had important implications for the understanding of social evils and for perceptions of God: increasingly, the ills of the world were seen as eradicable through human effort and God was understood as a benevolent overseer. Even for those thinkers with the most general understanding of

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[16] *Die Gesellschaft zur Unterstützung der redlichen Hülfsbedürftigen Haus=Armen, in der Deutsch=Evangelisch= Lutherischen Gemeinde in Philadelphia, in dem Staat Pennsylvanien, in Nord=America* (n.p., 1790), 5-6. This tract can be found at the Lutheran Archives Center, LAC H10 P5G3 1790. On the founding of the society, see A. G. Roeber, "J. H. C. Helmuth," 85; on Philadelphia's tradition of mutual aid and voluntary societies, see Roney, *Governed by a Spirit*. For Helmuth's biography, see: C. R. Demme, *Die letzte Ehre des Christlichen Predigers in einer christlichen Gemeine. Eine Predigt gehalten vor der St. Michaelis=und Zions=Gemeine in Philadelphia, am 13. Febr. 1825, als an dem Tage der Gedächtnissfeier Ihres verewigten Lehrers, des Hochw. J. H. C. Hellmuth, Doktors der h. Schrift und Seniors des Lutherischen Ministeriums von Pennsylvanien* (Philadelphia: Joh. Georg Ritter, 1825), 14-15. In a letter to the Francke Foundations, Helmuth reported that his published account of the yellow fever had brought in over 200 pounds for the Poor Society. Justus Heinrich Christian Helmuth to Johann Ludwig Schulze, 7 May 1794, Missionsarchiv der Franckeshen Stiftungen (hereafter AFSt/M 4) D 3: 31. I am indebted to Dr. Wolfgang Flügel of the Kulturhistorisches Museum Magdeburg for sharing his knowledge of Helmuth materials at the Archives of the Francke Foundations.

God's involvement in the created order, providence nonetheless remained central to their conception of compassion. It was God, after all, who endowed humans with the instinct of benevolence.[17]

Helmuth and his Society assumed the new philosophical language of human compassion as a natural instinct, and they grounded it firmly in providence. Their tract spoke, however, not of a general providence in which a distant God creates at the beginning or rewards at the end of time, but of a particular providence in which God takes an active role in human affairs. Compassion was an instinct and a duty that Christians must undertake on their journey toward salvation, but this journey was directed not by their own activity or desire for happiness but by God. As the Society sang in a hymn:

> How beautiful indeed is the band of love,
> there one fulfills the sweetest duty;
> there one, from gentle, compassionate instincts,
> assuages the pain of the poor brother.
> This is the path, upon which one
> can become an image of the highest.
>
> God creates a happiness of eternalness
> He cultivates the faculties of the soul
> He himself will lead us to truth
> He makes us happy on this path:
> He gives enlightenment to the mind,
> The heart enhances its hand.[18]

[17] Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion," 383-392; on the influence of Hutcheson, in particular, in America, see Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 106-111.

[18] *Die Gesellschaft*, 8. Translation mine. I have found the same hymn in several nineteenth-century hymnals, but I am not sure when or where it originated. See, for example, hymn no. 324 in: *Eine Sammlung evangelischer Lieder, zum Gebrauch der Hochdeutsch Reformirten Kirche in den Der. Staaten von Nord Amerika* (Chambersburg, PA: Kieffer & Co., 1853), 382.

This hymn, included in the Society's first publication, expressed a strong belief in the providential direction of human compassion. With its language of "instincts" and a God who "cultivates the faculties of the soul," the hymn merged Enlightenment and providential language. It promised happiness and enlightenment to those who traveled the path with God and helped the "poor brother." A glance at the first words of each line of the second stanza shows that the primary actor here was God, creating, cultivating, and leading the human, heart, soul, and mind.

It is not clear if Helmuth saw where his Society and his writing echoed and diverged from new ideas and language about innate human sympathy. He was generally aware of and skeptical of Enlightenment thought, particularly when it stripped God of too much power in the lives of sinful humans. He and his colleague in Philadelphia, Johann Schmidt, were anxious about attempts to rationalize Christian faith. They worried about the attitudes of "atheism and the contempt and derision for the means of grace," which seemed to be taking the "upper hand" in "western lands." They were especially dismayed by reports of the arrival in Philadelphia of Joseph Priestly, a scientist and dissenting English minister who sought to bridge Enlightenment thought and Christianity and did so, according to Helmuth, by rejecting the divinity of Christ.[19]

When it came to the yellow fever, Helmuth's writings struggled between his implicit acknowledgment of an innate human compassion with his fervent belief in

[19] Johann Friedrich Schmidt to Gottlieb Friedrich Stoppelberg, 2 June 1794, AFSt/M 4 D 3: 29; Justus Heinrich Christian Helmuth to Gottlieb Friedrich Stoppelberg, 17 Feb. 1797, AFSt/M 4 D 4: 71; Johann Friedrich Schmidt and Justus Heinrich Christian Helmuth to Johann Ludwig Schulze. 13 Sept. 1796, AFST/M 4 G 10; Justus Heinrich Christian Helmuth to Georg Christian Knapp, 28 July 1800, AFSt/M 4 D 5: 80. Joseph Priestley ended up moving to what is now Northumberland, Pennsylvania. The Library Company of Philadelphia holds part of his library collection. For an example of his writings on Christ's divinity and the human soul, see: Joseph Priestly, *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit: To which is added, the history of the philosophical doctrine concerning the origin of the soul, and nature of matter; with its influence on Christianity, especially with respect to the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ* (London: Johnson, 1777).

divine providence. The yellow fever demonstrated, for him, the breakdown of human sympathy without God's direction and intervention. In his published account he remarked not only on the "instances of humanity and hospitality" he witnessed, but also on the "unfriendly conduct, sometimes even inhuman brutality," which, he wrote, "will remain a stain upon humanity." As evidenced in his private journal, Helmuth's encounter with inhumanity led to increasingly fervent calls to his congregation and community to fulfill the commands of Scripture. On Tuesday, September 17, Helmuth's journal described a message that he gave to a "numerous and attentive assembly" at his church. He warned that the evils sent by the Lord would endure, until all who were wanting were saved. Citing Isaiah 55, he urged his congregation: "Up, therefore, Oh souls! For the sake of yourself and yours; for the sake of the city. Shake yourselves up and place yourselves in the fissure."[20]

By "fissure," Helmuth meant the chaos, the social disintegration, and the lack of basic human care that he daily witnessed in the city under the epidemic. He wrote in his journal of a terrible smell he encountered while accompanying a corpse through town to its grave. On his return journey, a companion explained that the smell, which emanated from a house on the main thoroughfare, was from a man inside who was dying with no one to care for him. Disturbed by the thought of people dying alone, Helmuth confided in his journal, "My God! What is becoming of us miserable worms!"[21] His published

[20] Helmuth, *Short Account*, 32; cf. Helmuth, *Nachricht*, 60; Helmuth journal, 17 September 1793, LAC. "Auf daher, O Selen! Um eurer selbst und[?] der Eurig willen_ um der Stadt willen; auf bebetet euch und stellet euch in den Riß." Translation mine.

[21] Helmuth journal, 19 September 1793, LAC. "Auf einmal, als wir bey einem Hause verbeykamen, bemerkten wir einem höchst wiedrige Gestank [in margin written: "Todes Gerauch"] – Ich predigte wieder beym Grabe_ Als ich fertig war, so erzahlte mir mein begleiter, daß in dem Hause, wo der heftige Geruch sey, ein Mann am Sterben liege, der diesene Gerug verursachten_ und der vermuthlich Niemand bey sich hat_ Mein Gott! was wird aus uns elenden Würmen werden!" Translation mine.

account of the epidemic expressed the conviction that many people died of their solitude. Without the attention of human compassion, "the fear of death overpowered many and actually killed them."[22]

To step into the fissure, then, meant to cross that boundary of fear—the gap that had been created between the healthy and the sick, the living and the dead—and to respond with compassion to suffering. Helmuth recognized the difficulty of this task when fear had overcome the most basic of human instincts: the innate love and affection found particularly among families. He told of anxious relatives standing at a distance, reluctant to approach an ailing beloved. "I do not know," he reported, "where this distress would have ended, if some persons had not interfered, who at other times did not properly make it their business to attend the sick." Physicians like Caspar Wistar and Benjamin Rush assisted as they were able, but Wistar contracted the fever and, Helmuth reported in his journal, Rush's house was overflowing with patients to such an extent that it hindered his efforts. Thus those who had the least of occupations—those who tended the dead—proved most significant at this time. The congregation's "inviter" (who managed funerals) and the driver of the hearse were willing to touch the dead and place corpses in coffins, to offer them a final human dignity. These men and Helmuth were often the only people to attend the dead to their final rest. The funeral procession of three men, he wrote, was a marked difference from the norm.[23]

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[22] Helmuth, *Short Account*, 28; cf. Helmuth, *Nachricht*, 52.

[23] Helmuth, *Short Account*, 28-29; cf. Helmuth, *Nachricht,* 52-55; Helmuth journal, 12 September 1793, LAC. "D. Wistar ist voll von Flecken, er hat das Fieber also im höchsten Grade_ D. Rushes Hauß, sieht mir ein Hospital aus_ er kann nicht Rath schaffen, so stark ist der Überlauf." Helmuth mentioned medicine and physicians throughout his journals; he described, for example, Rush and Rush's medicines in entries from 14 September and 18 September 1793.

Helmuth cared passionately about service to the suffering, but he recognized that, with the exception of a few brave souls, most of his community had been paralyzed with terror, unable to perform the basic functions of human compassion. He was not alone in his concern for the limits of an innate human sympathy. The Scottish Common Sense philosopher Thomas Reid had delineated a difference between benevolence as an affection and benevolence as a virtue. The former was "a propensity to do good, from natural constitution or habit, without regard to rectitude or duty." The latter was "a fixed purpose or resolution to do good when we have opportunity, from a conviction that it is right, and is our duty." For Reid, the answer to a breakdown in benevolence was to root it not in the passions but in a "fixed principle," grounded in human reason and judgment.[24] For Helmuth, the answer to such a breakdown was to turn to God.

As the epidemic and its corresponding despair heightened, Helmuth found both solace and energy by returning to the themes of repentance and consolation found in God's providence, themes that had long defined Protestant responses to sickness. On the 17th of September he wrote about a Methodist who told him: "these times could make a community dim." The comment "humbled" Helmuth and weighed on him throughout the day. He knew that he had "often done great with the margins of the community's members," serving the needy and suffering through his commitment to walking with Jesus, but it was a difficult duty and he had many sins and failings, known to God. After visiting yet another sick person Helmuth went home overwhelmed, even though corpses

[24] Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man* (Philadelphia: Young, 1793), volume 2, 227-236. These volumes were first published in the 1780s in Scotland. Mark Noll offers a helpful overview of the influence of Scottish Common Sense philosophy as it was received in revolutionary America, focusing particularly on Frances Hutcheson and John Witherspoon. Reid, although different, was part of this tradition and his writings were known and published in the United States. See Noll, *America's God*, 93-113.

remained to be buried. In his solitude, he meditated intensely on God's mercy and love: "I pushed myself as a poor poor sinner in the wounds of Jesus. A right poor worm." Here, pulled to Christ's passion, repentance defined Helmuth's story. He confirmed his dependence on God's direction and mercy. Far from limiting him, this dependence on God—exemplified in the life and death of Jesus—provided the "bedrock and soil" for Helmuth's active efforts in the midst of relentless suffering and death. Turning almost daily to God in solitary despair and prayer, he emerged refreshed.[25]

Despite the fear and despair that he encountered at every turn, Helmuth found hope in God's providence over the epidemic, his community, and himself, and in his sense that the experience of God's providence was not bound by human emotions and time. "The world," he wrote, "disappeared before my eyes like a shadow." The epidemic swept away the immediate and familiar; those left behind had to make meaning of a life transformed. Helmuth urged his congregants not to be fixed on the earthly mortality around them and instead to follow Jesus, who was "the primary path to have peace, courage, and yieldedness (*Gelaßenheit*) in these dangerous days."[26] Helmuth likewise filled his published account of the epidemic with stories that highlighted how faith in

[25] Helmuth journal, 17 September 1793, LAC. "O dort wandete Jesus mit seinen Jüngens und ihr Herz brannte__Ein Methodist sagte mir: diese Zeiten könten eine Gemein dimme machen_ ich fasste dis und demütigte mich deßwegen, daß ich wohl oft mit der Margen meiner Gemeins Glieder Groß gethan habe_Auch umerkante Sünden stellest du, O Gott! ins Licht_Besuchte des Gutmanns frau in der Racestr. War bis nach Sonnen Untergang zwischen den Gräben Ging heim, ob schon die Leichen nach nicht alle unter der Erde waren_ ich fühlte zu kalt. Abends Mr. Krebs hier-die Familie herzlich und innege Erbauung in der selben_Zu der Einsamkeit drangte ich mich als armer armern Sünder in die Wunde Jesu_ ein recht armes Würmling." Helmuth retired to solitary prayer almost every evening. See for example his entry from 21 September 1793: "der Jammer breitet sich immer weiter und weiter aus_ Gegen Abend innige, herzliche Erholung. Ach die liebe Einsamkeit—wie wohl war mir doch auch Jesus Grund und Boden!" Translation mine.

[26] Helmuth journal, 14 September 1793, LAC: "und dieser Weg sey sich ersten Wege in diesen gefährlichen Tagen Friede, Müth, und Gelaßenheit zu haben_und dieser Weg sey der Glaube an Jesus;" Helmuth Journal, 15 September 1793, LAC: "die Welt vershwand vor meinen Augen, wie ein Schatten." Translations mine.

God's providence lifted himself and his community—not so that they might avoid earthly sorrow but so that they could act with compassion unhindered by fear.

St. Michael's and Zion continued to meet and worship throughout the epidemic, despite criticism from some that this could further contagion. Helmuth reiterated throughout his account that such meetings in a place of worship did much to temper fear: the congregation took precautions, met in an orderly fashion, and not only worshiped and prayed but also learned the latest news and means of prevention. With their mixture of spiritual and practical ends, the meetings offered a distraction from fear, and, Helmuth wrote, "experience has shewn how hurtful fear has been to the inhabitants of this city." Turning to God and the church community in the midst of the yellow fever was not a way to avoid the epidemic's reality—it was a way to encounter the disease with courage.[27]

Helmuth recognized that his community's actions during the epidemic had far-reaching, transcendent significance for their spiritual lives and for their posterity. This significance depended, however, on an adequate record and interpretation of the events. He began his interpretive work the moment he announced his decision to stay. Adopting a retrospective framework, he expressed his decision to remain in the city by voicing, at the same time, his conviction of the outcome: "See me," he had declared from the pulpit, "as a dead man."[28] Helmuth had every reason to suspect his service during the epidemic

[27] Helmuth, *Short Account*, 46; cf. Helmuth, *Nachricht*, 87. For an example of such criticism, see Mathew Carey, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Carey, 1793), 105-107.

[28] Demme, *Die letzte Ehre*, 16-22. "Doch eines – und Eine wird stat Tausend seyn – Eines muss ich nennen. Es ist sein Werk im Jahr des Unglücks 1793. Damals, als Gottes Hand auf dieser Stadt lag, als die Pest ihre Opfer in Schaaren forderte, als Alles, was eilen konne, hinwegeilte von dem Ort des Entsetzens, als viele Prediger ihre Gemeine verliessen, als selbst die Band des Bluts nicht fest mehr hielten, und der Gatte vor der Gattin, die Kinder vor der Eltern floh'n – da blieb Er, bereit aus LIebe für die Heerde sich zu opfern. Auf dieser Kanzel stand Er und sprach: „Sehet mich als einen Todten an" und gieng dann hin in

would kill him; yet his pronouncement did not, in fact, fix his death date. His reference was to an eventual, inevitable mortality—a reminder for both himself and his audience that the end of Christian life was not physical survival but spiritual growth. This perspective shaped both his journal and published account. He continuously returned to a narration of the fever as an opportunity to discern and do God's will and to grow spiritually, regardless of physical danger.

In his published account, Helmuth expanded on this interpretation of God's providence in sending the fever, highlighting the spiritual importance of the epidemic for both the local and wider Christian community. For Philadelphia's Christians, the crisis offered a profound window to their faith and thus their hope for salvation. For those outside of Philadelphia, Helmuth gratefully acknowledged the prayers and contributions of "distant brethren," writing that they helped with "the burthen which sometimes would become too heavy for us." He looked forward to how, in "eternity," the judgments which they suffered would "mix in pure celestial exstacy (*sic*)." In the midst of suffering, Helmuth described hope in his community's turn to God and in the service of the wider Christian community. Citing 2 Corinthians 4:17, he wrote: "for 'our light afflictions[,] which are but for a moment, work out for us a far, more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."[29] By calling humans to reflection and service, suffering could be a means to salvation through faith.

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die Häuser, wo das Gift wohnte, und brachte den Kranken und den Sterbenden und den weindenden Gesunden Evangelium; gieng hin auf die Leichenfelder und rief seinen Todten noch ein Lebewohl nach! O wahrlich! da zeigte Er sich als den Hirten, der die Heerde liebte, und das Leben selbst zu theuer nicht achtete. Da verdiente Er sich die Hoch achtung, die Ihm so allgemein zu Theil ward. Wenn ich am Schlusse meines Lebens ein solches Tagewerk hinter mir liegen habe, wie Hellmuth am Schlusse jenes Jahres, ich würde hofften dürfen, dass mein Feierabend schön sey!" Translation mine. Cf. Roeber, "J. H. C. Helmuth," 77.

[29] Helmuth, *Short Account*, 55; cf. Helmuth, *Nachricht*, 103-104.

Helmuth's conviction of God's intention and grace in sending the epidemic also allowed him to comprehend his personal experience and emotional turmoil. His journal often described his long quiet nights among the graves—the "newly raised hills"—and his sense of Jesus's presence "among the tombs." Helmuth wrote of Jesus as looking for the "possessed," a reference to Luke 8:27. The gospel account describes Jesus driving the evil spirits from a man who had been bound by them and forced to wander in a cemetery. Once freed from the evil spirits, the man returned to the city, proclaiming Jesus's words. Helmuth's published account repeated this scriptural reference. The thought of Jesus's presence in his own cemetery, Helmuth wrote, was "reviving…to my soul!" and made his time among the graves "sweetly solemn." Looking back, he interpreted his sense of peace in the midst of death as God's means of rescuing him from evil and restoring and refreshing him in his ministry in the city.[30]

Helmuth attributed his steadfast faith and service to God, and he recognized with joy that his experiences during the epidemic would define his Christian life and career. He wrote:

> and I—the most unworthy of the servants of the Lord, who had been so unprofitable, so little useful, during the whole time of my office, I may cherish the unmerited hope, that the Lord graciously made use of me, to lead many a soul to salvation, who else would have strayed and been lost—and oh! my God what happiness! To be instrumental in saving a soul! not for a world, would I barter the personal advantage which I have derived from the mortality in Philadelphia.

[30] Helmuth, *Short Account*, 30; cf. Helmuth, *Nachricht*, 56; Helmuth journal, 18 September 1793, LAC; cf. Luke 8:27.

Forget not oh my soul! what the Lord has conferred upon thee, unworthy as thou art!"[31]

Helmuth perceived and described the epidemic as a terrible crisis of human misery, and yet he also retrospectively recognized the enormous significance of the epidemic for shaping his entire life and hope in salvation. The epidemic would forever be part of his reputation as a Christian minister, and Helmuth's published account ensured that. There is an air of Enlightenment self-interest in his description of the happiness and "personal advantage" he received from his good works,[32] but, even as he wrote the words, Helmuth seems to have offered such an account with an explicitly Christian interpretation. As an "unworthy servant"—a reference to Luke 17:10—Helmuth had merely done his duty; his faith and his service in furthering the Christian faith of others were the true focus. His "happiness" was not the happiness of more skeptical Enlightenment thought, a happiness found in personal fulfillment and this-worldly ends. He grounded his happiness, rather, in the fact that his retrospective account confirmed God's providential guidance over his life, his faith, and his service to others.

Helmuth believed that his actions during the yellow fever were inspired by God. Despite his acceptance of a natural instinct of human sympathy for the suffering, he recognized that this instinct could be thwarted by fear. He believed the only way to transcend this fear was to turn to God in dependence and humility, praying for God's direction in earthly work and in salvation. Through his writing he confirmed God's active intervention in his life and the life of his community, their utter dependence on

[31] Helmuth, *Short Account*, 35-36; cf. Helmuth, *Nachricht*, 67.

[32] See Williams, "'The Luxury of Doing Good,'" 85-86.

this intervention, and the profound rewards offered for those who, like him, found grace in surrendering their lives and duty to God's service.

"their sympathy is balm to our wounds"

As Helmuth worked among the German-speaking Lutherans, a group of English-speaking men gathered in City Hall to address the organizational and political vacuum created by the epidemic. Many political leaders had fled the city, and by early September the mayor, Matthew Clarkson, along with those overseers of the poor who had remained, placed an advertisement in the city's papers seeking the assistance of "benevolent citizens." The city was in desperate need of volunteers who were "humanely disposed" to "aid in the present distress." The advertisement appeared on September 10, 1793, and on September 12, the newly-formed Committee to Attend to and Alleviate the Sufferings of the Afflicted with the Malignant Fever held its first meeting. It met daily in City Hall until the epidemic abated in late October and continued meeting periodically until March of 1794.[33]

Like Helmuth, the Committee members recognized that sympathy and compassion were not enough to encourage people to fulfill basic human duties during the epidemic. Unlike Helmuth, the Committee focused its attention not on turning to God but on its responsibility for re-establishing order. The Minutes stressed repeatedly that with good order people might again behave with consideration toward their neighbors. The Committee did turn, eventually, to a general sense of providence in its

[33] Committee to Attend to and Alleviate the Sufferings of the Afflicted with the Malignant Fever, minutes, 1793-1794, Library Company of Philadelphia (hereafter The Committee, Minutes, LCP), 1, 3. The quotations and page numbers I use are from the manuscript minutes, but the Minutes of the Committee were published shortly after the epidemic subsided in 1794. See *Minutes of the proceedings of the committee* . . . (Philadelphia: R. Aitken & Son, 1794). For a brief discussion of the political context and the leaders who had left, see Griffith, "'A Total Dissolution of the Bonds of Society,'" 55-56.

efforts to comprehend fully the extent and meaning of the epidemic and its actions. While this sense of providence profoundly shaped the narrative of the epidemic, it was secondary in the early sections of the Committee's Minutes.

Upon its formation, the Committee acted immediately, citing a joint commitment to sympathy for suffering citizens and a great concern for order. They first focused attention on the hospital at Bush-Hill, where they achieved success due to dedicated volunteers and their attention to detail. By September 14, only two days after its initial meeting, the Committee received a report on the miserable state of affairs at the hospital. Stephen Girard and Peter Helm, two committee members, volunteered to lead efforts to reform the hospital, "commiserating the calamitous state to which the sick may probably be reduced for want of suitable persons to superintend the Hospital." Moved by their sympathy, Girard and Helm made efficient improvements to the hospital's cleanliness, staff, and patient care. These had immediate effects; for example, on September 18, it was reported that twenty patients had not been visited over the course of the day. On the morning of September 19, it was again reported that a number of patients had not yet been visited. By noon of the same day, however, the Committee recorded that its newly-hired doctor, Deveze, had completed rounds on all remaining patients. By September 24, the Minutes reported that "all the sick are in bedsteads, and furnished with suitable bedding, that the rooms are all numbered and that the whole house is in regular order."[34]

Establishing the "good order" of the hospital was essential to easing the epidemic and its effect on the city. Once the hospital was in order, the Committee encouraged

[34] The Committee, Minutes, LCP, 6-7, 14, 25, 28, 39,

those who were sick to "admit themselves" as soon as they experienced any symptoms. Such actions ensured that "the lives of many might be preserved." Likewise, the Committee took charge of the burial of the dead: after hearing citizens' complaints, the Committee changed the route that carters took from the hospital through town, urged coffin makers to take more care in their carpentry, and visited and reported on the state of the city's burial grounds.[35] Although the Committee did not understand the cause or transmission of yellow fever, it was convinced that proper care of both the living and the dead would benefit the city's overall health and outlook.

The Committee also cited a "duty incumbent" to look after the orphans created by the epidemic. It gathered children who had lost parents to sickness or death, organized a committee to care for them, found a suitable house for them—eventually in the old Loganian Library—and coordinated donations from "fellow citizens." By October 24, 159 children had been admitted to the orphan house. They had a matron, Mary Parvin, ten assistants, and a doctor, Samuel Duffield; thirty one had already been released to relatives, and only eight had died. The Committee was cautious about releasing children, anxious that "improper persons may" claim "they are connected" with certain children. The Committee instituted a ten-day waiting period on such claims and insisted on retaining oversight.

In some cases, the Committee's interest in the orphans may have stemmed from class anxieties—related, of course, to its focus on the reestablishment of order. The first orphans mentioned in the Minutes were the fifteen-month-old twins of Joseph Mercier and his wife, whose deaths were reported in the Committee's Minutes on September 16.

[35] Ibid., 24, 34, 38-39, 40-41, 43, 53.

The infants were left with no one to care for them but a servant girl of "unknown" character. The Merciers also left behind property. The Committee took the property into possession, "until legally called for," and found a "very suitable place" for the infants. Perhaps the Committee was afraid that the Merciers' servant would be tempted to steal or take advantage of the infants' property. Yet the Committee's care for orphans seems to have been expansive. Among the diverse children admitted, for example, was "Billy Dee a mulatto."[36]

It could be argued that the Committee's efforts to re-establish order were motivated primarily by an interest in social control and economic concerns, an argument that has been made about other historical eras.[37] The endless lists of names—of those admitted to the hospital, to the orphanage, to the potter's field—certainly suggest how the epidemic created an opportunity for modern bureaucracy. A similarly reductionist account would suggest that charitable responses represented an effort to enforce a Protestant ethic of discipline, criticizing the idle and extolling the productive and industrious citizens who went about their duty.[38] Alongside such interpretations, however, it is important to remember that in the immediate context of the epidemic, the careful order and leadership exhibited by the Committee were essential to relieving

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[36] Ibid., 21-22, 24, 25, 40, 100, 113-114.

[37] See Davis, "Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy," 36; Dayton and Salinger, *Robert Love's Warnings,* 5; Wandel, *Always Among Us,* 14-16; Wright, *The Transformation of Charity*, 10-11; for an older but helpful discussion of the development of the social control argument as it relates to American religious benevolence, see Banner, "Religious Benevolence," 23-41; cf. Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women,* 2-3; Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions*, 1-24.

[38] The argument about using religious charity toward social control has an especially long shadow in scholarship on Methodism, due to the influence of E.P. Thompson. For a good overview of scholarship in this area, see: Madden, "Medicine and Moral Reform," 749-755. For an interesting study of the influence of Methodism on E. P. Thompson, see David Hempton and John Walsh, "E. P. Thompson and Methodism," in *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860*, ed. Mark A. Noll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 99-120.

distress. Only order and leadership ensured that the sick would be visited, corpses would be carted away and buried, and orphans would be cared for.

It is impossible to know the exact motivations of those who worked on behalf of this order, but their writings offer insight to manifold, overlapping concerns. These included not only human sympathy and economic and political interests, but also providential conceptions of divine judgment and Christian duty. Scholars have highlighted that the men on the Committee were lay professional men, mostly of "middling" backgrounds. Not included in leadership or civic government under normal circumstances, they were interested in shaping the city when most members of the civic and federal governments had fled. They were also anxious to prove their own virtuous and civic-minded beneficence. Their records indicate further, however, an intense apprehension about the future—of the city, the nation, and the individual—which often manifested itself in explicitly providential terms.[39]

Behind the detailed accounting of time and resources, the Committee's Minutes often pulsed with a larger narrative of divine punishment and the redemption of the nation. This narrative is especially evident in the records of donations the Committee received (the Minutes recorded both the letters that accompanied donations and the Committee's responses). When other towns and cities—in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey—donated money and goods to Philadelphia, they described God's judgment on the city as a judgment on "fellow citizens" of the "American Nation." This providential framework both encouraged and explained significant donations from

[39] Griffith, "'A Total Dissolution of the Bonds of Society,'" 55. As Natalie Zemon Davis, Cornelia Dayton, and Sharon Salinger have shown in earlier eras, those who responded to suffering and poverty often had numerous and interconnecting reasons, including Christian faith, humanist teachings, and economic and political interests. Davis, "Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy," 17-20, 29, 35-37, 41, 57, 61; Dayton and Salinger, *Robert Love's Warnings,* 4-5, 21, 41, 43-45, 49.

other cities and individuals, who dwelt in dismay on the incontrovertible fact that the capital city of their new nation suffered such a setback.

What could it mean that the political center of the young United States was hit with misery on this level? On October 12, 1793, Richard Varick wrote to the Committee on behalf of the Common Council of New York City. He sent five thousand dollars and offered more, should it be necessary. The New York Council bemoaned the disorganization wrought by the epidemic. They were, Varick wrote:

> deeply impressed with the awful judgment of the Almighty on the American Nation, in permitting a pestilential disease to lay waste and disorganize that once populous, well regulated and flourishing sister city, the seat of Empire, by destroying the lives of many valuable patriots and citizens and by driving many others of its numerous and very opulent and useful inhabitants into exile.

Varick concluded with a reference to a biblical plague, praying that God "speedily stay the progress of the desolating disease and say it is enough" (cf. 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Chron. 21:15). He also praised the Committee members, who had "remained faithful to your trust," and prayed that they "be the peculiar care of Heaven."[40] The New York Council saw in Philadelphia's suffering a judgment not only on Philadelphia but on the entire nation. God's judgment, visible in the sickness of one community or family member, demanded the pious reflection of all.

The Committee's response to the New York Council turned likewise to a providential framework as it tried to comprehend the suffering in Philadelphia as well as their neighbors' sympathy, which transcended civic boundaries. In the most explicitly

[40] The Committee, Minutes, LCP, 77-79.

religious language that had thus far appeared in the Minutes, Clarkson, the Mayor, wrote on behalf of the Committee. He acknowledged gratefully the donation "on behalf of our suffering fellow citizens," explaining that the New York Council's benevolence and sympathy "is balm to our wounds," a scripturally-laden reference to healing. Clarkson described the "divine interposition," that touched their lives—not only in sending the epidemic, but also in seeing that "the hearts of so many around us have been touched with our distress and have united in our relief." He prayed that "the Almighty disposer of all events" protect others from the disease.[41]

Some scholars have interpreted the Committee's use of phrases like "Almighty disposer of all events" and "great Ruler of the universe" as an example of the adoption of "fashionable Deistic terminology." But the God who disposes all events is different from the God who is a clock maker or final judge. As the Committee and its benefactors discussed the transcendent significance of the epidemic and the charity and compassion of their fellow human beings and citizens, they in fact maintained a traditional Christian providential framework. In describing accounts of the epidemic, one historian has tried to divide accounts that relied on "a traditional religious framework" of divine judgment from accounts that offered a "more hopeful interpretation" of human effort and the possibility of communal recovery.[42] With its detailed Minutes, full of compassion, order,

[41] Ibid., 83-84. See Jeremiah 8:22.

[42] For an additional example, see the letter from the citizens of Bucks County: "for they can conceive no more acceptable method of testifying their thankfulness to the All-wise disposer of human events, for his particular mercy towards them, than by entertaining a proper tenderness for the sufferings of their fellow men, and a cheerful readiness to narrow the dominions of distress—They would also consider themselves as having rejected all regard for the social tie, if, whilst members of other societies are voluntarily coming forward with offers of assistance, they should be remiss in their endeavours to alleviate the misery of our fellow citizens…In the meantime be assured that we are the friends of our fellow citizens, and particularly of those who are in distress: And may the great Ruler of the universe who ever chastens with the tenderness of a parent, look with compassion upon the sufferings of his children, and put a period to their afflictions." Ibid., 106-109. Griffith, "'A Total Dissolution of the Bonds of Society,'" 45, 47.

accomplishments, and gratitude, the Committee and its work could almost fit into this latter narrative: its work typified an Enlightenment-infused optimism about human nature. Yet the Committee itself did not describe its work in this way; it relied on both narratives—it relied on providence.

In the Christian tradition of providential thought, there is no narrative distinction between judgment and hope—they are bound closely together. For those suffering and serving during the epidemic, there was hope and a call for human effort to be found in the judgment. In his thanks to the New York Council, Clarkson concluded by accepting the divine judgment on his city, writing: "we humbly kiss the rod and improve by the dispensation." Deistic as his language might seem, Clarkson relied on a traditional providential interpretation of transcendent judgment, human repentance, and the hope of redemption, which was, indeed, already evident in the bonds of human sympathy.[43]

As with Helmuth, the members of the Committee relied on retrospection in order to narrate their experiences during the epidemic. As the yellow fever waned in late October, the Committee's Minutes signaled gratitude for survival as well as sadness for the loss of many. The Minutes thanked "Divine Providence" for the "agreeable prospect of returning health to our long afflicted city," and the Committee agreed to allow members a day off in order to attend "their respective places of worship." The Committee's final report from March of 1794, which was copied in the Minutes, ended by acknowledging the deaths of four Committee members and reflecting, in the report's last lines, on the epidemic's meaning: "yet while we look back with mournful regret to the loss of our companions, gratitude to the supreme disposer of events requires our

[43] Ibid., 83-84.

acknowledgment of his interposition in the preservation of our own lives, and those of so many of our fellow citizens."[44] After pages of detailed Minutes accounting for human efforts and failures as well as survival and loss, the Committee concluded by looking back with a final appeal to providence.

The writing of one Committee member, the publisher and author Mathew Carey, offers insight into one individual's emotions and experience of participating in the Committee and interpreting the epidemic. Although he left the city for a period of three weeks during the epidemic, his time in the city affected him.[45] In a wildly popular publication, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever*, he sought to make sense of how the epidemic revealed human nature. Influenced by contemporary philosophical understandings of benevolence, Carey remarked that those who served the sick performed the "kindest offices of disinterested humanity." He surmised that responders such as Helmuth "would have done the same," even if they had been "remote from the public eye" and had no promise of fame. Carey knew their reward was a "self-approving conscience," but he sought to give them, further, the "approbation of our friends and fellow men" by placing their names in print. He narrated their works, hoping that his account would provide examples for subsequent generations "to emulate." He found in this work of narration the "highest consolation I have ever experienced."[46]

In addition to finding meaning in writing and in reputation, Carey also reflected on a divine overseer as he contemplated human actions and the course of the epidemic. Carey depended on a very rational, creator God, who he invoked, for example, in his

[44] Ibid., 111, 234.

[45] Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 163.

[46] Carey, *A Short Account*, 37-38.

criticism of those who continued to worship in the midst of the epidemic. He argued that the "mistaken zeal" of those who worshiped in church rather than at home actually furthered the contagion, pointing out that churches with the most crowded worship services suffered the highest number of dead.[47] Such action exemplified an incorrect understanding of God's providence, he argued. Instead of focusing on God's law, that is, God's commandment to worship, humans should focus on another kind of law, "implanted" in their very nature: the "law of self-preservation." This law was written "in indelible characters by his divine hand, on the breast of every one of his creatures." Breaking the fundamental law of self-preservation was no proper way to adore "the maker and preserver of mankind." Carey suggested that the law of nature, implanted by God, supplanted the law of the Old Testament.[48]

Carey's rational, general overseer differed from Helmuth's active, intervening God. Vestiges of a Christian providential framework nonetheless remained in Carey's account, particularly when he turned to the feelings of thanksgiving or joy experienced in comprehending a meaning in human suffering and in human efforts to ease suffering. He concluded his account with a call to "thanksgiving to that Supreme Being, who has, in his own time, stayed the avenging storm, ready to devour us, after it had laughed to scorn all human efforts." Human efforts were, in the end, nothing without a supporting transcendent force. Likewise, in narrating the self-sacrificial efforts of those whose

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[47] Helmuth's Lutheran congregation was likely one of the targets of this critique. Helmuth, however, defended his church's continued meetings and worship. He argued that the high interment rates at the Lutheran cemetery were due to the cemetery's openness to outsiders. He also tried to quantify the proportional rate of death compared to other congregations. He argued that more of his congregants stayed in the city and lived in the most highly-infected neighborhoods. In this light, the Lutherans actually fared better than what the raw numbers suggest. Helmuth, *Nachricht*, 89-95, 105-116; cf. Helmuth, *Short Account*, 47-50.

[48] Carey, *A Short Account,* 107-108.

dedication to the sick surpassed all reason, Carey turned to God. He described his language as overcome with intense emotion, which he could not adequately convey to the reader without comparison to the divine. He wanted his reader to share in the "pleasure" he found in witnessing such human actions: "When we view man in this light, we lose sight of his feebleness, his imperfection, his vice—he resembles, in a small degree, that divine being, who is an inexhaustible mine of mercy and goodness." Carey "rejoiced" to be "a witness and recorder" of such transcendent human behavior in the midst of a terrible event.[49]

Like Helmuth, Carey found a sort of "personal advantage" in his work among the sick. Unlike Helmuth, he was unwilling to attribute his "pleasure" to God's intervention, but he nonetheless founded it above all in the divine, perceiving in the divine being a model of "mercy and goodness" for humans to emulate. Carey's difference from Helmuth on providence, while significant, was subtle compared to the changes that were to come. In a letter written four decades after the yellow fever epidemic, in 1834, Carey returned to the pleasure he felt in the epidemic, explaining that his work on the Committee remained "some of the most tranquil and happy hours of my existence," and he remarked that his colleagues on the Committee felt "pretty much the same."[50] He still wondered how an emotion like happiness could exist in the midst of the terrible social breakdown that accompanied the epidemic. But in 1834 Carey did not turn to a divine example or providential framework to find the meaning behind the epidemic or to explain the fulfillment he found in his work. Instead he turned to science. He wrote that

[49] Ibid., 39.

[50] This was the fifth letter of a series of autobiographical letters by Carey. Mathew Carey, "Original Papers: Autobiography of Mathew Carey. Letter VI," *The New-England Magazine* 6 (1834), 93-94.

his feelings of enjoyment were "curious" to him and he invited a "physiologist" to investigate how he could find such happiness in a time of misery.[51]

In the immediate context and aftermath of the yellow fever, however, Carey and the Committee still relied on providence to make sense of the suffering around them and their responses to it. Although more general than the providence that pervaded Helmuth's writings, the divine, the "Almighty," or the "Supreme Being" that appeared in the Committee's Minutes and Carey's account played an important role. It allowed them to express their conviction that the widespread suffering and their benevolent actions for the sake of sympathy and order had significance beyond the immediate event. They were part of a plan to help the city, its inhabitants, its neighbors, and themselves. The accounts suggested that while humans might fail, there was a timeless model for compassion in divine mercy and goodness, a model that could inspire renewed efforts and hope.

"instruments, in the hand of God"

As a printer, Mathew Carey seized the opportunity to publish the first account of the yellow fever epidemic, and he released multiple editions in the early aftermath of the disease. The opportunity allowed him to emphasize the salvific nature of the Committee's response and thus the leadership potential of the tradesmen and artisans

[51] Carey, *A Short Account,* 96-97; Carey, "Original Papers," 93-94; in her study, Griffith took up Carey's invitation, and offered a modern psychological assessment of Carey's emotions. She suggested that Carey might have experienced something like what the "psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has recently described as a state of 'flow,' in which a person becomes so absorbed in a complex task—that he or she loses all senses of time and self-consciousness, yet experiences the greatest enjoyment." Griffith, "'A Total Dissolution of the Bonds of Society,'" 53. Another reading of Carey's experience could be offered by current scholarship on religion and the emotions. Suffering on the scale of an epidemic provokes wonder, an emotion that, one scholar has argued, opens humans to seek meaning beyond the human realm and to "religious sensibility." See Robert Fuller, "Wonder and the Religious Sensibility: A Study in Religion and Emotion," *The Journal of Religion* 86 (2006): 364-384.

who had stayed and served. While extolling the Committee, unfortunately, Carey not only disregarded but also degraded the contributions of other community members, including African American nurses.[52] In response, the African American ministers Absolom Jones and Richard Allen published their own account of the yellow fever, defending black nurses from charges of misconduct, extortion, and theft. Shaped by their years in the Methodist Church and participation in Philadelphia's zeal for voluntary societies, Jones and Allen explained the black community's response as a result of their own free will and God's providence, and as an example of their civic belonging and participation in the era's central concerns of human sympathy and benevolence.

Black nurses and workers were a central part of the response to the yellow fever in Philadelphia. These men and women cared for the dying, nursed hundreds back to health, and buried the dead. And, despite medical claims that blacks were immune to the yellow fever, many became sick during their efforts and died alongside white Philadelphians. While Carey briefly praised the efforts of Jones and Allen, who organized the nurses, and William Gray, who took charge of the burials, he mostly disparaged African Americans' efforts. He claimed that they took advantage of their suffering patients and a city in disarray to steal and charge high fees for their services.[53]

Jones and Allen responded to Carey's account with an account of their own: *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia, in the Year 1793*. Scholars have highlighted the significance of the *Narrative* as a "first"—the first published account in which African Americans

[52] Griffith, "'A Total Dissolution of the Bonds of Society,'" 54-56.

[53] Carey, *A Short Account*, 78.

responded directly to white accusations—and as a "polemic" that expressed blacks' frustrations and anger with Carey's characterization of their behavior and with their situation in Philadelphia and the new nation.[54] Although scholars have emphasized the uniqueness of Jones and Allen's *Narrative*, in important ways it is not unique at all: it confirmed that the black community was also guided by principles of Christian charity and human sympathy, overseen by God's grace and mercy. Though the *Narrative* should be read as a unique expression of a community's frustration and anger, it also inhabits a familiar form. Like Helmuth and the Committee, Philadelphia's black community was a community of Christian and civic-minded human beings, dedicated to serving their neighbors and doing God's will.[55]

In the late eighteenth century, Philadelphia's free black community was the largest in the United States. The community had grown steadily after Pennsylvania had passed a law for the gradual emancipation of slaves in 1780. Despite its size and the sympathy of antislavery white Pennsylvanians, the community's position remained precarious. Because emancipation was gradual, many blacks remained enslaved for their

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[54] A[bsolom] J[ones] and R[ichard] A[llen], *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia, in the Year 1793: And a Refutation of Some Censures, Thrown upon them in some late Publications*. (Philadelphia: Woodward, 1794); Lapsansky, "'Abigail, A Negress,'" 61-65; Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 166-170.

[55] Lapsansky, "'Abigail, A Negress,'" 61; I am influenced here by the work of Susan Ryan and Bruce Dorsey. In her analysis of nineteenth-century benevolence, Ryan argues that benevolent actions became associated with citizenship, with important implications for black Americans: "For African Americans and their advocates, blacks' achievement of benevolent agency shored up arguments against various forms of exclusion, from the civic effacement of slavery to the literal deportation of African colonization." Although the context is different, I think Ryan's argument is helpful to keep in mind in considering the actions of free blacks in Philadelphia during the yellow fever. Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions*, 7-8. Dorsey's focus is also the antebellum era, but he begins with early-national Philadelphia and argues that Philadelphia's free black community "discovered that voluntary associations, intimately tied to the African Church, were the best hope for creating an independent and self-reliant black community in Philadelphia." Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women,* 27. Similar reasoning is briefly suggested in Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 123.

whole life or for twenty-eight years, depending on when they were born, while some had worked or continued to work in order to purchase their own freedom. It was a system in which blacks "bore the costs and burdens of emancipation" and knew it. Among white reformers, there was also growing interest in colonization programs, which would resettle African Americans in Africa or elsewhere. Although not unpopular in some black communities, colonization was unappealing to Philadelphia's blacks and represented an unwelcome alternative to true citizenship. Further cementing the need for leadership and organization in Philadelphia's black community, finally, was the passage of the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act, which returned escaped slaves to their masters and also, some feared, promoted the kidnapping of free blacks.[56]

From this context, several black leaders emerged, including Jones and Allen. Both former slaves, they were instrumental in the development of the Free African Society, a mutual aid and burial society, and a new African Church, institutions which mirrored white efforts and communities in Philadelphia. Problems nonetheless continued for Philadelphia blacks: some white clergy did not approve of the new African Church and retaliated by segregating their black parishioners. With construction of the African Church underway, meanwhile, some white benefactors who had initially pledged money to the construction withdrew their funds in order to support slave owners escaping to Philadelphia from the slave uprising that began in Saint-Domingue in 1791.[57]

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[56] Lapsansky, "'Abigail, A Negress,'" 70-73; see also Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 151-152.

[57] Lapsansky, "'Abigail, A Negress,'" 70-73; see also Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 151-152. For a fascinating treatment of this church community after the epidemic years, see Sarah Barringer Gordon, "The African Supplement: Religion, Race, and Corporate Law in Early National America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 72 (2015): 385-422.

The irony and capriciousness were not lost on Philadelphia's struggling black community.

The yellow fever epidemic of 1793 occurred in this period when Philadelphia's free blacks were striving to emerge as an autonomous and organized community. They recognized that their response to the epidemic was an opportunity to demonstrate their role in and relationship to the city. Thus, in their narrative, Jones and Allen relied on language that would be familiar to all Philadelphians. On the first page, they wrote: "we found a freedom to go forth, confiding in him who can preserve in the midst of a burning fiery furnace, sensible that it was our duty to do all the good we could to our suffering fellow mortals."[58] From "confiding" in the God of the scriptural "fiery furnace"[59] to citing a "duty" to "fellow mortals," the *Narrative* showed that Philadelphia's free black community freely participated in the same tradition of human affection and providential guidance that characterized white efforts and writings.

Early in the *Narrative*, Jones and Allen explained black workers' duty in response to the yellow fever as a matter of voluntary choice—much like the men who served on the Committee. The newspapers had published a "solicitation" in early September, asking "people of colour to come forward and assist the distressed, perishing, and neglected sick." This solicitation was the result of the common belief that black people were immune to yellow fever. After meeting and discussing the matter with others, Jones and Allen decided to act with a public appeal. In their narrative, they emphasized that their response was entirely their own: it was a "charge we took upon us." Not as slaves, but as "fellow mortals," Philadelphia's black community freely sought

[58] Jones and Allen, *A Narrative*, 3.

[59] See Daniel 3.

to help the suffering in the way most "useful." After consulting with Mayor Clarkson, Jones, Allen, and William Gray directed their service first to recruiting nurses to attend the sick and second to the removal and burial of the dead.[60]

Jones and Allen emphasized the voluntary nature of their work for two reasons. First, influenced by Methodist teachings, they believed that humans had free will in matters of salvation, including in the good works they chose to do as they sought a life of sanctification. Their efforts during the fever exemplified a conscientious Christian choice to do good and to live a holy life. Second, they sought to remind readers that they also participated in the culture of voluntary and mutual aid societies that permeated eighteenth-century Philadelphia. They performed their duties, they wrote, out of a "real sensibility; –we sought not fee nor reward." This statement was, in one sense, a direct response to Carey's damaging charge that black nurses charged extortionate fees for their services, but the language of sensibility also stressed their connection to wider benevolent networks. Indeed, their commitment to mutual assistance and compassion was not limited to their immediate community of black Philadelphians but—as evidenced in the epidemic—shared with the wider community. As nurses they engaged in the "finer feelings" and "acts" of "humanity" in their care of patients both black and white. The same could not be said of most white Philadelphians. As it turned out, blacks were susceptible to yellow fever and "suffered equally with the whites." Yet even though "our distress hath been very great," Jones and Allen wrote, it was "much unknown to the white people. Few have been the whites that paid attention to us while the blacks were engaged in the other's service." In their service to both black and white communities,

[60] Jones and Allen, *A Narrative*, 3-4.

the black nurses and workers exemplified Christian good works and benevolence to a greater extent, they argued, than most whites.[61]

Jones and Allen did describe the attention of one white man: the physician Benjamin Rush, who encouraged their work as nurses and connected them to understandings of Christian service and benevolence within Philadelphia's contemporary medical society. Rush taught them how to bleed patients (for better or worse), to prepare medicine, and to call on him or another physician when situations required. Jones and Allen learned from Rush's model of diligent service to the sick:

> We feel a great satisfaction in believing, that we have been useful to the sick, and thus publicly thank Doctor Rush, for enabling us to be so. We have bled upwards of eight hundred people, and do declare, we have not received to the value of a dollar and a half, therefor: we were willing to imitate the Doctor's benevolence, who sick or well, kept his house open day and night, to give what assistance he could in this time of trouble.[62]

In Rush, Jones and Allen chose a well-known and respected model of Christian benevolence for their work as nurses. Rush had studied medicine first under the Philadelphia physician John Redman, a Presbyterian from whom he learned a respect for medicine as a work directed by God for the good of humanity. Rush's memoir of Redman highlighted the pious underpinnings of his medical work, evident even in the concluding lines of his medical dissertation: "God grant that my studies and labours

[61] Ibid., 4-5, 12, 15. For a succinct discussion of Methodist understandings of free will, see Noll, *America's God*, 335.

[62] Jones and Allen, *A Narrative,* 18.

may be directed to the glory of his name, and to the welfare of my neighbors."[63] Jones and Allen likewise explained their nursing work as directed by God. "When a physician was not attainable," they wrote, "we have been the instruments, in the hand of God, for saving the lives of some hundreds of our suffering fellow mortals."[64]

By placing themselves in the company of Christian physicians like Rush, who accepted pay, Jones and Allen also pointed to the value of their work and the possibility that economic self-interest and Christian benevolence could go together. Though they reiterated that they "sought not fee nor reward,"[65] they also seem to have respected individual black workers' decisions to choose their compensation. These decisions were shaped by perceptions of human duty and God's providence. Some anecdotes suggest that a few nurses actively avoided payment. One female nurse refused pay, saying "if I go for money God will see it, and may be make me take the disorder and die, but if I go, and take no money, he may spare my life." Such refusals suggest an anxiety about the nature of good works and the effect that underlying human motivations might have on God's acceptance. Because Methodists believed they were free to contribute to their

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[63] [Benjamin Rush], "Memoirs of the Life and Character of John Redman, M.D.," *Philadelphia Medical Museum* 5 (1808), 50. I read this article as a Photostat in the second volume of a collection at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia Historical Library. See *John Redman, M.D., 1722-1808: First President of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia*, compiled and edited by William N. Bradley, (Philadelphia, 1948), Library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Bradley attributes authorship to Rush based on a letter Benjamin Rush wrote to John Adams on 5 April 1808, in which Rush wrote: "I enclose you a hasty tribute to the memory of my dear and venerable master, Dr. Redman. I loved him most affectionately. I lived six years in his family, viz., from 1760-1766, during which time I was the witness of most of the virtues I have ascribed to him" (*John Redman, MD*, 207). The account had previously been attributed to John Redman Coxe, Redman's grandson and a later editor of the *Pennsylvania Medical Museum*. A slightly different version of this account of Redman's life can be found as introductory matter to the 1865 publication of Redman's 1793 paper regarding the 1762 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia. See John Redman, *An Account of the Yellow Fever As it Prevailed in Philadelphia in the Autumn of 1762; A paper presented to the college of physicians of Philadelphia at its stated meeting, September 7, 1793* (Philadelphia: 1865), 2-8.

[64] Jones and Allen, *A Narrative*, 5.

[65] Ibid., 4.

salvation, they also believed they could lose their salvation. The examples of nurses refusing pay highlight the seriousness with which black nurses considered their actions, their freedom, and their salvation. These examples do not mean, however, that black nurses understood their work as a "recusal from Philadelphia's commercial society," as has been argued. Alongside accounts of those nurses who refused pay were those who "charged with exemplary moderation."[66]

In the case of those who did accept extra pay, Jones and Allen did not condemn but offered a degree of understanding and sympathy. When recruiting black nurses, they had arranged pay of six dollars a week, but the desperate sick often offered more. Jones and Allen could not restrain the nurses from accepting more pay:

> It was natural for people in low circumstances to accept a voluntary, bounteous reward; especially under the loathsomeness of many of the sick, when nature shuddered at the thoughts of the infection, and the task assigned was aggravated by lunacy, and being left much alone with them.[67]

Jones and Allen condemned all acts of pilfering or mistreatment, of which—they pointed out—both white and black people were guilty, but they recognized that no intervention on their part could change the inflated wages some nurses collected. They saw, and the mayor agreed, that wage inflation was created by the epidemic and the difficult working conditions, not by innate evil impulses on the part of black nurses.[68]

The social breakdown caused by the yellow fever pushed Jones and Allen, as it had others, to useful action and faithful trust in God's providence. They recorded human

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[66] Ibid., 11-12; Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 168-169.

[67] Jones and Allen, *A Narrative*, 7-8.

[68] Ibid., 12-14.

cruelty and the failures of compassion: men and women abandoned to die "unseen, and unassisted"; orphans with no one to care for them; and widows left alone to arrange for their husbands' burial. The *Narrative* described the "barbarity" of such actions, and reported that it was "with reluctance we call to mind the many opportunities there were in the power of individuals to be useful to their fellow-men, yet through the terror of the times was omitted."[69] Many of the people who fled—including Carey, who had so unfairly criticized the black community—were white. In responding to Carey, Jones and Allen were at pains to point out that whites along with blacks were guilty of petty crimes and inhumanity. Yet, like Helmuth, Jones and Allen also compassionately allowed for the powerful effects of fear on human actions: "we ascribe such unfriendly conduct to the frailty of human nature, and not to willful unkindness, or hardness of heart." The only way to overcome this frailty and fear, they argued, was with God's assistance. "Truly our task was hard," they wrote, "yet through mercy we were enabled to go on." God "was pleased to strengthen us, and remove all fear from us, and disposed our hearts to be as useful as possible."[70]

The *Narrative* depends on this faith in God's providential direction. Although Jones and Allen stressed human freedom in pursuing good works, they nonetheless, like Helmuth, saw a transcendent presence guiding their activity through the epidemic's misery. This is evident in the first page of the tract, where they wrote: "we found a freedom to go forth, confiding in him who can preserve in the midst of a burning fiery furnace." They refer here to Daniel 3, a story of three Babylonian Jews who, refusing to worship their king's gods and golden image, were sentenced to death in a "fiery

[69] Ibid., 19.

[70] Ibid., 4, 17-20.

furnace." Once the sentence was enacted, the king saw not three but four men walking in the furnace. He was astonished and realized that "the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." The king ceased the punishment and the three men emerged unscathed. Jones and Allen imagined the presence of God in their own sojourn into the "fiery furnace" of yellow fever, trusting in this presence to "preserve" their lives and, perhaps, their reputations as they served their "suffering fellow mortals" from their own free will and journey toward salvation.[71]

The epidemic reminded Philadelphia's black community of God's providence and the salvific significance of all their work and action, whether rewarded in this life or not. These themes are reiterated in Jones and Allen's publication by a series of paratexts that ended the work. One was a hymn urging ministers to exhort parishioners to repentance, reminding them of the shortness of time and the dangers of waiting in a world with unexpected crises. Another paratext addressed "People of Colour," urging slaves to "put your trust in God, who sees your condition, and as a merciful father pitieth his children, so doth God pity them that love him." Christian love, the address argued, would endear slaves to masters and "promote your liberty." And, if masters proved cruel, God was not: God would favor those who loved and worked with affection for others, even in the context of misery. The "chief end" of life was "to be prepared for a better."

This final paratext offered a familiar message of consolation and otherworldly reward for slaves in hopeless situations, but why mention slaves in a pamphlet

[71] Ibid., 3; Joanna Brooks has pointed out the scriptural citation and suggests its importance for the black community's understanding of itself as especially covenanted and as opposed to the consumerism it witnessed in Philadelphia. While the black community might have been skeptical of the consumerism of Philadelphia, I doubt that it reached the level of opposition. Brooks also does not note the significance of God's presence in the "fiery furnace" with the Babylonian Jews, which is an essential part of the story for Jones and Allen. See Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 168-169.

describing the work of Philadelphia's free black community during the yellow fever? Perhaps Jones and Allen wanted to remind free black and white communities of the suffering, dutiful slaves in their midst. Or, perhaps, they wanted to suggest that, although free in body and will, the black men and women who served in the epidemic might nonetheless have to wait for a deferred reward—that their work, though spurned by men like Carey, contributed to their salvation and had providential significance that would only be fully realized in retrospect.[72]

Jones and Allen concluded their main *Narrative* along these lines, reflecting on the vagaries of human memory and its implications for human compassion and faith. Citing an "old proverb," which they found "applicable to those of our colour who exposed their lives in the late afflicting dispensation," they wrote:

> God and a soldier, all men do adore,
> In time of war, and not before;
> When the war is over, and all things righted,
> God is forgotten, and the soldier slighted.[73]

In the crisis of an epidemic, Jones and Allen recognized, men and women gained a unique appreciation for those who responded with commitment and attention to duty. The yellow fever forced people to encounter human suffering and to ponder God's will, the freedom of humans to respond, and the meaning of their response. African American workers responded to the fever, and their work deserved credit both from their "fellow mortals" and fellow Christians. In the aftermath of the epidemic, they feared their actions would be forgotten, especially when accounts like Carey's slighted

[72] Jones and Allen, *A Narrative*, 26-28.

[73] Ibid., 20. So far as I can find, these lines originally date from 1770. According to a note appended to the source in the Early American Imprints Collection, the lines were part of a broadside "posted at noonday in the streets of New York by the solders on Friday 19 Jan. 1770." 16th Regiment of Foot, *God and a soldier all men do adore* (New York, 1770).

their contributions. Jones and Allen wrote their *Narrative* to defend and record their community's humanity, compassion, and service, born of their own free will and faith in God's providence.

"your duty to venture"

The African American nurses who served in the epidemic represented one prong of the city's medical response. Yellow fever was also the focus of Philadelphia's professional medical community, which was thriving by 1793. The first medical school in the thirteen colonies was founded at the College of Philadelphia (later University of Pennsylvania) in 1765. In 1787, twenty-four physicians gathered to found the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, a professional medical organization designed to further knowledge and research in science and medicine. Within this community, strong debates developed over the cause of yellow fever, and scholars have given sustained focus to the medical, scientific, and even political nature of these debates.[74] Little attention has been given, however, to the ways in which medicine in early national Philadelphia was regarded as a benevolent and Christian enterprise.

During the 1793 epidemic, John Redman, president of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, was the only physician who could offer an account of the yellow fever epidemic that had previously hit Philadelphia, in 1762. He gave a lecture to the College of Physicians based on his experiences, which was subsequently published. This lecture and his manuscript correspondence offer a critical view of how an influential early

[74] One of the best-known examples is: Martin S. Pernick, "Politics, Parties, and Pestilence: Epidemic Yellow Fever in Philadelphia and the Rise of the First Party System," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (1972): 559–86. An interesting recent dissertation focuses on how the debate sparked greater inquiry into "the construction of natural knowledge." See Apel, "Feverish Bodies, Enlightened Minds."

American physician understood suffering, human duty, and God's providence in the midst of epidemic.

Redman was a devout Presbyterian. He was early educated at the famous "Log College" of William Tennent alongside men famous for their role in the Great Awakening—the revivals of religion that swept the eighteenth-century American colonies. While Redman's writings might be more pious than those of the average Philadelphia physician, he was an esteemed leader in the city's medical community. He was the teacher, mentor, and correspondent of the influential physician Benjamin Rush, and he was reelected president of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia multiple times, serving from its foundation in 1787 to 1804. His presidential addresses to the College resounded with references to God's providential guidance over its work. In his inaugural address, he merged the language of rationality with the langue of providence, citing Proverbs 3: "'I am convinced that it highly becomes rational men in all their lawful enterprises and undertakings of importance . . . to acknowledge God to be their sovereign Ruler and the Over Ruler of all events."

Redman described God's involvement in the College's undertakings as a covenant. The college held "obligations" to God "for giving us capacities for such an undertaking, and influencing our wills to engage in so good a design at this time." God, in turn, would bless their work and lead them to salvation. In the end, if they had "served our generation faithfully according to the will of God," Redman wrote, "we may be fitted for and admitted into his Kingdom and glory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour."[75] Like Jones and Allen, Redman stressed God's providence in the work of

[75] *John Redman, M.D.*, 114-118. Originally published as: "The Inaugural Address, Made to the College of Physicians, by the First President Thereof, Dr. John Redman, " in *The College of Physicians of Philadelphia*, ed. W.S. W. Ruschenberger (Philadelphia: 1887), 179-183.

medical care. Unlike Jones and Allen, however, Redman, as a Presbyterian, did not stress human freedom to do good works and earn their salvation through sanctification. The physician's ability to do good—both in the skills he employed and the service he pursued—was directed by God. God "influenced" the human will in works of salvific significance, including medicine.

An Enlightenment language of sympathy and compassion also frequently punctuated Redman's writings and statements on medicine, although it was never far removed from his deep faith in providence. He reveled in the College's devotion to "*good work*" and the "cause of humanity." On one occasion Rush recorded a toast made by Redman: "to the Individual Practitioner, who makes the health, Comfort & happiness of his fellow Mortalls one of the chief Ends & delights of his life__And acts therein from Motives that ought Render him Superior to all the difficulties he may have to Encounter in the pursuit thereoff."[76] For Redman, sympathy for patients and the easing of their physical pain were essential components of medical work. To rise above the inevitable "difficulties" of the profession—one might imagine the difficulties of witnessing the suffering and death of an epidemic—the physician depended above all, however, on a motive resting in faith. Writing to Rush in 1782, Redman again reiterated that their professional service was "according to the will of God," and that,

> though some storms should meet us, so common to all, in the voyage of life; yet having him who rules the winds, commands the raging waves silences the roaring

[76] *John Redman, M.D.,* 199-200. The original is located in the Rush Family Papers, LCP, vol. 22, p. 8; for an example of Redman's letters to Rush, see John Redman to Benjamin Rush, 21 December 1782, Rush Family Papers, LCP, vol. 22, p. 21. A Photostat of this letter is also available in *John Redman, M.D.,* 97. Redman writes: "we may hope to glide safely through the darksome valley of death, and having his rod & staff to direct & support us, to perceive only the shadows of evil terminating in substantial Joys, & bliss everlasting."

> billows & stills the tumult of the people, with us in our little weak & shatterd bark; and though he may seem to sleep, yet if we call on him in truth, He will soon awake arise, and silence our own tumultuous passions within, command a calm all around us, or overrule all for our best good, and so astonish & charm us with a view of his power & sense of his love.

Redman found both motivation and solace in his piety, and it defined his medical care. One of his dying patients said to a friend that "death had nothing terrible in it when Dr. Redman spoke to her about it."[77]

Redman's account of the 1762 yellow fever exemplified how he merged his medical training, his concern for the public good, and his strong faith that he was guided by God's providence. He offered extensive observations of the disease and practical advice regarding the use of vinegar and tobacco for their preventative benefits. He also included what he found to be the best advice of all: to be fearless and trust in God. Such trust, he wrote, did him great good and made him of use to others. Even so, Redman continued, "with all my apparent courage something would and often did obtrude to raise my fears, and a sense of danger frequently affected me." Redman reflected that God guided him through these anxieties, lifting him up to continue his work. "This much I know," he wrote, "that when that Light which shineth in darkness led me to the exercise of piety and virtue, it made me happy even in the midst of danger or troubles, and when slighted or neglected it rendered me miserable, tho' surrounded with every other circumstance capable of giving pleasure to the senses."[78] Like Helmuth, Carey,

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[77] Rush, *Memoirs,* 52; Redman, *Account*, 6; John Redman to Benjamin Rush, 21 December 1782, Rush Family Papers, LCP, volume 22, page 21.

[78] Redman, *Account*, 29-31.

Jones, and Allen, Redman experienced a sense of happiness from his service. He was careful to differentiate this happiness from physical pleasures, stressing, as he did throughout his writings, that all of his work, success, and joy depended on God's grace.

In 1797, when another yellow fever epidemic hit Philadelphia, Redman offered a revealing glimpse of how closely he identified the practice of medicine with Christian ministry. His minister, Ashbel Green of the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, asked Redman whether he should return to the city after he had fled to the outskirts. In reply, Redman said that he considered it Green's "duty to venture," writing:

> we think that it be deemed improper or unjustifiable for Medical Doctors & Natural parents to Quit us at such times; It is equally if not more so, for our Spiritual Fathers to desert us altogether, or at least not occasionally to Aid the remainder of their flock who Cannot, or dare not Emigrate, in their Worship, & improvement on the present Calomitous occasion.

For Redman, physicians and ministers had the responsibility to stay and serve in times of epidemic; such crises demanded "more peculiar Exertions in duty," in "doing & promoting Good."[79]

While Redman claimed that he sought not to "intrude on matters above my small Sphere," the physician continued his letter by quoting scripture to his minister. He chose Psalm 91, verses 2-6, in a less-than-subtle way to remind Green of God's promise of providential guidance in times of disease:

> I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the

[79] John Redman to Ashbell Green, 20 September 1797. Original in possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; I viewed the Photostat in *John Redman, M.D.,* 171-172a.

noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.[80]

Green's duty was clear, in Redman's view, and God's direction was obvious.

To walk piously, in covenant with God, was the profession of the Christian, whether physician, pastor, or, indeed, tradesman. In 1798, Philadelphia was struck by yet another yellow fever epidemic, and Redman found himself once again writing to his minister Ashbel Green, who had this time fled to Princeton. The purpose of Redman's letter was not to advise Green on whether he should return to the city (presumably Green had learned better than to ask). Redman's letter was, rather, a report on the city and congregation Green had again left behind. The Second Presbyterian Church had continued to meet every Sunday "but one," Redman reported, with "Messrs Eastburn and Faulconer" as officiants. Eastburn, a tradesman, had worked on both "the board of health and in discharge of Christian duties," proving essential "both to the souls, & bodies" of those who were sick or suffered loss. For Redman, Eastburn's presence in the city, with its joint benefit to human souls and bodies, could be seen as nothing other than "very providential."[81]

During the yellow fever epidemic, Redman confirmed and extended his well-honed conviction that medicine was a work done to relieve human suffering and was directed by God. He found happiness in not only his faithful pursuit of this work and his

[80] Ibid. See Psalm 91:2-6; Redman paraphrased the quote with many partial phrases and etceteras. For the sake of clarity, I quote it in full from the King James Version.

[81] John Redman to Ashbell Green, 14 September 1798; I viewed the Photostat copy in *John Redman, M.D.,* 177-178; notes on the photostat indicate that the original is in the possession of the College of Physicians, but I could not locate it.

hope for salvation, but above all in his sense of the continuous presence of God's mercy in his life, even in times of immense trial. In his leadership, faithful service, and deep commitment to medicine, he exemplified the merging of Enlightenment-era conceptions of sympathy and advances in medicine with a devout Christian faith in God's providence.

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In 1929, the *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* published a biography of Redman, a nearly-forgotten alumnus of the Presbyterian "Log College." Before his long and illustrious career as a physician, he was a schoolmate of Gilbert Tennent, the famed revivalist of American religious history. Further cementing his Presbyterian credentials, the article continued, Redman served as a trustee of Princeton from 1761-1778, along with other former Log College schoolmates. In an 1851 account of the Log College and its famous alumni, however, Redman did not make the cut.[82] Why not?

According to the 1929 article, "Dr. Redman's calling was a secular one."[83] By choosing medicine instead of ministry, the article suggests, Redman dissociated himself from a religious calling and from the religious world of his peers. Perhaps it is time to reconsider this assumed separation.

Redman did not perceive his care for the sick and response to yellow fever as separate from his sense of Christian calling and God's providential direction. Neither did

[82] Ingram, "Biographies of the Alumni," 356-362; Archibald Alexander, *Biographical Sketches of the Founder and Principal Alumni of the Log College. Together with an Account of the Revivals of Religion under their Ministry*. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1851). Tennent went on to become minister of the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, where Redman worshiped.

[83] Ingram, "Biographies of the Alumni," 362.

Helmuth, the Committee, or Jones and Allen. Although they understood and represented their actions and motivations in different ways, depending on their work and religious beliefs, they all saw in the epidemic a call to human action and a need to reflect on God's providence. They described their actions with language from the Enlightenment, they reflected on an innate human sympathy, they grew troubled over the persistent failures of humanity, and they turned to God for direction or for models of service and sacrifice.

Although scholars have separated the religious and secular "genealogies" of nineteenth-century benevolence, these genealogies converge in their shared sense of duty and conception of providence.[84] Recognizing this does not require an uncritical stance to the problems, prejudices, and blind spots of benevolence in the eighteenth century or as it developed in the so-called "benevolent empire" of the nineteenth century. Rather, understanding the ways in which benevolence developed from a commitment to providence can highlight both its motivating potential for good and its inherent dangers. Helmuth's zeal and determination, which were continuously reinvigorated by his providential faith, benefited his community and patients. Carey's zeal and spin on the yellow fever, however, highlighted the salvific nature of the Committee's response and their innate compassion, while belittling the contributions of free blacks and suggesting an underlying, innate avarice in their work.

Understanding how these two genealogies are, in fact, one also helps us to understand a conundrum of scholarship on benevolence. That is, how could Christians expect or accept an earthly reward or benefit for doing good? Would not such benefit—

[84] See discussion in Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions*, 14-15; Roeber, "J. H. C. Helmuth," 77-78; McCarthy, *American Creed*, 15.

be it an enhanced reputation, the money earned from service, or the survival of a loved one—reveal their self-interest and undermine their claims to be motivated by God's providence? Such questions shape studies of nineteenth-century benevolence. Susan Ryan has argued, for example, that the "relevant question . . . is how the desire to do good and the language used to describe such desires came to correspond so neatly with self-interest."[85] For scholars of secularization, such as Charles Taylor, this correspondence was a critical turning point for the movement into a secular age: when the motivation for human actions began to come from the "human realm" and not God.[86]

In Christian tradition, doing good in the world is a part of the covenant with God. Although the Reformation transformed aspects of charity, in particular by insisting that good works are not in themselves salvific, Protestants nonetheless continued to understand human actions as a central component of their Christian lives. For the Lutheran Helmuth and the Presbyterian Redman, doing good was a reflection—or outpouring—of their faith in God and their hope in salvation. Jones and Allen, as Methodists, understood that the good works they did of their own free will as faithful Christians contributed to their holiness and salvation. For the Committee and Carey, their good works were motivated not only by sympathy, but also by a sense that divine providence intended for them to benefit from the experience and the service.

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[85] Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions*, 4-5.

[86] See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 15-16, 37-41, 257-263. Max Weber responded to such narratives by arguing that the fundamental shift occurred in how Protestants interpreted earthly rewards. Whereas early Protestants considered earthly rewards as evidence of God's providence and grace, later Protestants ceased viewing earthly rewards providentially but rather as ends in themselves. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1958).

Doing good could be, as all of these actors realized, of "personal advantage." Their work certainly affected their reputations, careers, and income, and they were all aware enough of this significance to record their actions in both private and public writings. But they also interpreted the advantages of their work in a way consistent with Protestant tradition: in terms of the spiritual fruits it wrought in their own lives and the lives of others.

Providence remained a powerful component in all of these accounts. It had not shapeshifted into a vague Enlightenment ruler or creator that implanted an innate sense of compassion in humans. Nor did it limit the authors to passive contemplation of God's judgment. Providence was, rather, the force which provided them with the meaning and the uplift necessary for activity in the midst of intense misery. In their service and writings, Philadelphians turned to providence with hope and happiness that their actions would not be lost to the moment of crisis or the passage of time. The epidemic reminded them of the limits of sympathy; yellow fever exposed the failings of human compassion. Yet these limitations and failures also opened an opportunity to tell of the possibilities of profound human struggle and effort to overcome these obstacles with God's grace, to transcend the chaos through human action and faith.

Chapter 5

Missions, Slavery, and Providence in Colonial Georgia

When the famed Anglican itinerant George Whitefield arrived in the new colony of Georgia in 1738, he met and befriended the community of German-speaking Pietist Lutherans in Ebenezer, near Savannah.[1] Through his friendship with the Ebenezer community, and particularly its pastor Johann Martin Boltzius, Whitefield began a correspondence with Gotthilf August Francke, the contemporary director of the Francke Foundations. Francke—and his father, August Hermann Francke, before him—headed the charitable foundations and global Pietist missionary effort that had inspired Whitefield and other English evangelicals. Although Whitefield and the Pietists emerged from different Protestant traditions, they shared a commitment to pursuing God's work through mission and charity. They were all, as Gotthilf Francke wrote, "laborers in the vineyard of Christ."[2] In time, however, their common, providentially-infused commitment to mission would also inform their common acceptance of slavery, which had been outlawed in Georgia from 1735 to 1750.

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[1] In Ebenezer, Whitefield met the pastors Johann Martin Boltzius and Israel Christian Gronau, who arrived in Georgia in 1734 with a group of Protestant Salzburger refugees. They founded Ebenezer with the support of not only the Francke Foundations, but also the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Georgia Trustees. For an overview of the circumstances for the Salzburgers' emigration to Georgia, see George Fenwick Jones, introduction to *Henry Newman's Salzburger Letterbooks* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1966), 1-9. On the Salzburg expulsion and its significance in Protestant evangelical history, see Chapter 3 of W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 93-115. For a more recent study on the Salzburgers' religious situation before expulsion, see James Van Horn Melton, "Pietism, Print Culture, and Salzburg Protestantism on the Eve of Expulsion," in *Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820*, ed. Jonathan Strom, Hartmut Lehmann, and James Van Horn Melton (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 229-249.

[2] The phrase comes from Gotthilf August Francke: "die in dem Weinberg des HERRN arbeiten." Gotthilf August Francke (hereafter GAF) to George Whitefield, 20 January 1739, Missionsarchiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen (hereafter AFSt/M) 5A7: 27. See the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 20. Despite initial concerns over Whitefield's relationship with the Moravians, Francke encouraged the Ebenezer ministers to form a close relationship with him. See GAF to Israel Christian Gronau (hereafter ICG), 27 January 1741, AFSt/M 5A9: 22. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German to English are my own.

Protestants' views on slavery in the early-eighteenth century were embedded within a theological tradition of providential thought and narration. Protestants had long turned to providence as they interpreted sickness, engaged medicine, and participated in benevolent endeavors. It played a powerful role in how they interpreted their mission, their work in the world, and their responses to economic and moral issues like slavery. Recent scholarship on slavery and Christianity has focused on how religion was used to defend and promote slavery and racism and the economic order that undergirded them, but this scholarship has overlooked the providential meaning of slavery for eighteenth-century Christians.[3] Scholars of the eighteenth century and Christianity have, in turn, generally seen providential thought as promoting human passivity through its strong emphasis on God's direction.[4] In fact, providential thought and narration proved to be active and motivating forces behind the missionary endeavors of eighteenth-century Protestantism, and the acceptance of slavery was construed within the same theology and language that shaped this missionary activity.

In their descriptions and defenses of both mission work and slavery in mid-eighteenth-century Georgia and the wider Atlantic world, Protestants turned to providential belief and narration. Their faith in providence, along with their writings

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[3] See historiographical discussion below. Examples of this characterization include: Frank Lambert, *'Pedlar in Divinity': George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 204-205; Alan Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 53-54.

[4] This scholarly misconception is apparent in literature concerning the eighteenth-century development of and debate over smallpox inoculation. See chapters 1 and 3, above; Ernest B. Gilman, *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 247; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 343; Maxine Van de Wetering, "A Reconsideration of the Inoculation Controversy," *The New England Quarterly* 58 (1985), 59, 66. Equally problematic is a tendency of scholarship to conflate providence and predestination, leading to the assumption that providentialism was limited to Calvinists or early English Puritans. See introduction, above.

that attested to this faith, actively shaped Protestants' missionary activities, social life, and economic decisions. It is not enough to say religion was used to justify slavery and Christians' self-serving participation in plantation economies. A history of thought and a method of narration rested beneath this justification, and they represent substantial and troubling aspects of the story of the Christian acceptance of slavery. Providential thought could affirm and guide Christian action, and this affirming and guiding power contributed to the significant influence of providential thought in eighteenth-century Christian defenses of slavery.

Eighteenth-century Protestants turned to providence to understand, explain, and guide their religious, physical, social, and economic lives and actions, including slave ownership. In their published and manuscript writings, Protestants relied on and realized the powerful ways in which providential thought—and, correspondingly, retrospective narration—allowed them to interpret and express the meaning and significance of their experiences. Both Whitefield and the Pietists grounded their ministry, mission, and views on slavery in their understanding of God's providence, the workings of which they carefully sought to discern in their lives. This discernment depended on retrospection; in writing, Whitefield and the Pietists sought to recognize God's will, oversight, and care in past events, including both difficulties and successes. This habit of retrospective narration not only applied to past events, however, but also became critical to interpreting and acting in the present.

Retrospection was a narrative style that promoted human activity while ultimately denying human agency, offering consolation and assurance in God's plan. Whitefield and the Pietists highlighted past evidence of God's faithfulness to their Christian mission and posited, based on this evidence, a future perspective of God's

judgment on their contemporary actions. In this way, they were able to forge and defend new endeavors, including both the construction of orphanages and the acceptance of slavery. Whitefield and the Pietists considered and described their endeavors providentially as God's work. They narrated each aspect of these endeavors, including both spiritual efforts to convert and economic efforts to raise money and achieve financial stability for a mission. They explained these efforts as interrelated and depending, ultimately, on God's blessing. Like many of their Protestant contemporaries, Whitefield and the Pietists were convinced of God's direction and care over all areas of their life and work, and they used writing and publication to defend their efforts and decisions from critics and to share with others their conviction and evidence of God's providence in their actions.[5]

Following a brief overview of scholarship on Christianity and slavery in the eighteenth century, this chapter argues, first, that transatlantic missionary movements depended on and were framed by their leaders in terms of God's providential direction. Whitefield was inspired by and appropriated the Pietist August Hermann Francke's famous account of the founding of his institutions and orphanage in Halle. He was deeply influenced by Francke's description of providential faith and its role in mission work. This strongly-held faith in God's providence brought both the Pietists and

[5] On retrospective narration in Puritan literature, see W. Clark Gilpin, preface to *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to That Which Is to Come* and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, by John Bunyan (New York: Vintage, 2004), ix-xvi. On retrospection and narrative, see Richard A. Rosengarten, "The Recalcitrant *Distentio* of Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*," *Literature & Theology* (2013), 174-175, 178; Richard Rosengarten, *Henry Fielding and the Narration of Providence: Divine Design and the Incursions of Evil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), xiv. On the development of eighteenth-century evangelical writing and print culture, see Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), especially 43-46, 51-61, 67-80, 94-95, 131. Hindmarsh's study focuses on English evangelicals, but many of his themes are relevant for transatlantic German religious writing and printing. See chapter 2, above, and footnote 16 in particular.

Whitefield to Georgia, where they pursued their missionary work with providential fervor. While they were there, however, they confronted the problem of slavery. This chapter argues, second, that although Whitefield and the Pietists disagreed on whether to reintroduce slaves to the colony, these very differences ultimately relied on a shared faith in providence and a common narrative practice of retrospection that had grown vital to Protestant missionary endeavors.[6]

Eighteenth-Century Christianity and Slavery: Historical Treatments

Scholarship on Christianity and slavery in eighteenth-century America and the Atlantic world has struggled with how to acknowledge Christianity's potential for good, including, eventually, the well-known reform and abolition efforts of the nineteenth century, while also analyzing its complicity with the development and expansion of the slave trade and plantation economies in the American colonies. For some, the negative weight of the latter erases any recognition of the former. Stephen Stein argued that George Whitefield's defense of slavery should exclude him from consideration as an important forerunner of nineteenth-century humanitarian efforts.[7] Forrest Wood demonstrated the power of Christian conceptions of election and covenant in American history—ideas which eventually appealed to slaves themselves—and acknowledged that "the sense of obligation that accompanied the privilege of being chosen" could result in "humility, generosity, humanitarianism, compassion, and an open mind." Yet the

[6] The only secondary study I have located that has used these sources is Karl Zehrer, "Die Beziehung zwischen dem hallischen Pietismus und dem frühen Methodismus," *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 2 (1975), 43-56. Much of Zehrer's focus is on the relationship between Francke and John Wesley; the section on Whitefield is brief and explores some of the competitive nature that developed in Whitefield and Francke's discussion of their missionary endeavors.

[7] Stephen J. Stein, "George Whitefield on Slavery: Some New Evidence," *Church History* 42 (1973), 256.

overarching argument of Wood's book is that North American Christianity was (and is) beset by the "dark side" of this "favored-people doctrine," which contributes to the "arrogance, conceit, indifference, contempt, and closed minds" that create and buttress "institutional racism."[8]

More recent studies continue to wrestle with how to acknowledge the ways in which eighteenth-century Christianity and its missionaries were initially motivated by a scripturally-based "conception of human unity" while at the same time highlighting how these missionaries used their faith to differentiate themselves religiously and racially, often in service of their own economic interests. Christians relied on scriptural descriptions of kinship and lineage to support their understanding of human unity and the need for mission—and eventually Christian slaves would use the same hermeneutics to assert their right of resistance—but such scriptural passages could also be used, as Colin Kidd has shown, in a "more sinister capacity to encourage the importation of divinely authorised categories of blessed and cursed."[9] Conceiving of Christianity in scriptural terms of lineage also allowed, Rebecca Goetz has argued, white masters to limit Christianity to a "heritable characteristic" tied to whiteness.[10] Finally, as Travis Glasson has explained, "the belief in essential human unity," which initially motivated missionary organizations like the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), was strikingly weakened once the SPG became entangled in the economies

[8] Forrest Wood, *The Arrogance of Faith: Christianity and Race in America from the Colonial Era to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 211-212.

[9] Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 21.

[10] Rebecca Anne Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 3, 10, 172.

and practice of slavery itself, in some cases contributing to the tightening of racially-based legal definitions and slave codes.[11]

Studies of slavery in Georgia have generally highlighted the political and economic reasons for both its restriction (in 1735) and its eventual reintroduction (in 1751), while barely touching on religion—except where religion has been analyzed as a "tool" used for social and economic ends. Frank Lambert wrote that religion—specifically seen in the goals of evangelization and the economic survival of the orphanage Whitefield founded in 1740—offered convenient reasons for Whitefield to justify his acceptance of slavery. Likewise, Alan Gallay argued that Whitefield used religion to defend and support the economic institution of slavery, paving the way for the nineteenth-century use of "religion as a form of social control," which would become "an essential element in the ideology of the southern master class."[12]

Scholarship on Christianity and slavery in the eighteenth century has emphasized how Protestants became complicit in the great economic and social evil of their time and did so by disregarding their own ideal of human unity or by merely using religious language in order to justify ulterior motives. While not denying the social and economic motivations behind Christians' defense of slavery, this chapter argues that their acceptance of slavery relied on a significant theological tradition of providential thought and retrospective narration. This tradition, which shaped Protestants' responses to sickness and suffering, also motivated their missionary efforts. It was not disregarded

[11] Glasson explicitly disputes the argument that the SPG was a forerunner of "Anglican humanitarianism." Travis Glasson, *Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4-6, 123-129, 200; Travis Glasson, "'Baptism doth not bestow Freedom': Missionary Anglicanism, Slavery, and the Yorke-Talbot Opinion, 1701-1730," *William and Mary Quarterly* 67 (2010), 311-316.

[12] Lambert, *'Pedlar in Divinity'*, 204-205; Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite*, 53-54.

nor simply used for social convenience; rather, mid-eighteenth-century Protestants like Whitefield and the Pietists understood their acceptance of slavery as a demonstration of their trust in God's guidance over human affairs. They narrated this acceptance with the same providential language they used to describe their missionary work.

Providential Conceptions of Mission: Whitefield's Reliance on the Pietists

In 1742, George Whitefield wrote Gotthilf August Francke and reported on recent Christian efforts in the colony of Georgia. Whitefield saw his missionary work in Georgia as part of a transatlantic movement to convert the world to Christianity, a movement in which Francke played a vital role as the director of the well-known charitable and educational Francke Foundations in Halle. Whitefield had met two Pietist missionaries from the Francke Foundations in the community of Ebenezer, Georgia, and he observed in their work—particularly in their orphanage, organization, and industry—an example for his own.

"Our Lord intends to do great things for Georgia yet," Whitefield effused to Francke, and with that "yet," Whitefield enunciated his belief in God's direction over his and his fellow missionaries' actions. Whitefield's phrase recognized both past efforts that remained unfulfilled and hope in the anticipated but unknowable future. Like many of his contemporaries, he believed in God's providence over human affairs and was convinced that this providence was currently directing a dramatic expansion of Christ's kingdom on earth, both through local charitable work and revivals and through more distant missions. Seeking to record this providential expansion, Whitefield longed to hear reports from Gotthilf Francke on the Pietists' missionary work in Halle and the

American colonies, and Whitefield, in turn, wanted to share news of his revival work in the colonies, England, and Scotland:

> I suppose you have heard of the work of God in Scotland. Indeed the word has run & been glorified[13] & Jesus has gotten himself the victory in many hearts. In England also He is pleased to bless me. Here are many close Followers of the bleeding Lamb.[14] And tho' there is difference of opinion between me, Mr. Wesley, & the Moravian Brethren, yet Jesus pities us & blesses us all. I long for that time when the Watchmen shall all see Eye to Eye,[15] when the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid, the Lion eat straw like the Ox[16] & people learn war no more[17]— Hasten that time O Glorious Emanuel, & let thy kingdom come![18]

In his scripturally-laden description, Whitefield acknowledged differences among missionaries, but he saw them all as contributing to a single end: the new Jerusalem prophesied in the Book of Isaiah.[19] In recording the cumulative and far-reaching efforts of himself and his contemporaries, Whitefield found evidence of God's providential oversight over missionary endeavors and hope for the prophesied peace, unity, and salvation.

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[13] Cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:1.

[14] A reference to a Charles Wesley hymn. See Charles Wesley, "CCXLI. Invitation to our Absent Friends," in *Hymns and Sacred Poems in Two Volumes*, vol. 2 (Bristol: Farley, 1749), 326-327.

[15] Cf. Isaiah 52:8.

[16] Cf. Isaiah 11:6-7.

[17] Cf. Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3.

[18] Cf. Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2.

[19] George Whitefield to GAF, 23 November 1742, Hauptarchiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen (hereafter AFSt/H) C 532: 2.

The Pietists Whitefield met in Ebenezer, in fact, reinforced a longstanding influence of Pietism on Whitefield's missionary endeavors. In his 1742 letter to Francke, Whitefield excitedly recalled the effect of Francke's father's famous account of his orphanage in Halle. August Francke's account of his charitable efforts in Halle, *Segensvolle Fußstapfen des noch lebenden und waltenden liebreichen und getreuen Gottes* (*The blessed footsteps of God, who is faithful and rich in love, who still lives and reigns*), first appeared in 1701. It was very popular, quickly translated into English, and published in 1705 under the title *Pietas Hallensis: Or a publick Demonstration of a Divine Being yet in the World.* By 1706, Francke's account began appearing in English under what would become its more popular title: *An Abstract of the Marvellous Footsteps of Divine Providence*.[20] It was read by evangelicals in both Old and New England, with the Puritan Cotton Mather reporting: "All the World has read the amazing Story."[21] For Whitefield and others who were involved in the early Methodist movement in England and missionary efforts in Georgia—including the brothers John and Charles Wesley—the story of the Francke Foundations spurred their own desire to

[20] I consulted the third edition of the German text, August Hermann Francke, *Segensvolle Fußstapfen des noch lebenden und waltenden liebreichen und getreuen Gottes* (Halle: in Verlegung des Wäysen-Hauses, 1709), at the Archive of the Francke Foundations in Halle. The first English translation I have found is: *Pietas Hallensis: Or a publick Demonstration of a Divine Being yet in the World* (London: J. Downing, 1705). Francke's account was likely translated into English by Anton Böhme, who was the Lutheran court chaplain in London at this time and who translated many Pietist writings into English. By 1706, Francke's account began appearing with its new title: *An Abstract of the Marvellous Footsteps of Divine Providence. In the Building of a very large Hospital, or rather, a Spacious College, For Charitable and Excellent Use in the Maintaining of many Orphans and other Poor People therein* (London: Downing, 1706). On Böhme, see Arno Sames, *Anton Wilhelm Böhme (1673-1722): Studien zum Ökumenischen Denken und Handeln eines Halleschen Pietisten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 19-22. On Böhme's translation work and the transmission of Halle Pietist texts into English, see Peter James Yoder, "Rendered 'Odious' as Pietists: Anton Wilhelm Böhme's Conception of Pietism and the Possibilities of Prototype Theory," in *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, ed. Christian T. Collins-Winn, Christopher Gehrz, G. William Carlson and Eric Holst (Cambridge: James Clark & Co., 2011), 17-28.

[21] Cotton Mather, *Nuncia Bona e Terra Longinqua. A Brief Account of some Good & Great Things a doing For the Kingdom of God, in the midst of Europe. Communicated in a Letter to* --. (Boston: B. Green for Samuel Gerrish, 1715), 2-9.

found an orphanage in colonial Georgia. As Harry Stout writes, for Charles Wesley, "such an institution would serve the cause of both charity and piety. It would be a place that redeemed young orphans in body and soul."[22]

Whitefield wrote Gotthilf Francke that the memory of his father "is still precious to me. His account of the Orphan house hath, under God, been a great support & encouragement to me in a like Undertaking." August Francke's account shaped Whitefield's excitement for his work and the connection he felt to the transatlantic Protestant community. Whitefield wrote Gotthilf Francke: "For tho' I never saw You in the flesh, yet I love You in the bowels of Jesus Xt, & wish You much prosperity in the work of the Lord."[23] Whitefield described a spiritual connection of common, evangelical purpose that surpassed any personal meeting.

In his letter to Francke, Whitefield enclosed the 1742 account he wrote of his own orphanage, Bethesda, founded south of Savannah in 1740. This account was a defense of Whitefield's fundraising for Bethesda. Crucial to his defense were letters and accounts that emphasized the expansive and providentially-directed nature of the contemporary revivals and Bethesdsa's place within these revivals. Whitefield included a letter from Benjamin Colman, a New England Congregationalist minister, which made this case by suggesting a parallel between Bethesda and Francke's orphanage in Halle. Whitefield seconded Colman's parallel with his own description of the Francke Foundations, and then transcribed large sections of Francke's account. Indeed, Whitefield filled the

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[22] Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 62. See also A. G. Roeber, "'The Origin of Whatever Is Not English among Us': The Dutch-speaking and the German-speaking Peoples of Colonial British America," in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 247.

[23] George Whitefield to GAF, 23 November 1742, AFSt/H C 532: 2.

remainder of his Bethesda account—pages 26 through 82—with text directly taken from Francke.[24]

Francke's account had enormous influence in encouraging missionary activities like Bethesda, even though Francke repeatedly denied any human agency or direction in the foundation of his charitable institutions. This denial, however, gave the account its significance and adaptability for other missionary endeavors. In Francke's account and its retrospective attribution of all success to God, Whitefield found a basis for his own efforts. Throughout the portion excerpted from Francke, Whitefield printed manicules—or pointing fingers—in the margins, in order to direct readers to passages especially relevant to Whitefield's situation. In the end, there were several manicules per page, and almost all pointed to passages praising God's direction. Whitefield was convinced that "God can help us in *Georgia*, as well as he helped Professor *Franck* in *Germany*." Indeed, "Professor Franck met with unspeakably more Contempt and Calumny, whilst he was building the Orphan-House in *Germany*."

Through the lens of Francke's retrospective account, Whitefield could both perceive and present Bethesda's present troubles as a sign of God's providential direction over his work. August Francke's account detailed his early struggles, many of which involved finances and accusations of wrongdoing, struggles with which Whitefield strongly identified. With Francke in mind, Whitefield proclaimed that he would not be

[24] Bethesda had quickly become an important part of Whitefield's itinerancy and fundraising and thus also the subject of scrutiny and critique. George Whitefield, *A continuation of the account of the Orphan-House in Georgia, from January 1740/1 to June 1742* (Edinburgh: Lumisden and Robertson, 1742), 3, 19-20; for the Habersham letters, see especially pages 8-14; for Colman, see page 17. I consulted the edition at the Library Company of Philadelphia. See also Frank Lambert, *James Habersham: Loyalty, Politics, and Commerce in Colonial Georgia* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 53-54; Harold E. Davis, *The Fledgling Province: Social and Cultural Life in Colonial Georgia, 1733-1776* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), 220; Edward J. Cashin, *Beloved Bethesda*: *A History of George Whitefield's Home for Boys, 1740-2000* (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 2001), 1; Lambert, *'Pedlar in Divinity',* 207.

ashamed of his fundraising efforts on Bethesda's behalf. The need to provide funding for Bethesda actually spurred Whitefield's itinerancy: fundraising was "one great Means in [God's] Hand of bringing me out to preach the everlasting Gospel in so many places, and to many Thousands of poor perishing Souls, who I doubt not (be it spoken with all Humility) will evidence my Commission thereto, by being my Joy and Crown of Rejoycing in the last Day."[25] Humble or not, Whitefield—like Francke—saw and narrated God's direction in his missionary work, both that already accomplished and that planned.

Whitefield highlighted passages from Francke that emphasized, through retrospective voice, God's past and continuing providence. For Francke, the account represented a "Duty" to both the present and future. Narrating the Francke Foundations' amazing story would, per Hebrews 10:24, inspire others to grow in "Christian Charity." According to Francke, his contemporaries suffered from "ungrateful Unbelief" and often failed to perceive God's providence; publications like Francke's were God's merciful means to provide a "present Narrative for a Memorial to After-ages, that they may magnify his Name." Although focused on the future, Francke nonetheless hoped that his contemporaries might recognize God's support and "Bounty" in the past and present and have faith that God "was ready to do still greater Things" in the future, "if we could but believe."[26]

In fending off his contemporary critics, Whitefield relied on Francke's retrospective narration of his activities and efforts to discern God's providence, even in

[25] Whitefield, *A continuation of the account of the Orphan-House*, 18-20, 26-82. On the orphanage and its financial troubles, see Lambert, *James Habersham*, 46-56.

[26] Qtd. in Whitefield, *A continuation of the account of the Orphan-House*, 29-30, 36.

describing economic and physical setbacks. In Francke's account, when the Halle orphanage faced financial troubles or sickness, he trusted God, and "the Lord provided," whether through a donation, an apothecary, or a physician. While attributing all to God, this retrospective awareness of God's continuous guidance also motivated and defended human action in the present with trust in the future. The account's capacity to spur action and to narrate setbacks explains, in fact, its citation and afterlife in later transatlantic missionary endeavors. For Francke himself, if people disagreed with his efforts, he referred them not only to past providences but also to the future, writing: "I never as yet have miss'd my Aim, when I have undertaken any Thing in Dependence upon the Lord." He waited on "the Day . . . wherein the Lord will make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts." His comment is a reference to 1 Corinthians 4:5, in which the apostle Paul worries not about human judges but waits on the future, when Christ will come, peer into the deepest motivations behind human actions, and judge all that is past. In response to critics, Francke, following the proto-missionary Paul, insisted that he did not presume to know God's plan or judgment but strove to undertake God's work by pursuing it with humility.[27]

Whitefield found in Francke's faith and retrospective narrative a model for defending and encouraging mission based on God's providence, both past and future. From the first pages of his defense of Bethesda, Whitefield followed Francke's model, retrospectively accentuating his powerlessness as he explained how his motives in founding the orphan house were focused on "the Salvation of Souls" and that "God put it into my Heart to build this House." Further, Whitefield attributed all of the orphanage's

[27] Ibid., 42, 45, 54, 58, 63, 77.

success—both spiritual and economic—to God. In response to his critics, Whitefield emphasized not only this past and present humility but also a future perspective. Regardless of their suspicions, Whitefield asked his enemies "at least to pray" that he go about his work in resignation and with an eye to God's will. With these prayers, Whitefield was convinced, "they will see happy Issue of this Work and future Ages have reason to bless God, for ever putting it into my Heart to build an Orphan-House in *Georgia*." Following Francke, Whitefield defended his motives and the rightness of his work by arguing that his critics would someday see the fruits of his labor and God's ultimate direction, regardless of any presently perceived setback.[28]

Through retrospection, Whitefield and Francke anticipated the future resolution of difficulties in their evangelical endeavors. Whitefield exemplified this attitude in his 1742 expression of optimism to Gotthilf Francke: "our Lord intends to do great things for Georgia yet."[29] Whitefield's hope in the future, his faith that God's blessing would yet further and confirm contemporary missionary zeal, and his willingness to live in delayed certainty demonstrate the deep permeation and resonance of providential, retrospective narration in eighteenth-century Protestantism.

Providential Defenses of Slavery in 18th-Century Georgia

Despite Whitefield's efforts and confidence in God's mercy, Georgia struggled economically. By the 1740s many in Georgia became convinced that the economic survival of the colony required slavery. In the colony-wide debates over the introduction of slavery, Whitefield and the Pietist pastors in Ebenezer came to sharp disagreement.

[28] Ibid., 3-5, 20.

[29] George Whitefield to GAF, 23 November 1742, AFSt/H C 532: 2.

Scholars have emphasized the different economic circumstances faced by Whitefield and the Pietists. Bethesda was in constant financial straits, and Whitefield's plantation-owning benefactors in South Carolina were key proponents of slavery. Meanwhile, the Pietists in Ebenezer achieved moderate success without slaves and actually feared economic repercussions from the introduction of slavery—such as less land and employment for middling white settlers, who would be edged out by the larger plantations and unpaid labor that came with slavery.[30]

In explaining the acceptance of slavery among evangelical Christians in Georgia, scholars have privileged these economic contexts and motivations and overlooked the importance of providential thought. Alan Gallay has argued that evangelicals like Whitefield and the Bryans used religion—meaning particularly the hope of slave conversion and future salvation—to "rationalize" the brutality of an institution that they made little real effort to reform or change.[31] Such an argument misses the significance of Whitefield's providential language and suggests that slavery was primarily an economic

[30] Whitefield's active support for the introduction of slavery into colonial Georgia has been described by scholars including Arnold Dallimore, Frank Lambert, and Alan Gallay, among others, who have shown how slavery helped Whitefield to provide Bethesda with some financial stability. Historians have also highlighted Whitefield's complex and, indeed, paradoxical relationship to slaveholding. Scholars have explained Whitefield's economic reasoning, his Atlantic and Georgian context—including the larger push for slavery among the colony's malcontents—and his conviction that slavery, when pursued by Christian masters, could function as a form of Christian mission to the African slave. The historian Betty Wood has well documented Boltzius's resistance to slavery, which was based, in part, on the Ebenezer community's support for the Georgia Trustees and their economic and security policies and, in part, on the community's early experience with slavery in 1734, before its prohibition. See Lambert, *'Pedlar in Divinity',* 204-210; Lambert, *James Habersham*, 46-49, 54, 78-79; Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia: 1730-1775* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 59-73; Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite,* 41-42, 49-51; Davis, *The Fledgling Province,* 126-127; Cashin, *Beloved Bethesda,* 60-62; A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1970), 207-208, 219, 367-368, 521. For Boltzius's concerns over slavery's effect on white wage labor, see his journal entry from 17 July 1750. Available in English translation in Samuel Urlsperger, ed., *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants who Settled in America,* trans. and ed. George Fenwick Jones, et al. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 13-14:95 (hereafter Urlsperger, *DR*).

[31] Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite,* 50, 53-54.

and not a moral issue for Whitefield—and that religion served only as a convenient justification. In fact, the economics of slavery were understood within the belief in God's providential oversight and the accompanying retrospective narration that had proven central components of eighteenth-century Protestant mission.[32]

In debating slavery, both Whitefield and the Pietist pastors relied on the same commitment to God's providential guidance, albeit in different ways. Based on his past experience and faith in God's guidance over his life and mission, Whitefield promoted slavery, seeing it as a means given by God to promote the flourishing of evangelical religion in Georgia: slave labor would provide economic support for Whitefield's missionary efforts at Bethesda, and the importation of slaves itself represented an opportunity to convert Africans to Christianity. The Pietists also eventually accepted slavery; although they had anxieties regarding its introduction and had trouble perceiving God's direction in the present, they also relied on a tradition of providential thought. They insisted that God worked through temporal authorities and had a plan for slavery that would, eventually, become clear in retrospect.

Despite their differences of opinion on slavery, the common dependence on providence—albeit distinctly interpreted—actually allowed Whitefield and the Pietists to remain united in their missionary efforts. In nineteenth-century slavery debates, as Mark Noll has argued, Christians developed different interpretations of the same scripture, which irreparably damaged the once-shared hermeneutical practices of evangelical Protestants in the early American Republic.[33] In eighteenth-century slavery

[32] Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite,* 53-54; Lambert, *'Pedlar in Divinity',* 207.

[33] Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 386, 396.

debates, however, providential thought and narration allowed Protestants to emphasize or accent different interpretations of the past and hopes for the future while remaining firmly committed to a common idea and language of God's direction and Christian mission. This commitment brought them together, and in their united efforts, they found confirmation of the great and widespread outworking of God's grace.

Whitefield outlined the advantages of slavery in providential language as early as the 1742 published defense of Bethesda. He argued that "a limited use of Negroes" would make Georgia "as flourishing a Colony as *South-Carolina*." In line with the providential style of narration that shaped the rest of the tract, Whitefield promoted this change "with the greatest Caution and Circumspection," relying not on man but on God, who, "having helped me and mine so often, encourages me to trust him again."[34] If Georgia was meant to have slaves, Whitefield believed, God would provide.

Whitefield was not alone among Anglican missionaries in his acceptance of slavery as a part of colonial life and evangelization. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) had been sending Anglican missionaries to North America since the beginning of the eighteenth century, with the goals of shoring up the loose organization of the Church of England in the American colonies and converting Africans and Native Americans to Christianity. Many of these missionaries, however, were overwhelmed by the work among dispersed communities of English people and claimed to have little time to visit and catechize Africans and Native Americans. Catechizing slaves also depended on the masters' cooperation; masters were often

[34] Whitefield, *A continuation of the account of the Orphan-House*, 18.

reluctant to allow slaves time off for instruction or opportunities to gather in large groups.[35]

In order to gain the cooperation of masters, SPG missionaries became increasingly aligned with the planters' interests. Some missionaries became slave owners themselves and the SPG eventually owned and operated a plantation in Barbados. As Travis Glasson has argued, by 1740 this "tightening relationship with slavery had begun to have serious effects on its missionary program," as the SPG "and its supporters had become enamored with the power and profits that slaveholding promised."[36] While SPG missionaries did not entirely give up working with slaves and attempting to reform slaveholding, their efforts further decreased in the wake of the religious revivals known as the Great Awakening. According to Glasson, the revivals of this period inadvertently strengthened ties between the SPG and slavery. In responding to the social disorder caused by revivalists—including Whitefield—Anglican missionaries

[35] For an early example of frustrations in efforts at slave conversion due to masters' reluctance, see Gilbert Jones to the Secretary, 6 November 1716, Letter Books, American material, Papers of the United Society Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (hereafter SPG Letters), Vol. B4, 75. I viewed this correspondence on the USPG microfilm collections available at the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth & African Studies at Rhodes House, Oxford. The missionaries' explanations of their difficulties in pursuing slave conversion can be found particularly in their reports from 1725, when they responded to a letter from SPG secretary David Humphreys, who was troubled by reports that "proper care hath not been taken to instruct in the Christian Religion and baptize the Negroes in the Plantations in America," and who exhorted the missionaries to do better. David Humphreys to all the Missionaries, 30 July 1725, SPG Letters, Vol. A19, 113. Exemplary responses to Humphreys' letter include Mr. [Brian] Hunt to the Secretary, 5 November 1725, SPG Letters, Vol. A19, 80; Mr. [Richard] Ludlam to the Secretary, 1 December 1725, SPG Letters, Vol. A19, 82; Mr. [John] Bartow to the Secretary, 5 November 1725, SPG Letters, Vol. A19, 184; Mr. [William] Vesey to the Secretary, 18 November 1725, Vol. A19, 185; Mr. [Robert] Jenney to the Secretary, 19 November 1725, SPG Letters, Vol. A19, 187. There are some occasional examples of slave instruction and baptism in the SPG reports from the 1720s. See, for example, Francis Varnod to the Secretary, 13 January 1723/4, SPG Letters, Vol. A18, 69-75, which describes the efforts of Alexander Skeen and "Mrs. Hague his Sister" to instruct their slaves in South Carolina; cf. the Clergy in South Carolina to the Secretary, 10 March 1723/4, SPG Letters, Vol. B5, 141.

[36] Glasson, *Mastering Christianity,* 5-11, 123-124, 129; on Barbados see especially 129, 141-170.

reiterated their commitment to upholding the social order and their alliance with plantation owners.[37]

Whitefield and the SPG had their differences when it came to revival, but both depended on the economic support made possible by slavery, and Whitefield's writings demonstrate how this economic support was understood within God's providence.[38] Bethesda's success as a missionary enterprise depended on its financial stability; and both the mission and its finances, Whitefield wrote, ultimately relied on God. Whitefield knew through Francke's example that accounting for Bethesda's finances would help demonstrate God's direction and, in turn, attract and reassure supporters. Whitefield's providential understanding of missionary economics is evident even in his correspondence from before the slavery debates. In 1740 Whitefield wrote Henry

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[37] Ibid., 6. Whitefield was a chief example of the disruption revivalists caused to existing norms. The Pietists in Halle and the SPG both expressed anxieties over Whitefield's habit of preaching outdoors and in pulpits assigned to others. See GAF to Johann Martin Boltzius (hereafter JMB) and ICG, 4 June 1739, AFSt/M 5 A 7: 47. For an excellent, although later, example of the distaste with which SPG missionaries regarded Whitefield, see Thomas Bradbury Chandler's report to the SPG, in which he described refusing to allow Whitefield the use of his pulpit in Elizabeth Town, New Jersey: "Mr: Chandler knowing the very exceptionable point of Light in which Mr: Whitefield formerly stood with his Superiours at home, thro' his undutiful & schismatical Behaviour, & having no Evidence of his Reformation, much less of having made any due Submission to the Governors of the Church, & obtained the Bishop of London's Licence, could not think the Example of the Clergy in Philadelphia, who had given Mr: Whitefield the free use of their Churches, sufficient to justify a Conduct, in his Opinion, so inconsistent with the Rules of Ecclesiastical Polity." Thomas Bradbury Chandler to the Secretary, 5 July 1764, presented at the General Meeting, 21 December 1764, Minutes of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1762-1764, ff. 301r-313r, Lambeth Palace Library.

[38] Despite Whitefield's support of slavery and his agreement with the SPG on the benefits of Christianization in creating better slaves, Glasson situates Whitefield on the opposite side of the SPG's entanglement with the status quo. Glasson points to a letter that Whitefield published in 1740 in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which was critical of masters' cruel behavior toward slaves. Whitefield's letter sparked a debate with Alexander Garden, a leading Anglican clergyman in Charleston, South Carolina, whose argument that slavery was a "benevolent institution" became characteristic of "later defenses of slaveholding." While Glasson acknowledges that Whitefield was not against slavery, he nonetheless vaguely groups Whitefield with "the forces unleashed by evangelicalism," which masters feared would lead to social disorder. Glasson, *Mastering Christianity*, 123, 127. On Whitefield's early critique of slave-owners' practices see: George Whitefield, "A Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, No. 592, April 17, 1740; Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite,* 36-39; Thomas S. Kidd, "Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina" (1740), *Encyclopedia Virginia* (January 18, 2012) http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/_Letter_to_the_Inhabitants_of_Maryland_Virginia_North_and_South_Carolina_1740#start_entry.

Newman, a Pietist representative in London, who forwarded Whitefield's letter to Gotthilf Francke in Halle. Whitefield described God's blessing on the Ebenezer Pietists, evidenced not only in their spiritual achievements but also in their economic flourishing. He ended with reference to Psalm 16:6: "Surely God has answered their Prayer, has cast their Lot at lenght [*sic*] in a fair Ground, and given them a goodly heritage." Whitefield sought the same providential blessing in the economic success of his own missionary and institutional efforts, and promoted, like the Ebenezer community, cottage industry. He reported that he hired spinners and a weaver for Bethesda, who had produced "above a hundred yards of home-spun cloth." For materials, they used cotton harvested by the Bethesda orphans. As Whitefield explained, "Picking Cotton is excellent employment for my little orphans." Whitefield understood that missionary success relied on economic success, and both—in language Whitefield had adopted from Francke's account and from Psalm 16—depended ultimately on God's providential oversight.[39]

Whitefield's followers in Georgia and South Carolina embraced his faith in God's providence and corresponding commitment to mission and promoted Bethesda's economic success on behalf of this faith and commitment. In March of 1747, the brothers Hugh and Jonathan Bryan purchased a plantation and slaves for Whitefield in South Carolina, where slavery was legal. Whitefield wrote that God inspired his friends to this purchase, which would provide financial support for Bethesda's mission, and he named his new plantation "Providence." Meanwhile, James Habersham, the

[39] George Whitefield to Henry Newman, 20 June 1740, AFSt/M 1E4: 76; this letter was apparently a copy. The location of the original manuscript is unclear. A German translation was made (George Whitefield to Henry Newman, 20 June 1740, AFSt/M 5A9: 4), which was apparently forwarded to Francke. For Francke's reference to the letter, see: GAF to JMB and ICG, 25 January 1741, AFSt/M 5A9: 17. For more on cotton production at Bethesda, see Lambert, *James Habersham*, 48-49.

superintendent of Bethesda from 1740 to 1743, recognized that the orphanage's flourishing depended on Georgia's success and accordingly created an economic plan for the colony. This plan influenced the Trustees' 1749 decision to legalize slavery.[40]

In promoting slavery, Whitefield and his supporters used the powerful providential and retrospective language that provided such critical motivation to eighteenth-century Christian mission and revivalism in the Atlantic world. Whitefield and his supporters were firmly convinced that the slave trade could benefit Christian mission by contributing to the economic success of Bethesda. They also believed that the introduction of slavery offered opportunities for the conversion of Africans and the growth of Christianity. Expanding the picture beyond Whitefield, however, demonstrates that there was disagreement on this issue among eighteenth-century Protestants and reveals the different ways in which Protestants relied on providential thought and its corresponding retrospective language in debating slavery.

Whitefield's friends and contemporaries, the Pietists in Ebenezer and Halle, illuminate both the diversity among Christian attitudes toward slavery at the time and the common commitment to providential faith and language. Instead of emphasizing a future perspective that would reveal the benefits of the slave trade to Christian mission, the Pietists were skeptical of slave conversion. They focused, rather, on the importance of obedience to providentially-appointed governing authorities and a future perspective that would reveal God's wisdom over the issue of slavery, even if they encountered it with anxiety in the present.

[40] Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite,* 41-54; Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 219; Lambert, *James Habersham*, 1-4, 74-79.

In September 1747 Hermann Heinrich Lemke, the assistant minister in Ebenezer, wrote Gotthilf Francke concerning community disagreements over slavery. Ebenezer's loyal support of the Trustees' policy to exclude slavery had opened the community to criticism from the colony's slavery proponents, affecting even the longstanding friendship between the head pastor of Ebenezer, Johann Boltzius, and Whitefield. Boltzius opposed slavery for economic and moral reasons, and his economic evidence—Ebenezer's success—particularly aggravated those slavery advocates who were convinced that white settlers could not succeed agriculturally in Georgia's heat. By the late 1740s, slavery proponents tried to undermine Boltzius's authority by accusing him of exercising "spiritual tyranny" over Ebenezer and pointing to Ebenezer settlers who wanted slaves. Lemke's 1747 letter addressed this development.[41]

Lemke described the controversy over slavery within Ebenezer by foreshadowing its providential resolution and highlighting a scriptural parallel that illuminated the

[41] Hermann Heinrich Lemke to GAF, 10 September 1747, AFSt/M 5A11: 73. For Boltzius's account of this unrest, see JMB to GAF, 7 September 1747, AFSt/M 5A11: 72; and JMB to GAF, 4 January. 1748, AFSt/M 5A11: 77; for an English summary of the events, see B. Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia,* 65-72. Boltzius's journals from 1749-1750 reflect the strained relationship between himself and Whitefield. See entries from 23 April and 11 August 1749, and 19 September 1750, in Urlsperger, *DR* (1990), 13-14:42, 94, 146-7. See also Cashin, *Beloved Bethesda,* 61-62; Lambert, *James Habersham,* 78; Julie Anne Sweet, *William Stephens: Georgia's Forgotten Founder* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2010), 150-151. Ebenezer's economic success was not entirely due to its inhabitants' industry. Unlike other communities in colonial Georgia, Ebenezer received immense advantages in support from the Georgia Trustees, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the Francke Foundations. For example, the Trustees provided immigrants to Ebenezer with supplies, including cattle, construction materials, and food, for three years after their arrival. The Trustees further paid for the salary and provisions for a medical doctor. In addition, the SPCK paid the salaries of the ministers, while the Francke Foundations provided a pool of trained ministers and doctors along with more material goods, such as medicines, linens, books, and other donations forwarded from interested benefactors. Historian Renate Wilson estimated the yearly monetary value of this support and these donations at 1,000 pounds sterling. Renate Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer: Pietism, agriculture and commerce in colonial Georgia" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 1988), 45-51. On supplies provided by the Trustees during the first years of settlement: Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen to James Vernon, 22 February 1737, AFSt/M 5A3: 41; on the Trustees' financial support of a medical doctor for Ebenezer: Harman Verelst to Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen, 10 March 1737, AFSt/M 5A5: 14, and GAF to JMB and ICG, 19 January 1739, AFSt/M 5A5: 24; on the Francke Foundations' shipments of linen, books, and medicine: JMB and ICG to GAF, August 1743, AFSt/M 5A11: 3, JMB to Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen, 9 July 1746, AFSt/M 5A11: 54a, and GAF to Christian Ernst Thilo, 17 July 1748, AFSt/M 5A11: 84.

Pietists' attitude of obedience to God-appointed temporal authorities. He explained first that many inhabitants were tempted to own slaves, but the ministers feared slavery would destroy the community, bringing "great and manifold" misery. The community's surgeon, Johann Ludwig Meyer, convened the householders, however, and "the affair attained a good outcome that, through divine governance, no one desired such black slaves any longer." Lemke emphasized the role of the layman Meyer in settling the community's dispute in order to stress that the stance on slavery within Ebenezer was not dictated by the ministers but shaped by a lay civic leader. In reporting the account to Francke, nonetheless, Lemke explained the situation and its resolution not by detailing Meyer's words or argument but by referring to a scriptural parallel: the biblical story from 1 Samuel 8, in which the Israelites asked Samuel to appoint a king, so that they might be like other nations. Samuel discouraged the Israelites—explaining the rights a king would have over them—but they persisted. Lemke saw the community's temptation for slaves stemming from a worldly desire to be like slave-holding neighbors in South Carolina. Like the Israelites, community members had not fully grasped the long-term consequences of their worldly desire: they would be beholden to the new political system they had prayed to God to create. Unlike the Israelites, however, the Ebenezer community was convinced, for a time, by warnings of the repercussions for worldly desire.[42]

Before it was legalized, the Ebenezer ministers promoted a providential interpretation of slavery as a symptom of human lust, to which community members

[42] Hermann Heinrich Lemke to GAF, 10 September 1747, AFSt/M 5A11: 73. Although I was unable to find a record of Meyer's first name, the historian Renate Wilson referred to him as Johann Ludwig Mayer. See: Renate Wilson, *Pious Traders in Medicine: A German Pharmaceutical Network in Eighteenth-Century North America* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 170-171.

would become servants, and which would bring God's future wrath. Were slavery introduced, Lemke wrote, "the judgment of God must be brought upon the land, and many perish in body and soul." Even if this disaster were temporarily averted, the community would always be in danger of disregarding its spiritual health for "the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and harmful concern for the stomach." The leaders tried to convince parishioners, but the success of these efforts, Lemke emphasized, ultimately depended on God: "we . . . can go nowhere but to God, who wants to help. Let him preserve those among us who belong to him, and protect them from evil." Lemke recognized God's providential power but, unlike Whitefield, did not find within that power the inevitability of slavery. He saw instead an evil to be avoided with God's help.[43]

When the Trustees legalized slavery in 1749, Boltzius struggled to contemplate God's providence in the appearance of slaves in Georgia and in Ebenezer, and he deferred to the Trustees' authority. Boltzius would not prevent community members from acquiring slaves, but his journal suggests he remained unconvinced of both the economic necessity and the morality of slavery.[44] Boltzius continued to argue that with a better work ethic more people in Georgia "would succeed without the help of Negro servants." He worried about settlers borrowing money to buy slaves, thus becoming "slaves of their slaves and of the merchants, and also lazy people." Furthermore, Boltzius questioned slavery's effect on white settlers who relied on wage labor, which slaves might overtake. As far as moral concerns, Boltzius recorded the opinions of the Council in Savannah:

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[43] Hermann Heinrich Lemke to GAF, 10 Sept. 1747, AFSt/M 5A11: 73; cf. Philippians 3:19.

[44] See entries from 1 February, 8 August 1750, in Urlsperger, *DR* (1990), 13-14: 18, 112-113.

> I was assured that they were eternal slaves in their own land and that they [African slaves] lived under great tyranny and difficult circumstances and were legally bought and sold. Therefore Christians should feel no more scruples in buying them or possessing them than the Patriarchs and even Philemon himself in the New Testament, to whom St. Paul sent back the servant Onesimus and demanded not his emancipation but just good treatment. They also have an opportunity to come to a recognition of Christ.[45]

Despite his dutiful recording of these arguments, Boltzius's other writings suggested that he remained unconvinced that Christians could in good conscience own slaves. In one journal entry from the same period, he cited reports from Pietist missionaries in Tranquebar, on the eastern coast of India, describing how their antislavery stance advanced their relationship with the local population and furthered their missionary success.[46]

Boltzius was not alone among evangelical Christians in expressing his skepticism over defenses of slavery, even within the context of supporting temporal authorities. In 1730, the SPG published a tract on its missionary work among slaves that contained an address and two letters by Bishop Edmund Gibson of London. The tract was intended to expand missionaries' access to slaves and to advance evangelization by convincing readers—presumably white—that they were "an Instrument under God," working to "see the Gospel propagated," to promote "charitable *Endeavours* for the salvation of our Fellow-Creatures," and to "find a very plentiful Reward from the Hands of God." The sections written by the Bishop offered reassurances to masters, who, fearing a

[45] See entries from 1 February, 17 July, 19 April 1750, Urlsperger, *DR* (1990), 13-14: 18, 95, 55.

[46] See entries from 8 August, 23 August 1750, Urlsperger, *DR* (1990), 13-14: 112-113, 121.

connection between baptism and civil freedom, limited missionaries' access to slaves. While the bishop, in the interest of evangelization, reiterated that baptism did not necessitate or entail emancipation, the tract's editor, SPG Secretary David Humphreys, nonetheless concluded the publication by exhorting slave owners to consider seriously whether they, as Christians, would be able to justify either their actions or the common arguments on behalf of slavery when placed in a future position of retrospection:

> Let the hardiest *Slave-holder* look forward to that tremendous Day, when he must give an Account to God of his Stewardship, and let him, seriously, consider, whether, at such a Time, he thinks he shall be able to satisfy himself [justify himself before God] that any Act of buying and selling, or the Fate of War, or the Birth of Children in his House, Plantations or Territories, or any other Circumstances whatever, can give him such an *absolute Property* in the Persons of Men, as will justify *his retaining them as Slaves, and treating them as Beasts?*[47]

Both the SPG message for missionizing slaves and Humphreys' foreboding contrapuntal on the morality of Christian slaveholding relied on tensely yet concurrently held providential understandings of God's oversight, the need to work within an existing social order, humans' missionary work on God's behalf, and a future state of retrospectively based judgment and reward.

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[47] David Humphreys, *An Account of the Endeavours used by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts to Instruct the Negroe Slaves in New York. Together with two of Bp. Gibson's Letters on that Subject. Being an Extract from Dr. Humphrey's Historical Account of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, from its Foundation to the Year 1728* (London, 1730), 17-20, 26-27, 35, 41-43. I consulted the copy available at the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth & African Studies at Rhodes House, Oxford. See also Glasson, *Mastering Christianity*; Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia*.

Unlike Boltzius and Humphreys, Whitefield perceived only positive signs of God's approval and direction in his elation over the legalization of slavery in Georgia. In a May 1752 letter to Gotthilf Francke, Whitefield tried to describe his delight in terms with which Francke would agree: God's providence. Whitefield pointed to the missionary potential among the imported Africans. He assured Francke that "the father of earth and heaven" provided slaves and that even Boltzius understood slaves were needed for the cultivation of Georgia. Whitefield hoped "that many negro children will be brought up for the sake of Christ," telling Francke that there is "no need to despair with Christ as your leader."[48] Francke responded unusually quickly—a mere two months later—and he also appealed to providence on the slavery issue, writing, "let us entrust the care to God." He maintained, however, that "if it were for us to decide, we would wish that they [slaves] were not introduced in Georgia." Based on the Ebenezer ministers' reports, Francke was pessimistic about slave conversion; he feared that the slaves would be corrupted "because of the sins of those who are accustomed to treat them [slaves] in a non-Christian manner." Instead of growing the church, Francke feared, slaves' children would be tempted to sins "which provoke divine wrath."[49]

Whitefield tried to convince Boltzius of the possibilities of slave conversion, and before the formal legalization of slavery Boltzius participated in meetings to ensure the new code promoted the spiritual care of slaves. Boltzius was unconvinced, however, that slave conversion was a reason to introduce slavery into Georgia. Some have suggested

[48] George Whitefield to GAF, 19 May 1752, AFSt/H C 532: 6. Note that the original letter is in Latin. I am grateful to Vincent Evener for his assistance in translation. Zehrer also offers a partial translation into German. Zehrer, "Die Beziehung zwischen," 53.

[49] GAF to George Whitefield, 19 July 1752, AFSt/H C 532: 7. As with the previous letter, the original is in Latin, and I again relied on translation assistance from Vincent Evener. Zehrer provides a partial translation into German. Zehrer, "Die Beziehung zwischen," 53.

that Boltzius's skepticism over the introduction of slavery was due to racism. He would have preferred that the colony be settled by "white Protestant people," but whether his pessimism regarding slave conversion was due to racial attitudes or local concerns for the economy and security of his particular community is hard to tease apart.[50] Rebecca Goetz has argued that, in colonial Virginia, Christianity was used to create hereditary notions of race that implied the impossibility of true conversion by Indians or Africans, an attitude that developed, in part, from legal efforts to assure planters that baptism would not make slaves free. These efforts came about because missionaries could not otherwise convince slave owners to grant access; unfortunately these arguments, according to Goetz, also implied the diminished "spiritual capacities" of Africans to become true Christians.[51] The question of how race affected conversion would eventually shape discussions of slavery in Georgia, including, perhaps, between Francke and Boltzius's successor, Christian Rabenhorst.[52]

For Boltzius, however, the immediate focus remained whether slaves' conversions were fulfilling, or could fulfill, slavery proponents' providential expectations of

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[50] See entries from 23 April 1749, 19 September 1750, Urlsperger, *DR* (1990), 13-14: 42, 146-7; on Boltzius's racism, see B. Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia,* 72-73.

[51] Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia,* 6-10. While Goetz's book is provocative, it must be pointed out that she is mistaken when she claims that within Christianity there was a "traditional link between baptism and freedom" (6), which was severed in Anglo-Virginia. Throughout Christian history, the connection between baptism and political or civil freedom has been denied and disputed. For another excellent study of Christian mission, slavery, and baptism in the American colonies, see Glasson, "'Baptism doth not bestow Freedom.'"

[52] Rabenhorst wrote Francke in 1763, describing how he tried through example and by speaking to his slaves to bring them to Christianity, but he saw "no means and way to save them." He was pleased with their labor and esteemed their "truth and diligence" above white servants, but "they are and remain heathen, who, in order to please me well, convey the name of God in the mouth but do not desire him from the heart." Rabenhorst acquired slaves both through marriage and through management of the pastor's plantation in Ebenezer. Christian Rabenhorst to GAF, 21 February 1763, AFSt/M 5B2:65. It is unclear, however, if in using "heathen," Rabenhorst meant to indicate race or rather non-Christian, as was typical in early modern discussions of religion.

missionary potential. In 1756, Boltzius reported on the 42 slaves who were living in Ebenezer, five of whom were children "born and baptized here." He explained that "they are better maintained in work, food, and clothing than in many other places, and are not allowed to work on Sundays for their food and clothes." Nonetheless, Boltzius bemoaned the slaves' spiritual state: "one unfortunately doesn't take time to bring them to the knowledge of the Christian religion." Six years after the introduction of slavery, Boltzius still discussed it with bitterness. "I find it terrifying," he wrote, "that these poor people—the same as cattle—remain in eternal slavery only to serve Christians with their work and in the end should be damned in the service of Christians. When one speaks publicly and privately on the topic and also acts with his office in the service of the negroes, it falls on deaf ears."[53]

Regardless of the Pietists' negative assessment of slavery and pessimism over conversion, in the end they conceded the matter to providence, citing God's oversight and their hope for a future, retrospective perspective. While Boltzius continued to raise objections to slavery after its introduction, he also tried to understand it in terms of God's providence and care over missionary efforts. He tried to stop speaking against slavery—because, as he wrote, "God's hand could be involved in this matter"—and to illustrate concrete examples of God's direction over the Ebenezer community.[54] The community faced, for example, an ever-decreasing number of white servants and also lost to epidemics promising children, many on the verge of becoming valuable laborers.

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[53] Johann Martin Boltzius, "Nachrichten aus Amerika für Sr. Hochwürden Herrn D. und Prof. Francken," December 1756, Francke-Nachlasses der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz 32/10: 10. I viewed this item on microfilm at the Archive of the Francke Foundations in Halle. On slaves' use of Sundays for work and socialization, see Glasson, *Mastering Christianity*, 157-158.

[54] See, for example, entry from 17 July 1750, Urlsperger, *DR* (1990), 13-14:93, 95.

In 1750 an epidemic variously identified as Rothe Friesel, scarlet fever, and measles killed 13 children—or approximately 5% of Ebenezer's population.[55] Boltzius considered that perhaps God's hand was involved—both in bringing the epidemic as a judgment and sending slaves as much-needed labor at a time of population decline. He wrote: "I do not feel that I can object when people wish to introduce Negroes into our community; in this as in all things I trust in God, who will show us in good time whether or not this practice is of any advantage [*nützlich*] to our people here."[56] Boltzius echoed here the same providential appeals he often made when epidemic and death threatened his fragile mission: he located consolation in hope of future clarity ("On judgment day we will know clearly") or in the reflection on past experiences, when God had shown mercy and aid ("the Lord always helps us up again.")[57]

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[55] The first transport to Ebenezer included approximately 50 immigrants. Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer," 86; Johann Martin Boltzius, *The Letters of Johann Martin Boltzius: Lutheran Pastor in Ebenezer, Georgia*, ed. and trans. Russell Kleckley in collaboration with Jürgen Gröschl, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 35n79. The first transport was supplemented by transports in 1735, 1737, and 1741, bringing the population to 249 adults and children by the end of 1742. This number did not significantly change until the early 1750s, when new transports of immigrants and increasing childhood survival rates finally brought the population to approximately 650 people by 1754. Although small, this number nonetheless represented, according to Wilson, 12 percent of the population of the entire colony of Georgia at this time. Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer," 99-100. See especially Boltzius's journal entries from 28 January 1750; 12, 21, October 1750; 3, 6, 9, 17, 18, 24, 26, 28 November 1750; 6, 8, 9, 13 December 1750, in Urlsperger, *DR* (1990), 13-14:161-207. For Jones' explanation of the Rothe Friesel, see his comments on v-vi and 226n24.

[56] See entry from 17 July 1750, Urlsperger, *DR* (1990), 13-14:93. One could read Boltzius's interpretation here as passive, but he is actively seeking to understand a situation that he cannot otherwise comprehend but through God's providence and scripture. It may be helpful to think of Boltzius's words as resignation, but, in so doing, to remember resignation can be an active verb. In this way Boltzius's writings resonate with the writings of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, an early Wittenberg reformer, who wrote on the meaning of *Gelaßenheit*: "One who lets go of or leaves something is a detached person. And although one who has been abandoned may be called a detached person, what is important in this usage is the fact that one has to leave and turn away from what one wishes to be detached from. Hence, in the statement, 'a detached person,' the term is active, i.e., it is real and in the doing mode." Andreas Bondenstein, *The Essential Carlstadt,* trans. and ed. E. J. Furcha (Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 1995), 135.

[57] See entries from 15 February, 23 December 1750, Urslperger, *DR* (1990), 13-14:27, 212.

In his 1752 letter to Whitefield, Gotthilf Francke came to terms with the legalization of slavery by relying on the providential thought and narration that had guided first his father's and now his own missionary enterprise. He wrote:

> Because this affair belongs to the will of the civil magistrate, we leave it to them, trusting that God is able, according to his most high wisdom, not only to turn away what we fear, but indeed to turn that which was going to be harmful to his kingdom into the growth of it. We must ask for this from him with constant prayers, and diligently move forward every work, which must be done with zeal, to where his counsel leads in all things which happen by his command or permission.[58]

Francke rejected Whitefield's conviction that slavery would grow the church, but Francke did accept the authority of Georgia's government as given by God. Like Boltzius, he expressed doubts and disappointment, but he also made peace with the contemporary political situation. Like his father—and Whitefield—Francke found in God's providence consolation for doubts, prescription for action, and hope for God's future resolution and continuing direction in missionary endeavors.

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In the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, Protestants relied on providential thought and, correspondingly, retrospective narration as they described and defended both their missionary efforts and their acceptance of slavery. In writing missionary accounts, they turned to a long Christian tradition of discerning and interpreting God's direction over human activity; this tradition had been shaped, most recently, by

[58] GAF to George Whitefield, 19 July 1752, AFSt/H C 532: 7.

Protestants' efforts to interpret new ideas about medicine and benevolence in terms of God's concern for the care and conversion of humanity. Protestants from a variety of backgrounds had found common ground in perceiving and describing God's providence as a spur to Christian action on behalf of others. This tradition was exemplified in the Christian missions of the Atlantic world, as seen in the charitable work and writings of August Hermann Francke in Halle and in the writings and missionary endeavors of the many Protestants he influenced, including Pietist missionaries in America and the Anglican revivalist George Whitefield.

The Christian acceptance of slavery in colonial Georgia depended on the providential thought and language that were characteristic of Christian efforts in and writings about mission, medicine, benevolence, and sickness. Shaped by pastoral writings, personal experiences, and Enlightenment thought, Protestants responded to suffering and sickness by seeking actively to interpret God's providential direction in their lives—both past and future. They looked back to see the evidence of God's providence in their spiritual and corporeal lives. They sought to apply this retrospective perspective to their present circumstances: to make decisions in the midst of suffering and uncertainty, to be open to new medical knowledge and understandings of human nature, and to move forward with hope in God's oversight. This habit of retrospection encouraged Protestants to participate in important endeavors in medicine and benevolence, trusting all the time in God's guidance and grace.

In their strong commitment to God's providence and in their habit of retrospective narration, however, Protestants also found a way to interpret and accept the introduction of an abhorrent system of labor. In colonial Georgia, this meant that they saw slavery as either a God-devised means of evangelism or as a system created by

a divinely-appointed temporal government that Christians must obey. Some, like Whitefield, perceived with certainty God's direction over slavery by retrospectively discerning the institution from a future point, in which Africans' bondage provided the necessary finances for mission work and, further, allowed for their evangelization and eventual salvation. Others, like the Pietists, waited with anxiety on that forthcoming "yet"—positing a future perspective in which they might glimpse God's oversight and care in retrospect.

Recognizing the common theological basis and narration behind mission and slavery reveals the potency of Christian arguments based on providence. In the case of slavery, economic and social considerations certainly influenced eighteenth-century Protestants' decisions to own slaves, but so did an entrenched—and often spiritually motivating—habit of providential thought.

Protestants turned to providence in their suffering, in their encounters with change, in their difficult decisions, and in their actions. Providential thought persisted in their lives and writings throughout the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. It fundamentally shaped Protestants' interactions with the new ideas and institutions of their time, while connecting them, always, to both the past and future.

Epilogue

> *"I wanted to come, and if I hadn't, they would have been all alone, and nobody would have ever known how frightened and brave and irreplaceable they were."*[1]

In Connie Willis's 1992 novel, *Doomsday Book*, historians of the future do their work through time travel. The main character, Kivrin, is a young scholar of medieval European history who, after extensive preparation, finally has her chance to visit the middle ages. Unbeknownst to her, however, she and her coordinators are exposed to a deadly flu epidemic shortly before she time travels. She arrives in the past terribly ill and disoriented, and her team—likewise affected by the virus—has mistakenly dropped her in the wrong year: 1348. With the help of the medieval villagers who find her, she recovers from the epidemic illness of her own time just in time to witness them succumb to an historic one: the Black Death, the plague in which approximately one third of Europe's population died.

Doomsday Book is a work of science fiction, based on the premise that historical knowledge is best achieved through time travel. The past comes alive in the book, however, not merely through the feat of time travel and the first-hand encounter of historical events. Rather, the past comes alive through the universal reality of human suffering and human responsiveness to suffering.

Moving between epidemics past and future, the reader learns how the human experience of suffering is, on the one hand, inextricably defined by historical circumstances like medical knowledge, environment, political and social institutions, class, and religious teachings. And yet, on the other hand, the reader also perceives that

[1] Connie Willis, *Doomsday Book* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 544.

the experience of suffering can transcend historical context. In both the past and the future, humans' perspectives and actions in times of sickness are shaped by emotions like vulnerability, grief, and hope, as well as by longstanding Christian teachings about God's providence, ethics, and community.

When we place sickness at the center of our historical inquiry, in other words, we see change and continuity. We see different medical treatments, for example, but we also see familiar conceptions of benevolence. This continuity in the midst of change disrupts our traditional, linear narrative of progress from a cruel and irrational religious past to a modern and rational medical future. Kivrin's experience of the plague completely countered what she had been taught: that medieval villagers were "panic-stricken and cowardly during the Black Death, that they ran away and wouldn't tend the sick, and that the priests were the worst of all." Living in the midst of their suffering and caring for them—as they had cared for her—she concluded that, "it isn't like that at all."[2]

Like Kivrin, we are surprised by our encounter with stories of sickness and medicine. When we read about eighteenth-century women and men who engaged medicine while at the same time relying on providence, we realize that there are flaws in our received narrative of the decline of providential thought and the corresponding secularization of the eighteenth century. While most scholars agree that secularization did occur in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century separation of religious and political authority, historians of medicine have perhaps been too prone to claim a parallel transformation in their own subject of study. In fact, the story of religion and medicine in the eighteenth century belies a simplistic narrative of wide-scale secularization external to the political realm. When it came to sickness, understandings of the human

[2] Ibid., 451.

body and soul, and the promotion of new medical knowledge, eighteenth-century Protestants turned to longstanding Christian convictions of God's sovereignty, human sin and guilt, and Christian mission.

Early Americans responded to suffering and change creatively, relying on their religion, their medical knowledge, and their community, while also considering their current situation and the meaning and implications of their actions for the future. Some early Americans, like the Puritans and Pietists, hoped their participation in medicine and benevolence were natural outpourings from their state of election or grace. Some, like the Methodists, believed their actions to ameliorate suffering contributed to their salvation. Many, from Cotton Mather and Johann Boltzius to John Redman and George Whitefield, thought that their efforts to heal, to promote medicine, or to advocate for political change demonstrated their commitment to God's direction and to spreading the Gospel far and wide. Others, like the civic committee members who responded to the 1793 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia, were convinced that they were confirming and participating in new social understandings of human goodness, happiness, and possibility, but—even in this more secular language—they nonetheless still grounded their hopes with an appeal to providential direction.

We cannot time travel to the eighteenth century, but we can encounter suffering in the eighteenth century through careful attention to a diverse range of sources, including pastoral manuals, letters, journals, memoirs, meeting minutes, and epidemic narratives. In so doing, we not only transform our understanding of religion and medicine, of providence, and of secularization, but we also engage early Americans and their ideas with respect for the fullness of human life. Early Americans lived embodied lives; they suffered, they witnessed suffering, and they sought to help people and to

improve the world. We must attend to the fullness of their experiences and the ways in which they lived out ideas in their bodies and actions. The doctrine of providence was bound inextricably to early Americans' corporeal lives and experiences. In their writing, medicine, and efforts to respond to suffering, they depended on, doubted, challenged, and confirmed God's providence.

When we perceive the rich and dynamic tradition of providential thought in the intimate human experience of suffering, we change our understanding of both the intellectual and social history of early America. Faith in particular providence did not disappear with elite ideas about a mechanistic universe, a distant God, or an increased optimism about human nature and actions. Allusions to God's providential wrath were not, furthermore, merely a tool of those in power to control social change. Far from declining in the shift to a more secular political world, providential thought continued to inform and shape early Americans' responses to suffering. It promoted Christian action in the spiritual and often personal work of writing and repentance as well as in broader social efforts of medicine and benevolence.

Early Americans turned to providence because of its essential place in Christian tradition and narrative; it was a doctrine that had long offered consolation. Yet they also found in providence a way to understand and respond to their modern world and to engage actively the medical knowledge and developments that were transforming their intellectual, physical, and social lives. Protestants depended on this activating potential of providential thought, moreover, not only in their encounters with sickness and medicine but also in their experiences of social and political change. One such example is found in the debates and eventual support for slavery among Protestants in colonial

Georgia. We can be disturbed by and critical of the active use of providential thought to promote slavery, but we cannot deny it.

Personal stories of past sickness challenge our understanding of what providence meant for an eighteenth-century Christian. Made confident by medical developments of recent centuries, we often assume that our response to suffering is more effective, more courageous, more active—more secular—than previous eras. By attending to sickness and suffering in history, however, we are challenged to see both the people of the past and ourselves differently. They were not passive. Providence did not limit them. Like us, they lived, suffered, experienced change, and worked actively to do the best they could with the medicine, knowledge, and faith they found in both themselves and their communities.

In *Doomsday Book*, Kivrin's recovery was, in the end, twofold: she survived her sickness and she returned to her own time with intimate stories of past suffering, stories too often lost to history's ledgers. Sometimes, when we encounter the past, we are so determined to highlight the change, transformation, and progress that define our present moment that we fail truly to see those who went before and to recognize our shared humanity. In suffering, in medicine, and in providence, we find continuities in the midst of change. We find humans who, faced with an uncertain future, persist in turning to the past, seeking meaning in their faith, in their actions, and in their God.

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