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WESLEY AS A MISSIONARY TO GEORGIA

THE FIRST ENTRY in Wesley's *Journal* is that of October 14, 1735. But the following letter, which Wesley published with the first edition of his *Journal*, precedes it, as it describes the incidents which led to the formation of the Holy Club and to the social activities from which, as the *Journal* shows, Methodism has evolved.

The letter was written from Oxford in 1732 to Mr. Morgan, whose son is mentioned. It runs thus:

Wesley Begins his Work

In November, 1729, at which time I came to reside at Oxford, your son [Mr. Morgan], my brother, myself, and one more agreed to spend three or four evenings in a week together. Our design was to read over the classics, which we had before read in private, on common nights, and on Sunday some book in divinity. In the summer following, Mr. M. told me he had called at the gaol to see a man who was condemned for killing his wife; and that, from the talk he had with one of the debtors, he verily believed it would do much good if anyone would be at the pains of now and then speaking with them.

This he so frequently repeated that on August 24, 1730, my brother and I walked with him to the castle. We were so well satisfied with our conversation there that we agreed to go thither once or twice a week; which we had not done long before he desired me to go with him to see a poor woman in the town, who was sick. In this employment too, when we came to reflect upon it, we believed it would be worth while to spend an hour or two in a week; provided the minister of the parish, in which any such person was, were not against it. But that we might not depend

wholly on our own judgments, I wrote an account to my father of our whole design; withal begging that he, who had lived seventy years in the world and seen as much of it as most private men have ever done, would advise us whether we had yet gone too far and whether we should now stand still or go forward.

Origin of the Holy Club

In pursuance of [his] directions, I immediately went to Mr. Gerard, the Bishop of Oxford's chaplain, who was likewise the person that took care of the prisoners when any were condemned to die (at other times they were left to their own care); I proposed to him our design of serving them as far as we could and my own intention to preach there once a month, if the bishop approved of it. He much commended our design and said he would answer for the bishop's approbation, to whom he would take the first opportunity of mentioning it. It was not long before he informed me he had done so and that his lordship not only gave his permission, but was greatly pleased with the undertaking and hoped it would have the desired success.

Soon after, a gentleman of Merton College, who was one of our little company, which now consisted of five persons, acquainted us that he had been much rallied the day before for being a member of the Holy Club; and that it was become a common topic of mirth at his college, where they had found out several of our customs, to which we were ourselves utter strangers. Upon this I consulted my father again.

* * * * *

Upon [his] encouragement we still continued to meet together as usual; and to confirm one another, as well as we could, in our resolutions to communicate as often as we had opportunity (which is here once a week); and do what service we could to our acquaintance, the prisoners, and two or three poor families in the town.

* * * * *

Wesley Sails for America

1735. Tuesday, October 14.—Mr. Benjamin Ingham, of Queen's College, Oxford; Mr. Charles Delamotte, son of a merchant, in

London, who had offered himself some days before; my brother, Charles Wesley, and myself, took boat for Gravesend, in order to embark for Georgia.

Our end in leaving our native country was not to avoid want (God having given us plenty of temporal blessings), nor to gain the dung or dross of riches or honor; but singly this—to save our souls; to live wholly to the glory of God. In the afternoon we found the “Simmonds” off Gravesend and immediately went on board.

Friday, 17.—I began to learn German in order to converse with the Germans, six-and-twenty of whom we had on board. On Sunday, the weather being fair and calm, we had the morning service on quarterdeck. I now first preached extempore and then administered the Lord’s Supper to six or seven communicants.

Monday, 20.—Believing the denying ourselves, even in the smallest instances, might, by the blessing of God, be helpful to us, we wholly left off the use of flesh and wine and confined ourselves to vegetable food—chiefly rice and biscuit.

Tuesday, 21.—We sailed from Gravesend. When we were past about half the Goodwin Sands, the wind suddenly failed. Had the calm continued till ebb, the ship had probably been lost. But the gale sprang up again in an hour, and carried us into the Downs.

We now began to be a little regular. Our common way of living was this: From four in the morning till five each of us used private prayer. From five to seven we read the Bible together, carefully comparing it (that we might not lean to our own understandings) with the writings of the earliest ages. At seven we breakfasted. At eight were the public prayers. From nine to twelve I usually learned German, and Mr. Delamotte, Greek. My brother wrote sermons, and Mr. Ingham instructed the children. At twelve we met to give an account of one another what we had done since our last meeting, and what we designed to do before our next. About one we dined.

Life on Board

The time from dinner to four we spent in reading to those whom each of us had taken in charge, or in speaking to them

severally, as need required. At four were the evening prayers; when either the second lesson was explained (as it always was in the morning), or the children were catechized and instructed before the congregation. From five to six we again used private prayer. From six to seven I read in our cabin to two or three of the passengers (of whom there were about eighty English on board), and each of my brethren to a few more in theirs.

At seven I joined with the Germans in their public service, while Mr. Ingham was reading between the decks to as many as desired to hear. At eight we met again to exhort and instruct one another. Between nine and ten we went to bed, where neither the roaring of the sea nor the motion of the ship could take away the refreshing sleep which God gave us.

Friday, 31.—We sailed out of the Downs. At eleven at night I was waked by a great noise. I soon found there was no danger. But the bare apprehension of it gave me a lively conviction what manner of men those ought to be who are every moment on the brink of eternity.

Saturday, November 1.—We came to St. Helen's harbor, and the next day into Cowes road. The wind was fair, but we waited for the man-of-war which was to sail with us. This was a happy opportunity of instructing our fellow travelers.

Sunday, 23.—At night I was awakened by the tossing of the ship and roaring of the wind, and plainly showed I was unfit, for I was unwilling, to die.

Wednesday, December 10.—We sailed from Cowes, and in the afternoon passed the Needles. Here the ragged rocks, with the waves dashing and foaming at the foot of them, and the white side of the island rising to such a height, perpendicular from the beach, gave a strong idea of "Him that spanneth the heavens, and holdeth the waters in the hollow of His hand!"

1736. Thursday, January 15.—Complaint being made to Mr. Oglethorpe of the unequal distribution of the water among the passengers, he appointed new officers to take charge of it. At this the old ones and their friends were highly exasperated against us, to whom they imputed the change.

Saturday, 17.—Many people were very impatient at the contrary wind. At seven in the evening they were quieted by a storm.

It rose higher and higher till nine. About nine the sea broke over us from stem to stern; burst through the windows of the state cabin, where three or four of us were, and covered us all over, though a bureau sheltered me from the main shock. About eleven I lay down in the great cabin and in a short time fell asleep, though very uncertain whether I should wake alive and much ashamed of my unwillingness to die. Oh, how pure in heart must he be, who would rejoice to appear before God at a moment's warning! Toward morning, "He rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm" [Matt. 8:26].

Memorable Atlantic Storms

Friday, 23.—In the evening another storm began. In the morning it increased so that they were forced to let the ship drive. I could not but say to myself, "How is it that thou hast no faith?" being still unwilling to die. About one in the afternoon, almost as soon as I had stepped out of the great cabin-door, the sea did not break as usual, but came with a full, smooth tide over the side of the ship. I was vaulted over with water in a moment, and so stunned that I scarcely expected to lift up my head again till the sea should give up her dead. But thanks be to God, I received no hurt at all. About midnight the storm ceased.

Sunday, 25.—At noon our third storm began. At four it was more violent than before. At seven I went to the Germans. I had long before observed the great seriousness of their behavior. Of their humility they had given a continual proof by performing those servile offices for the other passengers, which none of the English would undertake; for which they desired and would receive no pay, saying, "it was good for their proud hearts," and "their loving Saviour had done more for them." And every day had given them an occasion of showing a meekness which no injury could move. If they were pushed, struck, or thrown down, they rose again and went away; but no complaint was found in their mouth. There was now an opportunity of trying whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear, as well as from that of pride, anger and revenge.

In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and

poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sang on. I asked one of them afterward, "Were you not afraid?" He answered, "I thank God, no." I asked, "But were not your women and children afraid?" He replied, mildly, "No; our women and children are not afraid to die."

Friday, 30.—We had another storm, which did us no other harm than splitting the foresail. Our bed being wet, I laid me down on the floor and slept soundly till morning. And, I believe, I shall not find it needful to go to bed (as it is called) any more.

Sunday, February 1.—We spoke with a ship of Carolina; and Wednesday, 4, came within soundings. About noon, the trees were visible from the masts and in the afternoon from the main deck. In the evening lesson were these words: "A great door, and effectual, is opened." Oh, let no one shut it!

Thursday, 5.—Between two and three in the afternoon, God brought us all safe into the Savannah river. We cast anchor near Tybee Island, where the groves of pines, running along the shore, made an agreeable prospect, showing, as it were, the bloom of spring in the depth of winter.

Wesley Arrives in Georgia

Friday, 6.—About eight in the morning, we first set foot on American ground. It was a small uninhabited island, over against Tybee. Mr. Oglethorpe led us to a rising ground where we all kneeled down to give thanks. He then took boat for Savannah. When the rest of the people were come on shore, we called our little flock together to prayers.

Saturday, 7.—Mr. Oglethorpe returned from Savannah with Mr. Spangenberg, one of the pastors of the Germans. I soon found what spirit he was of and asked his advice with regard to my own conduct. He said, "My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it and asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" I paused and said, "I know He is the Saviour of the world." "True," replied

he; “but do you know He has saved you?” I answered, “I hope He has died to save me.” He only added, “Do you know yourself?” I said, “I do.” But I fear they were vain words.

Saturday, 14.—About one, Tomo Chachi, his nephew, Thlee-anouhee, his wife Sinauky, with two more women, and two or three Indian children, came on board. As soon as we came in, they all rose and shook us by the hand; and Tomo Chachi (one Mr. Musgrove interpreted) spoke as follows:

“I am glad you are come. When I was in England, I desired that some would speak the great Word to me and my nation then desired to hear it; but now we are all in confusion. Yet I am glad you are come. I will go up and speak to the wise men of our nation; and I hope they will hear. But we would not be made Christians as the Spaniards make Christians: we would be taught, before we are baptized.”

I answered, “There is but One, He that sitteth in heaven, who is able to teach man wisdom. Though we are come so far, we know not whether He will please to teach you by us or no. If He teaches you, you will learn wisdom, but we can do nothing.” We then withdrew.

Thursday, 19.—My brother and I took boat, and, passing by Savannah, went to pay our first visit in America to the poor heathens.

Begins His Ministry at Savannah

Sunday, March 7.—I entered upon my ministry at Savannah, by preaching on the epistle for the day, being the thirteenth of First Corinthians. In the second lesson (Luke 18) was our Lord’s prediction of the treatment which He Himself (and, consequently, His followers) was to meet with from the world. “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or friends, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

Yet, notwithstanding these declarations of our Lord—notwithstanding my own repeated experience—notwithstanding the experience of all the sincere followers of Christ whom I have ever talked with, read or heard of; nay, and the reason of the thing

evincing to a demonstration that all who love not the light must hate Him who is continually laboring to pour it in upon them; I do here bear witness against myself that when I saw the number of people crowding into the church, the deep attention with which they received the Word, and the seriousness that afterward sat on all their faces; I could scarcely refrain from giving the lie to experience and reason and Scripture all together.

I could hardly believe that the greater, the far greater part of this attentive, serious people would hereafter trample under foot that Word and say all manner of evil falsely of him that spake it.

Monday, 15.—Mr. Quincy going for Carolina, I removed into the minister's house. It is large enough for a larger family than ours and has many conveniences, besides a good garden.

Tuesday, 30.—Mr. Ingham, coming from Frederica, brought me letters, pressing me to go thither. The next day Mr. Delamotte and I began to try whether life might not as well be sustained by one sort as by variety of food. We chose to make the experiment with bread; and were never more vigorous and healthy than while we tasted nothing else.

"I Waked under Water"

Sunday, April 4.—About four in the afternoon I set out for Frederica in a pettiawga—a sort of flat-bottomed barge. The next evening we anchored near Skidoway Island, where the water, at flood, was twelve or fourteen feet deep. I wrapped myself up from head to foot in a large cloak, to keep off the sandflies, and lay down on the quarterdeck. Between one and two I waked under water, being so fast asleep that I did not find where I was till my mouth was full of it. Having left my cloak, I know not how, upon deck, I swam around to the other side of the pettiawga, where a boat was tied, and climbed up by the rope without any hurt, more than wetting my clothes.

Saturday, 17.—Not finding as yet any door open for the pursuing our main design, we considered in what manner we might be most useful to the little flock at Savannah. And we agreed 1) to advise the more serious among them to form themselves into a sort of little society, and to meet once or twice a week, in order to reprove, instruct, and exhort one another; 2) to select out of these a smaller

number for a more intimate union with each other, which might be forwarded, partly by our conversing singly with each and partly by inviting them all together to our house; and this, accordingly, we determined to do every Sunday in the afternoon.

Monday, May 10.—I began visiting my parishioners in order, from house to house; for which I set apart the time when they cannot work because of the heat, namely, from twelve till three in the afternoon.

Thursday, June 17.—An officer of a man-of-war, walking just behind us with two or three of his acquaintance, cursed and swore exceedingly; but upon my reproving him, seemed much moved and gave me many thanks.

Tuesday, 22.—Observing much coldness in M ——'s behavior, I asked him the reason of it. He answered, "I like nothing you do. All your sermons are satires upon particular persons, therefore I will never hear you more; and all the people are of my mind; for we won't hear ourselves abused.

"Besides, they say, they are Protestants. But as for you, they cannot tell what religion you are of. They never heard of such a religion before. They do not know what to make of it. And then your private behavior: all the quarrels that have been here since you came, have been 'long of you. Indeed there is neither man nor woman in the town who minds a word you say. And so you may preach long enough; but nobody will come to hear you."

He was too warm for hearing an answer. So I had nothing to do but to thank him for his openness and walk away.

Talks to the Indians

Wednesday, 30.—I hoped a door was opened for going up immediately to the Choctaws, the least polished, that is, the least corrupted, of all the Indian nations. But upon my informing Mr. Oglethorpe of our design, he objected, not only the danger of being intercepted or killed by the French there; but much more, the inexpediency of leaving Savannah destitute of a minister. These objections I related to our brethren in the evening, who were all of opinion, "We ought not to go yet."

Thursday, July 1.—The Indians had an audience; and another on Saturday, when Chicali, their head man, dined with Mr.

Oglethorpe. After dinner, I asked the grey-headed old man what he thought he was made for. He said, "He that is above knows what He made us for. We know nothing. We are in the dark. But white men know much. And yet white men build great houses, as if they were to live forever. But white men cannot live forever. In a little time, white men will be dust as well as I." I told him, "If red men will learn the Good Book, they may know as much as white men. But neither we nor you can understand that Book unless we are taught by Him that is above: and He will not teach unless you avoid what you already know is not good." He answered, "I believe that. He will not teach us while our hearts are not white. And our men do what they know is not good: they kill their own children. And our women do what they know is not good: they kill the child before it is born. Therefore He that is above does not send us the Good Book."

Monday, 26.—My brother and I set out for Charleston, in order to his embarking for England; but the wind being contrary, we did not reach Port Royal, forty miles from Savannah, till Wednesday evening. The next morning we left it. But the wind was so high in the afternoon, as we were crossing the neck of St. Helena's sound, that our oldest sailor cried out, "Now every-one must take care for himself." I told him, "God will take care for us all." Almost as soon as the words were spoken, the mast fell. I kept on the edge of the boat, to be clear of her when she sank (which we expected every moment), though with little prospect of swimming ashore against such a wind and sea. But "How is it that thou hadst no faith?" The moment the mast fell, two men caught it and pulled it into the boat; the other three rowed with all their might, and "God gave command to the wind and seas"; so that in an hour we were safe on land.

Fearless of Rains and Dews

Monday, August 2.—I set out for the Lieutenant Governor's seat, about thirty miles from Charleston, to deliver Mr. Oglethorpe's letters. It stands very pleasantly on a little hill with a vale on either side, in one of which is a thick wood; the other is planted with rice and Indian corn. I designed to have gone back by Mr. Skeen's, who has about fifty Christian negroes.

But my horse tiring, I was obliged to return the straight way to Charleston.

I had sent the boat we came in back to Savannah, expecting a passage thither myself in Colonel Bull's. His not going so soon, I went to Ashley Ferry on Thursday, intending to walk to Port Royal. But Mr. Belinger not only provided me a horse, but rode with me himself ten miles, and sent his son with me to Cumbee Ferry, twenty miles farther; whence, having hired horses and a guide, I came to Beaufort (or Port Royal) the next evening. We took boat in the morning; but, the wind being contrary and very high, did not reach Savannah till Sunday, in the afternoon.

Finding Mr. Oglethorpe was gone, I stayed only a day at Savannah; and leaving Mr. Ingham and Delamotte there, set out on Tuesday morning for Frederica. In walking to Thunderbolt I was in so heavy a shower that all my clothes were as wet as if I had gone through the river. On which occasion I cannot but observe that vulgar error concerning the hurtfulness of the rains and dews of America. I have been thoroughly wet with these rains more than once, yet without any harm at all. And I have lain many nights in the open air and received all the dews that fell; and so, I believe, might anyone, if his constitution was not impaired by the softness of a genteel education.

Desires to Go Among the Indians

Tuesday, November 23.—Mr. Oglethorpe sailed for England, leaving Mr. Ingham, Mr. Delamotte, and me at Savannah, but with less prospect of preaching to the Indians than we had the first day we set foot in America. Whenever I mentioned it, it was immediately replied, "You cannot leave Savannah without a minister."

To this indeed my plain answer was, "I know not that I am under any obligation to the contrary. I never promised to stay here one month. I openly declared both before, at, and ever since, my coming hither that I neither would nor could take charge of the English any longer than till I could go among the Indians." If it was said, "But did not the trustees of Georgia appoint you to be minister of Savannah?" I replied, "They did; but it was not done by my solicitation: it was done without either my desire or

knowledge. Therefore I cannot conceive that appointment to lay me under any obligation of continuing there any longer than till a door is opened to the heathens; and this I expressly declared at the time I consented to accept of that appointment."

But though I had no other obligation not to leave Savannah now, yet that of love, I could not break through: I could not resist the importunate request of the more serious parishioners, "to watch over their souls yet a little longer, till someone came who might supply my place." And this I the more willingly did, because the time was not come to preach the gospel of peace to the heathens, all their nations being in a ferment; and Paustoobee and Mingo Mattaw having told me, in terms, in my own house, "Now our enemies are all about us, and we can do nothing but fight; but if the beloved ones should ever give us to be at peace, then we would hear the great Word."

Wednesday, December 23.—Mr. Delamotte and I, with a guide, set out to walk to the Cowpen. When we had walked two or three hours, our guide told us plainly he did not know where we were. However, believing it could not be far off, we thought it best to go on. In an hour or two we came to a cypress swamp, which lay directly across our way; there was not time to walk back to Savannah before night, so we walked through it, the water being about breast high.

By the time we had gone a mile beyond it, we were out of all path; and it being now past sunset, we sat down, intending to make a fire and to stay there till morning; but finding our tinder wet, we were at a stand. I advised to walk on still; but my companions, being faint and weary, were for lying down, which we accordingly did about six o'clock; the ground was as wet as our clothes, which, it being a sharp frost, were soon frozen together; however, I slept till six in the morning. There fell a heavy dew in the night which covered us over as white as snow. Within an hour after sunrise, we came to a plantation; and in the evening, without any hurt, to Savannah.