The Autobiography of
the Reverend John Young, 1747-1837

edited by David L. Steele

John Young was born in Warwick County, Virginia, April 29, 1747. In 1775 he moved to Halifax County, North Carolina, during a time in which a great revival was taking place in that area. He had his first contact with Methodism in 1777 when he heard John King preach, and in June 1778, he joined the Methodist society. He was soon made a class leader, but it was not until March of 1786 that he was convinced of his own salvation. In August, 1786, he had a call to preach and in November of that year he was licensed to preach. In 1788 he moved to Franklin County, North Carolina, where he lived until his death in 1837.

Young served as a local preacher in the Roanoke Circuit while living in Halifax County and continued to serve as a local preacher in the Tar River Circuit after moving to Franklin County. He lived near Plank Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church and much of his work was connected with that church. He was ordained a deacon in 1792 by Francis Asbury, and in 1819 he was ordained an elder by Robert R. Roberts.

A significant collection of his papers survives, including this autobiography, a journal that covers the years 1814 to 1837, several letters, Young’s ordination certificates, and sermon materials.

It should be noted that the area in which Young lived was a “hotbed” of Methodism. On July 10, 1780, Asbury preached at Roger Jones’, and this is connected with the birth of the first society in that area. Young reports in his journal that Jones was the person who introduced Methodism to that neighborhood and that a society began to meet in Jones’ house. This society grew to be Plank Chapel M. E. Church, which is still a strong congregation of the United Methodist Church. John King was a local preacher in Louisburg, which is about twelve miles from Plank Chapel. The home of Green Hill, one mile north of Louisburg, was

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1 W. L. Grissom, History of Methodism in North Carolina. Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1905, p. 44.
2 Young moved to a place known as Bobbitt, east of Kittrell, N. C., which is now in southern Vance County.
3 The date of his death is recorded in the Young family Bible.
5 Young’s journal, July 11, 1819.
a regular stopping place for Asbury and the site of three early conferences.7 (The Green Hill house is one of the officially rec­ognized historic shrines of the United Methodist Church.) So this document comes from an important area of early American Method­odism.

The autobiography (which includes a doctrinal statement) was probably written in the latter part of 1818. At the end of the autobiography Young states that he is in his seventy-second year. This would indicate an 1819 dating. But immediately following on that page is a journal entry for December 20, 1818. This strongly suggests that the autobiography had to have been completed before this date. There is another good internal dating. Young tells us that he began the practice of family prayer soon after he joined the Methodist society in 1778. Then he says that it has been forty years since he began this practice. This would also indicate a dating of 1818.

The autobiography was probably intended to complete the picture of Young's life given by his journal. The first volume of the journal covers the period July 10, 1814 to December 6, 1818. Then the autobiography was written, and the journal resumes with an entry for December 20, 1818, on the same page as the end of the auto­biography. Young might have been prompted to write the autobi­ography, with its doctrinal statement, because of attacks made on his preaching by members of Plank Chapel. His journal for this period reveals that several people objected strongly to Young's insistence on the necessity of sanctification. As one reads the last part of the autobiography, one senses Young's desire for a vindica­tion of his preaching. Perhaps the autobiography was a way for Young to think through his theological position while facing con­troversy.

We should not separate this work into an autobiography and a separate doctrinal statement. For John Young, no account of his life would be complete without a summary of the doctrine which he preached and by which he lived. He does not, in fact, divide the work. It is clear that the whole work is his "imperfect history" of his past life.

The work is valuable in that it gives us a picture of the beliefs of an early Methodist preacher in North Carolina. We can see the heritage of Methodism as it was transmitted to one area at one point in time, and can know something of what was actually being preached in Methodist Episcopal churches in North Carolina in

the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth.

We can also have an intimate encounter with a man of deep faith across the gulf of two centuries, and can see something of his character, spiritual growth, personal trials, and sources of strength.

In this manuscript we find a few pieces of historical data. We find the names of early Methodist ministers, including some of the important figures in the history of the Methodist Church. Perhaps these scattered references to names, dates, and places could be of use to some historian. But the main value of this manuscript lies in its picture of the man John Young and his faith.

Editorial Notes

This edition of John Young's autobiography is part of a larger project. This editor hopes to complete the editing of all of the John Young papers by 1980, the bicentennial of Plank Chapel United Methodist Church. Some work has already been done on the journal, and because of a desire for consistency some of the material in the journal has influenced the editing of the autobiography.

The editor's purpose in working with the Young papers is to make the material readily available to the lay reader. We also hope to maintain a level of quality which will make our work acceptable to the serious scholar. All attempts have been made to preserve the original meaning and style of the manuscript while at the same time making it more readable for those unfamiliar with the peculiarities of eighteenth century English and John Young's style.

The major addition to the text was, of course, punctuation. John Young used very few punctuation marks. He wrote in a discursive style, connecting thought after thought with conjunctions. He rarely used end marks. His normal end mark was the comma, and he occasionally used a period or dash. A major problem was breaking down passages where numerous independent clauses had been strung together. A logical dividing point was found, and an end mark and capital letter were added. Young capitalized nouns irregularly, and the capitalization did not appear to be for emphasis. These capitals were dropped.

Spelling changes involved providing modern spellings for archaic ones and correcting misspelled words. Young did not receive much formal education and was really a self-educated man. He seemed to rely on phonetic spelling, and this explains many of his errors. Thus "moral" is spelled "morrel," and "family" becomes "famely."

Several abbreviations were extended. Young abbreviated
“brother” as “Bo.,” and this abbreviation was extended. The ampersand, “&,” was frequently used, and this symbol was replaced with the word “and.” With the exception of biblical references, all numbers and numerical abbreviations are given as they are found in the manuscript.

Replacing Young's biblical notations with modern usage is not possible, for he will give references such as, “St. John 5 C. & part of the 6 V.” A standard approach has been adopted with an eye toward maintaining a degree of smoothness in the wording. The example above becomes, “St. John, 5th chapter and part of the 6th verse.” “Jeremiah 8 C & 22 V” becomes “Jeremiah, 8th chapter and 22nd verse.” The major features of this approach are adding punctuation, adding the numerical abbreviations (such as “th” and “nd”) where Young does not use them himself, and extending the abbreviations for “chapter” and “verse.” This procedure allows consistency while avoiding awkwardness.

Grammatical constructions were not changed to conform to modern usage. This preserves something of the flavor of the original text. Occasionally words are added within brackets to fill logical gaps. These additions were not intended to be interpretive. They were supplied to overcome awkward breaks in the reading of the text.

The Autobiography

A brief and very imperfect history of my past life drew up for my own satisfaction. I may truly say with the patriarch of old, “Few and evil hath been my days.”

I was born the 29th of April, old style 1747, in the State of Virginia, Warwick County, of what was then called moral parents, though I knew but little or nothing of my mother; she died when I was about a year old, as I was informed. My father was very tender of me from my childhood, as I was left of my mother when I was so young, but he was strict with me as well as tender in training me up, for he was a man that never used what the world call bad language, such as blaspheming or lying, so he suffered it not in his family if he knew [of] it. He was a hard laboring man and wrought at the house and shop joiners trade and lived well as to this world, for he was under a good corrector in his neighborhood. He was born of Quaker parents and so was not baptized until

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8 Genesis 47:9
9 In 1752 Great Britain began using the Gregorian calendar. The change was effected by designating the day following September 2 as September 14. Young's birthday, April 29 on the old style calendar, became May 10 on the Gregorian calendar. He did celebrate his birthday on May 10.
about fourteen years of age, when he was bound apprentice. His master's wife, I suppose, was a woman that had some serious thought about religion, and as he told, she had him baptised. And as long as I can remember he was steady to Church and sacrament and lived a very sober, orderly life. Sometimes he would have his family together to learn the Church Catechism. And he early sent me to school and continued me at school until I made some tolerable proficiency in learning to read, write, and some advancement in arithmetic. And if my master had been a better scholar I should have had some more learning, for I went as long as he could learn me any thing. While I was at school my old loving father would put the question to me what would I choose to follow: would I be a parson or a doctor of physic or a captain of a ship—as I was raised where I was acquainted with sea vessels? When I left school my father thought to put me in a store and agreed with a merchant to take me, and I was to go at a certain time. But before the time commenced my father heard that he kept a tavern also, and he then would not let me go—so careful was my father of my morals at that dark age in which he lived. O that professors of religion in this glorious day of gospel light were as careful of their dear children! But it is to be lamented that it is not so, no not with one perhaps in a hundred that profess to have an experience of grace. At that time of ignorance the people, a goodly number of them, were more moral than they are now. They were remarkable kind neighbors and friendly. If a neighbor needed help to do any business, they were not called upon to pay it again as they are now. There was no disorder at Church, as is now at the place of divine worship. Every one that went to Church went in and joined in the worship as well as I suppose they knew. When I was about fifteen years of age, I got me a Common Prayer Book, which was then common for all the congregation to have. I lived with my father until I was upwards of sixteen years of age. I never saw him intoxicated with spirits nor never heard him swear an oath as I remember. And I believe he was as just and as honest a man as ever I was acquainted with and as punctual to his word of promise. Also a good neighbor, for he would never deny a favor if in his power. And O what reason have I to be thankful to the Lord for such a father, for his example I have not forgot to this day! And I hope to meet him in glory, though it appeared he knew nothing of being converted or born again. But as St. Peter observed to Cornelius, "I perceive that God is no respect[er] of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted
with him,” 10 and it surely must be according to the light they have. When upwards of sixteen I was bound to a man to learn the house carpenter’s trade. Though my tender father gave me my choice, I chose to labor with my hands, and a hard servitude I had for about four years and half. Previous to this I had not the example of swearing before me, and as such I never had sworn an oath. But the man that I was bound to was a very blaspheming man, even when not provoked, so I now had the example always before me. But I thank the Lord it had no influence on me. So by grace I see that Solomon’s observation 11 is true in a good degree, for I never did use wicked conversation in my life, and it was always distressing to me to hear it from any person, though I was wicked enough in other respects: reveling, gambling, racing, cockfighting I delighted much in. And as I worked about in town and country, I had the example of vice always before me, but no example of virtue, for strictly speaking there was no real virtue to be seen or heard. Though all went to Church and a good many to the Lord’s table, also all would go to the gaming table and to the ballroom, racefield, etc. And they thought all was well, for the priest would do so too; so there was, as the prophet observed, like people and like priest. 12 When my apprenticeship was up or ended at the age of twenty-one, I worked with my master almost a year as a journeyman, and made some provision for settling in the world, and then took me a companion whom I lived agreeable with for a number of years. 13 But I appeared to be, as I thought, a little more settled and thoughtful, and I began to think I must go to the Lord’s table as my aged father had done for a number of years; but now he is no more, but thought I must follow his example in this as well as many other things. In one instance in particular he was as steady to reading the scriptures daily as he was to eating; which perhaps was one reason why I delighted in reading—which I did from my going to school—especially the historical parts of the Old Testament, and used to converse on it to a black man of my father’s, and rehearse to him such passages as I could remember. But I understood by the prayer book that it was the parson’s duty to examine every one before he admitted them to the table. This I did not like, but I ventured to the table. And he never

11 Perhaps this is a reference to a Proverb such as 22:6.
12 Hosea 4:9.
13 From the family Bible we know that Young’s first wife was named Mary (September 4, 1746-October 18, 1813). Apparently they were married in Warwick Co., Va., in 1769.
said a word to me, so I thought he was wanting in his duty. I then concluded I was very good. Although I was prayerless both in private and family, I endeavored to read prayers when at Church [; that] was all the prayer that I used. About this time I had a very severe affliction that it was thought I should die, but I was altogether insensible of my danger as to my eternal state. O the ignorance that I was in, and in comparison as stupid as the brute beast! My dear wife had more thought than I had at that time and, as she told me afterwards, was very uneasy on my account. The parson came to see me, but no prayer, nor a word about my soul, no more than if I had none. He brought or sent me a little wine that was left at the sacrament, for that judged not lawful [for anyone to drink, but] only for the afflicted or for the sacrament at some future time. Now it was that the war between Britain and America took place and was very distressing when I lived on the James River and not far from Hampton that I was often called out on service, viz., in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five. And after I recovered from my affliction, in December 1775 I moved to North Carolina; Halifax County. Here I heard the Baptist[s] preach, which appeared strange to me in two ways. First, they preached extemporally, which I thought impossible, not being used to that way of preaching, for all that I had formerly heard was only to read a sermon. The doctrine was also strange, that I never heard before, viz., unconditional election and reprobation, and final perseverance of the saints. They insisted on conversion and the new birth, that I never, I believe, heard before. This made me think a little or something more about religion than I ever did before, so that I thought more about searching the scriptures than I had done before, to see if these things were so. But the more I read the scripture, the more I disliked the doctrine, for if I did believe any thing of the scripture, I believed that there was a possibility for all men to be saved, as the Scripture informed that God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved\textsuperscript{14} and that he was the savior of all men and also that Christ tasted death for every man.\textsuperscript{15} So I could not receive the doctrine. In the former part of the [year] 1777 a Methodist preacher came through the neighborhood. I went to hear him out of mere curiosity, as I had heard or seen none before. His name was John King from Eng-

\textsuperscript{14} John 3:17.
\textsuperscript{15} Hebrews 2:9.
land. His text was Jeremiah, 8th chapter & 22nd verse. It reads as follows, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" In discoursing from the words he showed that the balm represented the blood of Christ, and the physician to be Christ, and that his blood was shed for the sins of the whole world, and that there was salvation for all, Gilead the Church or place where the balmy blood of Christ might be found to heal the wounds or hurt that sin had made in the souls of fallen man. Then he showed the reason why they were not healed. Though many went to Gilead in our day, viz., the Church, but when they got there they forgot their errand and all their inquiry was about how pork and corn sold, etc. But this discourse had a lasting impression on my mind that never wore off to this day; for it opened the way and manner and plan of salvation to me that I never saw before, and stripped me of all my boasted goodness and going to Church and sacrament for some years past, and was the doctrine that I always believed—if I had any faith in any doctrine more than another. The next time he came a Mr. Long was with him, and I believed a man of God if ever I saw one. I had the satisfaction of riding in company with him some miles, and he was free in conversing with me and informing me of the people called Methodists and their doctrine, which was so pleasing to me and agreeable to what little faith I had and knowledge of the scripture I got my consent so far that I resolved if ever I had an opportunity I would join with them and with them live and die and go to heaven.

And in January, 1778, I had the offer to join, and I willingly embraced the opportunity with about ten or twelve more. But all this time I was a stranger to prayer both in my family and closet, though I had often thought about it. But I never was in a family in my life where family worship was performed, only (as above hinted) my father would have his family together to learn them the Church catechism. The first thing I believe that ever made any impression on my mind was robbing a bluebird’s nest when I was six or seven years of age. The next day I was sick and lay on a pallet where I saw the bird on a tree in the yard making, as I thought, her moan on the account of what I had

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16 John King (1746-95) was converted by Wesley’s preaching and became a fervent Methodist. He came to America in 1770 to assist Boardman, Pilmore, and Williams. In 1777 King was stationed in North Carolina. He located near Louisburg, N. C., and practiced medicine. (Bucke, op. cit., pp. 93-94.)

17 The manuscript reads "concent."

18 The manuscript reads "mone."
done. And I thought and was afraid something would befall me, but I knew not what. But I thought I would never do the like, and have been very cautious of such things until now. And I think it wrong for parents to suffer their children to do so. But now I had joined the Methodist Society and preacher, which was Brother John King from England, and he gave me the general rules of the said society, and I saw with the rest that they contained was family prayer as well as private. It was now thought I was under some more obligation than before to pray both in family and in private. And the first time I bowed in private was in the night in a very dark room, and I had not been but a minute or two on my knees before it was suggested to my mind that the devil was there, and I was so affrighted that I immediately arose from my knees and for that time gave up prayer. And to take up the cross of family prayer appeared very heavy. I was afraid to name it to my wife, fearing she would oppose me, but, glory to God, it was otherwise, for she was well pleased to join me in so doing. But yet the cross was so heavy that I could only read a form and hardly that for trembling. But by the grace of God the cross soon became light—not only light, but a satisfaction—so that to this day I have not been weary of family prayer when I was able to perform the same. Though it hath been now forty years since I first prayed in my family, I never regarded company being at my house. I lived some years on a very public road and had travelers, both rich and poor, frequently with me of nights. My custom was with my guests on this wise: when prayer time came on I would tell them my rule was to pray with my family and if they would join me, well, and if not, there was a bed ready for them. But I don't remember of anyone person, rich or poor, refusing to join in prayer. And as to private prayer, as before hinted, I was never scared by the devil from prayer after that time, but frequently when I have been at prayer, both in or with my family and in private, the devil hath appeared to my imagination in the form of a great monster something like a great black bull, so that I have sometimes been constrained to open my eyes to see if it was not so. But, glory be to the Lord, by his grace he helped me and to gain a little more strength, so it was not long before I threwed away my form of prayer and began to pray extempore. And as I was put class leader soon after I joined society, I was called upon to use what little gifts I had. And it proved a blessing to me, so that I by grace waxed more bold and began to hold public meetings. And frequently I had tolerable congregations on the Lord's day, and I would read the Church service and then read a sermon wrote by some author.
But all this time I knew not that I was born again or my sins forgiven, so that I was not a son of God by adoption, but only a servant. But I endeavoured to use all the means of grace such as prayer and fasting every Friday; I searched the Scriptures and asked to hear it preached at all opportunities. But alas all this time I knew nothing of the power of religion; I only had the form and that in part. And I am awfully afraid that numbers that make a profession of religion are destitute of the power thereof and are deceived. But I began to consider more solemnly on what religion was in the power thereof. And I was convinced that I had it not and was more than ever uneasy on account thereof, thinking I was deceiving myself and others, for I passed for a Christian among my neighbors. This caused me to be more than ever in earnest with the Lord, especially in private prayer, fearing I passed in the world for a good man and at last [would] die and go to hell. It was on a sabbath at a Brother Whitaker’s where Brother O’Kelly preached and [led] class meeting [that] I felt more than I ever had done before, and I thought my soul was born again. But I was not as well satisfied as I wanted to be at times, for I wanted the witness of the Spirit. But I was encouraged, hoping and waiting for a deeper work of grace. In this state I continued some time until February, 1786; the Lord laid the rod of affliction on my body, and death stared me, as it were, in the face. And I shrank from it, being afraid I was not quite qualified for that pure state above, where a pure and holy God dwells and nothing unclean or unholy can dwell. I entreated the Lord to spare my life, and I promised on condition that my life was spared that I would be more devoted to the Lord than I ever had been before. The Lord was entreated; my life was spared that time. But, alas, (what a poor creature is fallen man!) my promise was forgot, and I fell into my old form of duty without any or very little of the power of religion. I kept up regular family prayer, with fasting, reading the scriptures and hearing

\[16\] The manuscript reads “ased.”

\[20\] Later references to O’Kelly in the journal make it clear that this is James O’Kelly. O’Kelly was a Methodist preacher who worked extensively in southern Virginia and North Carolina. In 1779 a group of Methodist preachers meeting at Broken Back Church in Fluvanna County, Virginia, decided to break with the Methodist leadership and take on the authority to administer the sacraments. James O’Kelly was present at this conference. This breach was gradually healed, but James O’Kelly was later associated with another break in Methodism. At the General Conference of 1792, O’Kelly led an attempt to limit the power of the Bishop to appoint the preachers. When this attempt failed O’Kelly and his supporters withdrew, and this had a negative impact on Methodist membership in Virginia and North Carolina. (See Bucke, op. cit., Vol. 1; and W. E. MacClenny, The Life of Rev. James O’Kelly. Raleigh, 1910.)
them preached, and almost every Sabbath reading sermon and holding meetings—not only class meeting, but public meeting. And sometimes large congregations would attend, especially when I buried the dead. I enjoyed health about a month; then the Lord laid his rod on me again. O man is like stubborn sons that must have the rod over and over again before they will submit! I was at the sale of a dead man's property on a Friday, this in March, 1786, and was taken with an ague. I returned home, but O how bad I felt when I reflected that I had not complied with my vows to the Lord! And now I thought I should surely die. And I still felt and was sensible that I was not in possession of that holiness without [which] I could not see the Lord in peace and live in glory. And what could I now do? I was cut off from self entirely and had not one plea for my life. I saw plainly if the Lord sent me to hell, I dared to say not a word, for I was sensible I deserved it; but, O Lord, if thou saved me, it is of thy great mercy through a dear saviour who died on the cross for sinners. It was then, and not until then, that I felt the love of God shed abroad in my poor sin-sick soul. And I knew my sins forgiven; my mourning was turned into joy; and it appeared like I had got into a new world. The house and every thing in it appeared new to me. And sleep departed from me, and I believe I did not sleep a minute for forty-eight hours. My wife asked me why I did not sleep. I told her I had forgot how to sleep, and I wanted to go to Glory. And I expected every hour to go. I had no more fear of death than I had of going to bed when I was well to take rest of a night. And I earnestly besought the Lord to take me, but in so doing I suppose I was wrong. As I lay in my bed expecting every hour to go to heaven, it appeared that I was by a kind of vision permitted to see Glory, but it was too dazzling for mortal to behold. I thought I looked through a loophole that was in my hat. It also appeared to me something like a lottery whether I was to die or get well. And I thought it turned that I was to recover, and my spirits sunk, for I thought I was done with all below the skies. It also appeared like a ship that had been a long time beating on the stormy ocean, and had almost got into a safe harbor, and then beat back in the storm again. I suppose I felt somewhat like the departed saints with regard to natural affection. For I thought I loved my wife and children equal to any man, but it appeared that it was gone, so that I thought no more of leaving of them than if I had them not. For previous to this I had settled my temporal affairs, and thought I had nothing more to do in this world, and so was weaned from all below. One of my wife's brothers lived with me as an apprentice, a very pious
youth, somewhat gifted in prayer; and he held family duty while I was sick. I thought he sung and prayed equal to any person. On Friday, the eighth day after I was taken sick, I began to mend and had got into the sweetest sleep I thought I ever was in in my life and was awakened out of it by my apprentice, who came to know how he was to go on with his work, for I was at that time building a house in the neighborhood. I thought I was asleep in the arms of Jesus. In that affliction I believe I received that love of God that casteth out all slavish or tormenting fear of death, hell, and eternity. And I adore the blessed Lord and Saviour for perceiving [preventing?] grace although I have not lived as I might have done or ought to have done. But I have not had much of the fear of death to the present time. But I hope I have somewhat advanced in the divine life. When I got about I felt so much the presence of the Lord that I felt transported for some time. I could now truly say that I loved the Lord because he first loved me, and I felt a love to all mankind; [so] that it pressed on my mind more and more that I must preach the gospel of that Jesus that had done so much for unworthy me. But I thought, how could such a weak and ignorant creature as I was preach the gospel? I was by nature very bashful—so much so that I thought I could not stand before a congregation and read a chapter—and how could I think it possible that I could preach? But I continued to hold meeting on the Sabbath and read sermons for some time after this. Then after a while I would read a chapter and expound from it and have some particular verse in view that I would try to enlarge. On one Sunday I had a meeting at home and read the 21st chapter of Job and enlarged on these words, "Suffer me to speak and after that I have spoken mock on." 21 A man was present of the Baptist persuasion [and] went and reported I had been preaching. Another man told him not. Depend on it, he replied, if I did not preach I came very near. So by the grace of God I went on in my weak and ignorant manner until the 14th day of August; on Monday morning as I was standing by my work bench in my shop I heard an inward voice, as though it had been human and vocal, speak, "Preach the word." I did not recollect where it was written, but I went immediately to my book and found it. 22 I then concluded it was from the Lord, and that I should preach. Accordingly I went to my appointment the next Lord's day at a Mr. Dew's, about ten miles from home, and laid aside my form, and took the words of [what] I thought was a call from God, and endeavoured [to] preach Jesus and him cruci-

21 Job 21:3.
22 2 Timothy 4:2.
fied unto the people; and endeavoured to exercise my small gifts until November 5 day, following,\textsuperscript{23} at a Q[quarterly] meeting held at Samson’s Meeting House\textsuperscript{24} by Brother Ivey, the presiding elder, and Brother Bowen,\textsuperscript{25} who—I suppose—thought I was called to preach and therefore gave me license so to do. Now my wicked neighbors began to persecute me on the account, for the captain of the common militia informed me that by the law I was free from bearing arms and mustering, as the phrase is. He, though a wicked man, was friendly to religion and very friendly neighbors. So the next court martial I went and presented my license and was cleared from muster, and my wicked neighbors envied me on the account. But I waxed bold and preached to them the way of salvation in my small circuit, that extended about ten or twelve miles around for about two years, and I hope not altogether in vain. The preachers know not what good they do until we get to heaven and meet those precious souls that we have been the instruments of the Lord of their conversion. To instance in some particulars that have come to my knowledge: some years after I moved from Halifax County, where I first labored in the Lord’s vineyard, there came a preacher in the circuit that claimed me for his spiritual father in the gospel; after this I heard by a preacher from Georgia\textsuperscript{26} of a very pious woman that moved from the neighborhood where I lived that also claimed me as her father in the gospel; and several since that I have heard of, that before I knew nothing of. So it is encouragement to labor on and leave the event to the Lord who alone can bless his own word.

I had lived in Roanoke Circuit on Roanoke River, where it was very sickly, from the year 1775 to 1788, but did not enjoy my health of body long at a time, [so] that I was hardly able to work with my hands or in the Lord’s vineyard. And I then judged it would be for the glory of God, and best for my health of body, and best for my family, to move. So I left the neighborhood and a few precious souls that I loved dearly. But if I had stayed with them I thought I could not [have] lived long to be any benefit to them. So moved to Franklin County, and I now was in Tar River Circuit. The time of my moving was in the [year] 1788.

\textsuperscript{23} He seems to mean the fifth day of the following November, November 5, 1786.
\textsuperscript{24} Samson’s Meeting House in Halifax Co. was later a headquarters for the Union societies which sought to reform Methodist polity in the 1820’s. (See Bucke, \textit{Op. Cit.}, pp. 435-452.)
\textsuperscript{25} The Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1786 show that Richard Ivy was stationed as the presiding elder of the New Hope, Tar River, Roanoke, and Caswell circuits and that Thomas Bowen was appointed to the Roanoke circuit.
\textsuperscript{26} The manuscript reads “George.”
Previous to this I was class leader almost from my first joining the people called Methodist. I now thought to get clear of the cross, but it was not so, for the preacher of the circuit—when he left the circuit without knowing me or even seeing me—put me leader over the small society in the neighborhood where I moved to. There was about 10 or 12 in the class, and my wife, daughter, and myself was three of the little class. There was another local preacher that had moved in the same neighborhood or near enough to preach with me and in another class who met in a class, but all met at one preaching place. And we were as true yoke fellow in the gospel and labored together. And our labors was abundantly blessed to the neighborhood, [so] that in a few months the little class increased to 40 or 50. The traveling preachers gave me the liberty to receive members in society, and one Sabbath I joined 13, on another Sabbath 10 or 12. And the work of the Lord prospered. And I was invited to other places to preach the Gospel of my Saviour. I was invited by an old backslider to preach at his house after he heard me preach once or twice. And he joined in class again and professed to have his backsliding healed. And a society of 70 or 80 was raised in the neighborhood. But Brother Carlsson, who had the charge of them, moved away, and a great many of them fell away. Some moved away, and others joined other classes, and the class at that place was broke up. Brother Carlsson was a good and useful man, but no great preacher, but his labors was a good deal blest. He confessed he was not as patient under affliction as he wished to be. And I heard that his desire and prayer to the Lord was for a sudden death, fearing he should not be patient enough under affliction. And the Lord heard and answered his prayer, and he was killed by lightning in his shop, for his occupation was a blacksmith. And it was at the anvil he was struck dead. It was observed by his wife, that morning he appeared to be more than common. drawn out in family prayer. I was also invited down on Sandy Creek to preach at several houses, but at length a Mr. Houze27 insisted that I should take his house for a stated preaching place. I told him that if any should get awakened I should want to raise a society and the privilege of a room in his house for class meeting. He readily granted me the privilege, and I preached there for some time and joined 10 or 12 in society. But after a while he got tired

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27 The tax rolls for Warren Co. in 1781 show that a William House lived in this area with taxable property worth 7,662 pounds. This might be the appropriate figure for the mill which Young says "Houze" owned (see below). (See Manly Wade Wellman, The County of Warren North Carolina 1586-1917. Chapel Hill, 1959, pp. 56 and 235.)
of preaching, as I thought, and did not behave as well as formerly. As I went one Sabbath to preach at his house, I crossed a creek below his mill, and it was grinding though the water was very low. When I got to the house there was a large congregation met—some about half drunk and as stupid as the ox by setting up all the night before gambling, a horse race being in the neighborhood the day before. I felt awful. I screamed like a lost sheep alone amidst wolves, not knowing that I had a person to help me. I retired in the woods alone, and poured out my soul to the Lord, and craved assistance from him that was able to save all that put their trust in him. I found help, and took courage, and went to the house, and took this text—Isaiah, 3rd chapter and 10-11th verses. And I did not fear the face of man. I was informed afterwards that the man of the house, whom was out, rose from his seat to come in and drag me out but was prevented by some that was without with him. I gave out preaching to be there that day two weeks by Brother Carloss, but I thought not to go any more my self. And I informed Brother Carloss not to appoint for me anymore, but the man of the house insisted I should come again (he was a backsliding Presbyterian), so I went once more. And when I got there, the said Mr. Houze was not at home. And it was judged he went from home on purpose and sent a very lusty fighting man to beat me. The said man behaved very rudely with some—he being, perhaps, half drunk. And I, not knowing any thing of the plot, reproved him very sharply. But power belongeth to God; he, the said man, opened not his mouth. And it was thought by some that was without that a black man would have flogged him if it had not been prevented. When I had finished my discourse, I took leave of them. A Mr. Allen stepped up and invited [me] to preach at his house and assured me he would defend the gospel under his roof. While I stayed in the house, said man—that was judged came to beat me—came in and looked very hard at me and went out (there being a very stout man in the house with me that was a friend to me) and stayed some time at the gate waiting for me—he was heard to say—to get a lick at me. The man that invited me to preach at his house had previous got awakened under my preaching. And I gave it up to the traveling preachers, and it prospered a while. But the[n] Brother Allen moved away, and it was broken up and preaching taken from the neighborhood. And the place is so hardened in sin that no kind of preaching or preacher can have any encouragement. There is at this time a small society in the neighborhood belonging to Mr. O'Kelly. Once a Baptist attacked me after I was done preaching because I preached against their prin-
ciples. And the congregation thought he would whip me, but he did not. Another time at Plank Chapel some of the baser sort had plotted to beat me, but their plot was overheard by a brother, and [he] informed a magistrate of it, and he stayed until they went away. So through the mercy of God I also escaped a flogging that time. One night I was preaching in my own neighborhood, and there was a great shout, and the devil got mad. And an old man rose from his seat and turned into bawling as loud as he could and came to me. I expected a blow, but he only gave me a hunch with elbow as he passed by and exclaimed aloud that the more the people bellowed,28 the more I encouraged them. I called aloud, “Let us go to prayer,” and then it was like pouring oil on a flame. After meeting break I went to the room door where the poor old sinner was sitting and expostulated with him. But he was very calm, and the next Sabbath came to my house to hear me preach and behaved well—as he also did, I believe, as long as he lived. As I did not keep any journal at that time I can only take notice of a few circumstances that occurs to my mind. Again I preached about twelve miles from home on a funeral occasion. And a very awful thunder cloud arose while I was preaching. Two woman arose from their seats and came and stood close by me. I mention this to show the folly of mankind, as they thought a mortal like themselves could preserve them from the power of the Almighty. In the year 1813 it pleased the Lord to take my companion from me, I hope to himself, after we had lived in love and union as man and wife ought to live. For we had one bed, one table, one purse, and there was no secrets between us, so we also had one mind. And this was for the term of forty-four years, five months, and five days. As her affliction and death was somewhat singular, I shall mention a few circumstances of her sickness and death. She was for a long time afflicted with the hysterical complaint. And at last it appeared so violent as to destroy her reason, that on the 21st of August, 1813, she was deprived of reason as to sink in despair. And we had to watch her by day and by night to prevent her from self murder. Her confidence with regard to religion was entirely given up, so that she often expressed, her eternal state was awful. But I had a hope for her, for I believe she had been converted to the Lord some years previous to this. And a few days, or rather nights, before, she waked me to tell me how happy she was in the Lord, so I had no reason to believe she had backslidden from the Lord. But she would not attempt to pray, neither wanted any one to

28 This word is virtually illegible in the manuscript but it seems to be “bellowed.”
pray for her, for she said it was in vain. The Lord and myself only knew what I suffered. For about eight weeks my cry to the Lord daily with tears [was] that she might come to her reason before she departed, that I might be fully satisfied of her acceptance with the Lord. And I believe the Lord was entreated and granted my request, for about eight days before she departed she came to herself and reason so far as to pray, and was patient as a lamb. Previous to this she wanted me to make a pen in the woods, and make a box, and put her in the pen, for she said we could not bear her to be in the house. And a few minutes before she lost her speech, she said to me, as I was sitting by her (for now she would not suffer me to be absent from her if she help it), I had not done as she wanted me to do; for she said, "I am now ready, and must go," and spake but a few words after this, and fell asleep in the arms of Jesus (I hope), and rested from pain and affliction, and obtained joy and gladness for ever more. This October 18th, about one half hour by sun in the evening, 1813, in the 68th year of her age.

I was now left as a lonesome dove without mate, and not a white person in my family but myself alone and a few black. And now considering my situation in life, I hardly knew what to do for the best. I took a little tour in the circuit, but I thought my strength of body at my age would by no means admit of my traveling a circuit and preach. And to break up housekeeping and put myself dependent on my children or any one of them, I could not think of doing. I had lived in love and peace with my loving wife forty-four years and five months and five days. And on serious reflection and in the fear of God I concluded it might be most to the glory of God and the best for my own soul and the society where I had been so long as a father in the gospel to them to take another companion and so continue in the neighborhood and try to do what little good I was able to do by the grace of God. And in the fear of the Lord and in much prayer, I took a second wife as I thought altogether suitable for me—one that feared and loved the Lord, and had been in the Church of Christ for some years, and had adorned her profession as a member of Christ—of which I hope I shall never have cause to repent. We were solemnly joined by Brother E. Wright the 9th day of January, 1814.

Now for[ty] years is past since I knew the Lord in the pardon of sin. I have been lost on the ocean of this vain world. My cup hath been mixed with joy and sorrow, tribulations and trials. I hath passed through the water and through the fire, but glory and thanks be to the Lord. And to his praise be it spoken that the
world—with all its frowns or smiles, and joys or sorrows, tribulations or trials—has not shaken my confidence in the Lord. But I still hold fast my integrity, neither hath my faith been wavering, but the same doctrine that I believed when I first joined the people called Methodists I still hold. I have not been as a reed shaken by the wind, nor as a double-minded man carried about with every wind of doctrine.

I shall now endeavor to give a short, but a comprehensive, sketch of the doctrine I think contained in the word of God and which I have endeavored to preach for many years. And I still think and believe the said doctrine is so founded on Scripture that they cannot be gainsayed nor overturned by no one if they will do justice to the text and context and prove Scripture by Scripture, which is the only way it ought to be done. I must believe that the Scripture is conditional, for if not, I know not what use it could possible be of; for if otherwise, viz., I will and you shall, it would destroy the agency of man. And then he could not be accountable, and if so, they would not be rewardable or punishable. We will take a view of man in his creation, fall, and restoration by Jesus Christ, the son of God. First, then after the Lord God had made the present world and all things therein contained, it was said by the three one God, let us make man. So man was made in the image of God. Now the moral image [of] God is righteousness and true holiness. Thus man was made a pure and upright creature in all the faculties of his soul, for the soul of man is what God breathed into him after he had made his body of the dust of the earth. He was made a free agent and indued with power to obey his creator, but free to fall. To upright man God gave a pure law to keep. But by the subtlety of the devil man broke the law that his creator gave him, and thus fell from the favor of God and lost his agency. Now as Adam stood as a federal head and representative of all mankind, all are considered to fall with or in him. For by his transgression he fell under the penalty of the law he had broken which was death—spiritual, temporal, and eternal—without some remedy provided for his recovery. But the Lord—out of pure unmerited grace, favor, or free love—gave the promise of the Savior, Jesus Christ, as the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head, that is, to destroy the works of the devil. So we find according to Scripture as the first Adam brought a universal seed of death in the world, so the second Adam—Jesus Christ, the federal head and representative of mankind—brought a universal seed of life; and so, in some good degree, restored man’s agency and rectified man’s will also. So we find according to Scripture as, by the offence of one, judg-
ment came on all men to condemnation, even so by the obedience of one, viz., Jesus Christ, the free gift came on all men to justification of life.\textsuperscript{29} Then it is plain without any further proof that all are restored to the favor of God. In this state we consider all in their state of minority, and so far restored as to be freed from the guilt of original sin, although we bring with us in the world a corrupt nature and are born in a state of peccability, that is, a corrupt nature that is prone to sin. But our having that nature and a proneness to sin, yet we cannot [be] said to be sinners until we break the law of God in person. So it is manifest that no person will be damned merely for Adam’s sin. Then when we come to mature age—that is, to be blessed with reason of discerning good from evil or capable of choosing good and refusing evil—that we are accountable creatures, and not before, and so transgress the command of God in person, we stand condemned by the law of God. Now it is manifestly clear to a demonstration that until we thus come to mature age and thus in person sin against God that we stand justified or acquitted in or before God by or through the alone merits of Jesus Christ, the savior of the world.

Then it follows that when man sins in person against God by transgressing his pure law, he is now condemned. The man must repent for his own sin that he hath committed in his own person against God by thus transgressing, and not for Adam’s sin. For how is it possible that we should repent for the sin that we never committed and that was committed and pardoned thousands of years before we were born? It therefore remains that we must repent or perish everlasting. For it is the doctrine of the gospel and was preached by him that best knew on what condition he would save us, that is, the Savior of the world. Also he commands all men every where to repent. Then I presume that all need repentance, for all have sinned that have come to mature age. And furthermore it is possible for them so to do, for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. And Christ is the true light that lighteneth every man that comes into the world.\textsuperscript{30} Now the God of love would not command us to repent if we could not by grace do so. We take it for a real truth that what ever God command his helpless creatures to do he will give them power to do if we are not wanting on our part. So by the grace of God we may repent, and the consequence is if we do not we must eternally perish.

But what is repentance? It is a conviction for sin wrought in

\textsuperscript{29} Romans 5:19.
\textsuperscript{30} John 1:9.
us by the Spirit of God by which we are brought to see the evil and damning nature thereof. This conviction begets in us a Godly sorrow for sin that worketh in us, that repentance that needeth not to be repented of, also a hatred to sin with a desire by the grace of God to forsake it. Also it implies a conviction of our helplessness, [so] that we look for help from him on whom help is laid—that is him that is mighty to save, the Lord Jesus Christ. And thus it is that we feel the guilt of sin on our conscience as to cause us, like the apostle Paul, to cry, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" 31 and a confession of sin and also forsaking. Then it is that we are invited to come to the savior who hath promised to give us rest from guilt and condemnation and restore us to the favor of God. But it is on the conviction of believing on Christ as our all-sufficient savior. But faith, as every other blessing is the gift of God. 32 But the Lord hath said in his word that he will be sought unto to do these things for us then [when?] we seek and ask for them, 33 and if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and he shall have. 34 But not withstanding faith is the gift of God, yet it is certainly the act of man. The Lord giveth us grace of repentance, and we improved that small spark of grace and did repent. So if we still improve grace we may with the heart believe unto righteousness. But if [we], like the slothful servant, bury that one talent of grace, 35 we shall not believe to the saving of the soul. Then it is certain that God giveth us the grace or power to believe. So, as reasonable creature[s], we may use the grace or power given and believe, or we may abuse or bury it as the slothful servant did and continue in unbelief. Now as the Lord is good in giving us food and a mouth and appetite to eat that we may live and be able to discharge our duty in this life, so it is manifest that God doth not eat for us. Even so the Lord blesses us with every means necessary for us that we might believe and be saved, yet the Lord doth not believe for us no more than he eateth for us. Now what is saving faith? It is a full trust, reliance, and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he died for my sins and rose again for my justification and salvation. And as this faith flows from Christ and [we] receive Christ in all his offices as a prophet, priest, and king, it justifies us or reinstates us to the favor of God; whereby guilt and condemnation is re-

31 Romans 7:24.
32 Ephesians 2:8.
33 Matthew 7:7?
34 James 1:5.
moved, and the love of God is shed abroad in the soul, and peace is restored. Whereas before, the soul was like the troubled sea that cannot rest. And we are enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Now the grand question is, are we qualified for Glory or not? The answer is no. Then if we are not, and we were to die in that state; what is to become of such a soul? The answer is ready: the Lord is able to finish the work and cut it short in righteousness and thus prepare it by holiness for glory. For the Scripture is very express on the subject of holiness: that without it no man is to see the Lord, and nothing unclean can enter and dwell in heaven. But glory to God that he hath made sanctification or holiness as much our privilege as justification. But sanctification as a privilege is purchased for, given to, and wrought in us by a gracious God. As a duty it should be studied by us. And in order to attain it we must receive it out of Christ's fullness by faith in his person and promises. Sanctification in this world must be complete. The whole man must be sanctified, and the whole law regarded. All sin must be utterly abolished here, or the soul can never be admitted into the glorious presence of God. (Wood on sanctification; 

Mr. Benson on the same subject.) Salvation is the end, sanctification the way that all must walk in who arrive at that desirable end. For saith the apostle, without holiness (viz., sanctification) no man shall see the Lord. Whatever a man attains, if he attains not this, he shall be excluded the presence and denied the blissful vision of God. He shall be shut out of heaven and thrust down to hell. Mr. Wesley on the same, answering the question whether it, sanctification, be gradual or instantaneous: whether one way or the other see that it is done if ever you wish or expect to go to heaven. Mr. Flicher saith that Christian perfection or sanctification stands on a precept and a promise. Now this blessed gospel doctrine need not frighten anyone. But it ought to be a matter of consolation to every believer. For it is the experience of every converted soul that after they have passed the pangs of the new birth that sooner or later they feel the remains of sin and the roots of bitterness

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36 This might be either of two British Methodist preachers, James Wood (1751-1848 or 49) or Thomas Wood (1786-1826). Both were authors of religious pamphlets.
37 Joseph Benson (1748-1821), British Methodist minister, Two Sermons on Sanctification, Leeds, Bowling, 1782.
38 Hebrews 12:14.
39 John Wesley, “On Patience,” Sermons on Several Occasions, No. LXXXIII, in Works, Vol. IV, p. 490, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan. “Be the change instantaneous or gradual, see that you never rest till it is wrought in your own soul, if you desire to dwell with God in glory.”
40 Perhaps this is John Fletcher (1729-1785), British Methodist minister, theologian, and author.
springing up in them, which in some measure distresses them. But when we believe it is our privilege to be saved from them and brought into the liberty of loving the Lord our God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as our self; to rejoice ever more, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks; to be saved from all slavish or tormenting fear of death, judgment, and hell (what a gracious and glorious state!); surely no Christian can be angry at or envious at such a gospel privilege. But again the enjoying such a happy state doth not put us out of danger, neither prevent our growing in grace as long as we live. And it appears to me that a soul thus sanctified and saved from sin will grow faster in grace than he doth while the weeds of sin and the sucker of iniquity is twisted about his soul; that there is no state that we attain to in life but will admit of advancement; also no state from which we cannot fall from without watching unto prayer. Therefore we are informed by St. Paul that [it] is by faith we stand and must not be high-minded, but fear, for if God spared not the natural branches (the Jews), take heed lest he spare not thee. And be faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

And according to the doctrine of the Scriptures we expect a general resurrection and eternal judgment, when the righteous are to be rewarded with eternal life and wicked sentenced to eternal death. It also appears that there will be a restoration of the brutal creatures to their state in which they were first created.

Now this is the doctrine I believe contained in the Scriptures and the substance of what I have been endeavoring to preach in my weak and imperfect manner for some years. But the doctrine of sanctification or Christian perfection or gospel holiness is what many cannot bear to hear preached. They can't bear giving up their every sin until death comes to make the final blow and make an end of sin, pride, self-will, unbelief; and the love of the world cleaves to them. And too many professor are satisfied with present attainments, and set down satisfied, and conclude they must remain so until death. And then they think it time enough to [give] those beloved things up. But it will be well if they don't by thus doing meet with a depart[ure] from me, by the God of holiness! And [it is] for my thus endeavoring to press the precious gospel truths on professor that they are prej-
udiced against me, and conclude that I preach too holy a doctrine and that there is no necessity for being so holy, and conclude no person is sanctified until death and also that no person can know when the work is done. But as we know when our sins are forgiven and we are restored to the favor of God, so sure we can know when we are cleansed from all unrighteousness and restored to the image of God and made meet to be partakers with the saints in light. Now to conclude, justification entitles us to heaven; sanctification qualifies the soul for glory.

I am now in the seventy-second year of age, and previous to this for five years I have taken some account of the sermons I have preached with the texts, and when, and where, with my feeling and manner of preaching. And by the grace of God I shall from now [try] to keep a more just account of my life and my preaching.

[There follows immediately on this page a journal entry for December 20, 1818.]

Conclusion

John Young died on July 21, 1837. His last journal entry shows that he preached less than a month before his death. He was ninety years old.

His loyal service earned him a touching last tribute. Among the papers of John Wesley Young,45 John Young's son, we find this work of an anonymous poet.

Father Young's Death

His soul is wafted far above;
It feasts on Jesus' dying love
With holy angels joined to sing
The praises of his God and King.

Long he labored here below
The love of God to men to show,
And many souls in heaven will tell,
His preaching Christ saved them from hell.

Plank Chapel mourns but hark its God.
Nor can this be his chastening rod.
He long to us by God was given;
His happy soul was ripe for heaven.

45 Manuscript Department, Perkins Library, Duke University.
The gospel trumpet long he blew
By preaching and example too.
Tho' dead he lives; he lives above.
He basks in a redeeming love.

Plank Chapel saints he loved you well.
The way to heaven he oft did tell,
Warning sinners the pains of hell.
His duty here he has done well.

God the Spirit and the word
He leaves with you as you have heard.
He beckons you to come away
And live with Christ through endless day.